contents

editorial
Josiah Klassen

the dream pool
Emily Bamforth

muffins
Salman Hussain

together is better
Ayman Oweida

heart packing
Josh Sterlin

beams
Mark Weissfeler

a conversation with God
Saoussan Askar

a painting
Kimberly Seida

OIKOS
Victor Lam

unknown feelings
Dalia Ramirez Cote

sonnet to a dear friend
Josiah Klassen

lost in a moment
Nawaa Makhani

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Good is a simple word. Like many simple words, it expresses a lot of different things. Because of that, it makes for an excellent theme-word: good. Lower-case g, one syllable, period. What is goodness? That, of course, is for you to decide, o reader. And for each of us to decide, as we live out our daily lives. For good is the ideal word - it is what we want, what we aim for. Goodness is thus a concern in each religious tradition and in each worldview. It is our orientation, our map; the specifics depend upon the cartographer. It is very individual; each person decides what is good for them. On the other hand, it is necessarily relational: we always form our desires and values in relationship with others, and we also long to be valued and approved (deemed “good”) by others. But goodness is also relative to situation, perspective and ability. We are all given unique lives to live out, and we cannot easily judge another’s. The personal story behind a seemingly simple outward act can be immense. A recent struggle of mine with mental health has given me a taste of the difficult and beautiful journey so many go through (in a sense, that we all go through) on a daily basis. There is goodness in each of us. This commonness of goodness is worth highlighting; good is a different word than great. What is good isn’t necessarily the impressive, the successful, or the radiant; goodness can be in the mundane, the ordinary, the daily, small choices. Another, final, sense of goodness is the aesthetic. Radix is a place where artists gather. We’re about poetry and photography, the graphic and the written word; each good in their own way and in multiple ways. So welcome to this issue of Radix. We’re doing something together, each of us in our own way, and we think it’s good. We hope you enjoy it.

Josiah Klassen
Radix Co-Editor
the dream pool
EMILY BAMFORTH

A fisherman stood on a lonely pier at the very edge of time
And into the ageless pool below he cast his lonely line.
Below him in the waters swarmed those things that might be to come
The chance of being caught by him outnumbered twelve thousand to one.

But those chosen moments were drawn to his hook, they swallowed up his bait
And the fisherman pulled them into life, caught up in his net called Fate.
When dusk falls and day is done, his reward is you and me
We are the products of his catch; of things that were chosen to be.

Sand grains in the desert, the stars in the sky, every hair on every head;
The number of things that could have been, that might have happened instead.
Every one of us is more precious than gold, rarer than any exquisite gem
For the beautiful moments that fashion our lives will never be caught again.

Emily Bamforth is a fifth-year PhD candidate in the Department of Biology/Redpath Museum. Her doctoral thesis work is in dinosaurs and vertebrate palaeontology.
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PHOTO BY JENNIFER HAMILTON
muffins
SALMAN HUSSAIN
Upon occasion I cross a bridge
Back arched, it bends over the river
It’s curvaceous figure lends itself
To those who choose to use its help
Countless mosses grow upon the stony steps
Those with losses jump to their lonely depths
To lose only regrets that caused them pain
No matter, I’ll cross it each day all the same
Though now my days do wane;
It’s time I listen to what it’s saying

Leaning over its edge
My downward gaze meets the flow
Of lucid water coursing beneath its stony frame
A reflection danced upon the lonely river;
It was mine, though time had made it wither
My gaze slithers away from the side
And I felt a tremor so I look down
A fuchsia tulip found a home
A single Amethyst crown
Sprouts proudly between two stones
A source of growth, or perhaps demise
It truly depends on whoever’s eyes
Meet this lonely figure
Hopefully, one day
I shall understand you better

Salman T. Hussain is a U3 Environment student who enjoys doing pro bono management consulting, jogging outside beside large rivers, rapping, and spending time with his family.
“Together is better” was one of the mottos at the Coming Together Student Interfaith Conference that was held in Chicago in mid-February. Over 120 university-level youth from more than 35 universities across North America came together to talk, learn and grow. Students from all walks of life participated in the conference: from Atheists, Methodists and Unitarians to Hindus, Buddhists and Jews. Everyone came with a shared goal: to better understand the ‘other’. Barriers were broken and hearts were united. Misconceptions
were dispelled and respect was instilled. Speakers, religious leaders and spiritual caregivers shared their view of a world where common values united people and where service to others is the norm. There’s an ever-growing desire in youth to explore the identity that best fits them. Students want to learn about the various faiths and ways of spiritual care and development, not only through books, but moreso through the experience of their peers. Creating space for students on university campuses to come together and explore their identities has become an essential component of a rich and fulfilling university experience. In a very inspirational speech, Rev. Teresa Owens, Dean of Students at the University of Chicago Divinity School, said, “One cannot work successfully in any profession nowadays without an understanding of people’s spirituality and faith”. This statement couldn’t be more true than on university campuses and educational institutions. There’s been a significant increase in the number of student initiatives exploring interfaith and spirituality. On the McGill campus, a student club named iF? (interfaith club) was formed earlier this year. In addition to its own events and activities, the iF? club has been able to connect faith-oriented clubs together through various venues of discussion and communication, including a very successful poetry/slam event that was held in collaboration with the Muslim Students’ Association in February. The coming together conference represents a significant milestone in fulfilling a much-needed venue for nurturing respect, understanding and collaboration among people of various faiths and identities. Coming together is the first step towards working together and building a coherent and thriving society.

Ayman Oweida is a doctoral student in the department of experimental medicine and an active member of the Muslim community.
Josh Sterlin is a U3 (and final!) anthropology major focusing in ecological anthropology, North American native peoples, and hoping to move further into human ecology, subsistence strategies and food processing skills, bushcraft skills, and applied biology. He’ll be spending next year at a wilderness school in Washington state working on that, and mixing the spirit and the flesh.
And I carry little you (never too big to fit), cummings in my heart.

pack

your bags lightly, only everything
you would save from
your burning house

(You’re going to be a nomad,
and you want to be able to
stand up straight)

the delicates tight
in sheets, and towels
and underwear

& never

let Others do it for you
(especially if they think they know better).
They will never pack the right stuff

or leave your bags unattended,
you will find them empty--
or filled with poison

don’t worry too much
if the suitcase gets dented,
(it is your character)

or if the latch breaks
and you can’t close it
(all the better)

and always

leave room
for all the hearts
you will carry with you.
Moon smiles like me
shines on me tonight.
Streetlamps orange by the pines
and clouds of stars glitter
of the same accord as
the giggling girl
I’m convinced was an actual fairy.
You can see teeth
in the moon,
lively yellowed whites
amongst the dust of this
brushstroked starry night.
There is brilliance
in that dark
(Like her, seated, bright face
sun cracking through to make
her chin a portrait in the dark
class she can’t possibly know how
beautiful
her light is)
matched now by this eclipse.
The orb around proves that
there is always more above an
appearance,
asks if I might worship.
Flashes pad old feather-filled coats and
illuminate, beg for
what those lights
might mean to me

Mark is a student of English Literature and Religious studies.
He also recently played a priest for the second time on stage at Mcgill,
which he believes is quite curious indeed.
a conversation with God
SAOUSSAN ASKAR

Why, dear Lord?
*When the sun is overturned,* He says
Then from where will I get my light?
*When the stars fall away,* He says
But my night sky?
*When the mountains are moved,* He says
Does it tire you?
*When the beasts of the wild are herded together,* He says
And you can harness such power?
*When the seas are boiled over,* He says
Where will I be in the middle of all this?
*When the souls are coupled,* He says
And who am I good enough to be paired with?
*When the pages are folded out,* He says
You would lay out the record of my life – my faults, my sins, my stumbles – for all to see?
*When the sky is flayed open,* He says
And I may see the true state of the earth?
*When Jahim is set ablaze,* He says
You frighten me.
*When the garden is brought near,* He says
And you bring me peace.
*Then a soul will know what it has prepared,* He says
I’ve been too distracted to prepare much for You, though
*I swear by the stars that slide,* He says
Yes, Your creations are beautiful.
*Stars streaming, stars that sweep along the sky,* He says
And You are most beautiful.
*By the night as it slips away,* He says
Can I hold onto it a little longer?
*By the morning when the fragrant air breathes,* He says
Dear Lord. Dear, dear Lord.
You are a poet.
You are the first poet.
You are the last poet.
You are the only poet.

**This is the word of a messenger ennobled**, He says
Yes, I did receive it; he delivered it to me.

**Empowered, ordained before the lord of the throne,**
**Holding sway there, keeping trust**, He says
What I would give to be that close to You.

**Your friend has not gone mad**, He says
Yes, he is indeed my friend – he makes me smile.

**He saw him on the horizon clear** -
**He does not hoard for himself the unseen**, He says
Yes. So that I also may gaze in awe at You.

**This is not the word of a satan**
  **Struck with stones**, He says

**Where are you going?** He says
*Stop. Breath gone. Hands clamped firm to my chair. Afraid to be pried from it. Hyperventilating.*
*I don’t know.*
*I don’t know.*
*I don’t know.*

**This is a reminder to all beings**, He says
**For those who wish to walk straight** -
**Your only will is the will of God**
  **Lord of all beings**, He says
Lord? Please don’t let go of my hand.

[IMPORTANT NOTE: My own original words are those not in bold. The words in bold are some of the verses of Chapter 81 of the Qur’an, as translated into English by Michael Sells – here is the work’s citation:

_Saoussan Askar is a Patiently Hoping for a Degree (PhD) candidate in the department of sociology at McGill. She enjoys digital photography, baking and kickboxing, often practicing all three skills on her beloved husband._
a painting
KIMBERLY SEIDA
Geo-engineering, science and policy-making, adaptation measures, eco-literacy and citizen science are emerging fixes that hold promise for addressing the current ecological crisis. Humans have been the main drivers of change on the planet for the last 10,000 years since the agrarian revolution, and especially in the last 200 years with the industrial revolution. Each of these revolutions has brought about enormous advances in human welfare and allowed humans to overcome their survival limits. But now there is a looming crisis that brings us again to the verge of human existence and compromising the longevity of the planet and non-human species. We stand at an intersection between the sustainability of the Earth’s biocapacity and human flourishing, and the peril of post-industrialized globalization and sustained economic growth.

What kind of considerations ought we to make at the level of the global community and the university campus, in order to bridge such gaps? What kind of decisions ought we to make, as individuals, as contributors to society, and for future generations in the next 10, 20 or so years?

Although we have some of the most advanced technologies, and while research into the scale of human alteration of the planet continues to be discovered and documented, could there be something more that humans can do to bridge the gap?

The ecological crisis involves every being on Earth and we must acknowledge that everyone is an agent of change. Just as species need to respond and adapt to changing environments, humans must also adapt to this change. This requires not only a technological, scientific, or
political change, it requires a change in the way humans think about themselves, others and the world. It requires the willingness of every individual to understand, contribute and receive.

Imagine for a moment that you engage in a conversation with an engineer and a management student about public transportation and emissions. The engineer may discuss the technological feasibility of different public transport options with respect to fuel efficiency, while the management student suggests some economic incentives for transport agencies to purchase fuel-efficient vehicles. Whether you are in the social, physical or biological sciences, you begin to wonder how you can contribute to this dialogue surrounding a case-based study. In a highly academic environment, we are subconsciously aware of our connections with other students; however, we are unable to dig deeper with our casual conversations unless it is in an academic or classroom setting.

The case described here represents the model that OIKOS McGill strives towards: to invite members of the community to dialogue, to re-invent and share perspectives on the world in the hopes of bringing change in the human consciousness towards the ecological crisis that surrounds us. OIKOS McGill is a platform for voices from any discipline to be heard, whether you are a student, faculty, staff or a member of the neighboring community. In return, you take something away from the day’s discussion that can change the way you think about the most pressing issues. By putting the pieces together and crossing the boundaries of our rigid, specialized disciplines, we enable others and, in turn, ourselves to redefine what we can learn and do as we bring about this change of consciousness.

Feel free to contact Victor at oikosmcgill@gmail.com or Reverend Neil Whitehouse at neil.whitehouse@mcgill.ca for more information or to share a vision for OIKOS McGill!

Victor Lam is an active member of OIKOS McGill who has a deep passion for interdisciplinary dialogue and spiritual responses to the current ecological crisis. He is currently in U2 Arts and Science, with a major in Sustainability, Science, and Society and a minor in Philosophy.
unknown feelings
DALIA RAMIREZ COTE

These other thoughts, your
Insular fields of memory,
Often shared, now common good.
Who taught me to realize
- Early enough, it felt too late
How brutal, such complicity.
They make mistakes and hurt others
You and I both,
To be a part of it.

I thought I had been well
trained in living; a Good Life
- Capitals for emphasis, these
one time offers of false comfort and
the pretense of a belief in
universals and definitions.

Venture into states of paralysis;
lost my footing. I don’t know when I’ll be back.
Reconstruct and boundaries, put
the words together. You know what I mean.
Forgotten playgrounds, they’ve turned into battlefields,
All I can say is: I’m sorry.

Dalia Ramirez-Côté is a U2 student
pursuing an Honours degree in
Asian Religions.
radix

summer issue

Submission deadline: June 1, 2013.

Have an interest in faith and spirituality? Have a creative talent? Submit your work to radix@mail.mcgill.ca now to be included in our summer edition!

radix@mail.mcgill.ca
You walked a double path, he walked alone,
You loved another love - one made of gold.
You tried his heart to hold and not to own...
He kept his simple cards unplayed: a fold.
And when he walked alone in misery,
You wept beside, unhappy in his pain.
And though he lived in bitter memory,
You knew that you would do it all again.
Repentance was your only friend in guilt,
And harrowed by your flaws you still had hope.
For when the milk upon the floor is spilt,
You find the strength within, somehow, to cope.
Though weakness failed and even more did force,
You’re learning now the sacrament of divorce.

Josiah Klassen is a Linguistics student, co-editor of Radix and graduating soon! He is happily and gratefully married.
Your Neighbour’s Faith
McGill Chaplaincy regularly visits Montreal’s diverse places of worship. Last semester we visited the Enpukuji Zen, Buddhist Meditation Centre, a Mosque, an Orthodox Christian parish and a Sikh Gurdwara. We will be going to St. Andrew’s and St. Paul’s this semester as well as Hillel House. Contact chaplaincy@mcgill.ca for more info.

Radix looking for Volunteers
Like what you see? Believe in student creativity, and inter-faith collaboration? Help us do it better! We can always use help in marketing, web-development, research, distribution and much more! Email us to join the community. radix@mail.mcgill.ca

International Students!
Are you freezing?
Lightly used coats, clothing, shoes, and boots are available free of charge to International Students. Stop by Chaplaincy Services.

Ancient Wisdom Lies At Your Feet
It’s free! Just bring yourself. McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy
Try walking meditation using a labyrinth on campus. Every Tuesday afternoon 12-4pm, M. Parent Room, 2nd Floor SSMU Building. For more information visit: Labyrinth McGill on Facebook or www.mcgill.ca/students/chaplaincy

Zen meditation
 Starts January 11, 2013 until April 12, 2013 (no meditation during Study Break March 08, 2013) Instructor: Myokyo Zengetsu Location: Birks Chapel 2nd Floor Faculty of Religious Studies, Birks Bldg.
3520 University Street
For More Info: call 514-398-4104 or chaplaincy@mcgill.ca

Ghetto Shul
House of Prayer

Rabbit Hole Café
Vegan Kitchen
Fridays 12:30-3:30
3625 Aylmer, downstairs
Donations of $2.00 or a non-perishable food item are appreciated. www.yellowdoor.org

Newman Centre
3484 Peel St, 398-4106
newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca
www.newmancentre.org

Did you know that Roman Catholic Mass is held conveniently on campus several times per week?

McGill Student Parents’ Network
The MSPN provides support to McGill students who are parents. Regularly we offer free of charge to McGill students: in-home babysitting, support group meetings, study sessions for parents with babysitting for children. Interested families should contact the MSPN.

Conflict-Free Campus Initiative
This campaign works to educate the McGill community about the conflict in the DRC and the role of “conflict minerals”.

STAND
Engaging students in advocating against genocide and mass atrocities

Fundraising for the Valentino Achek Deng Foundation
STAND McGill also holds fundraising events to benefit the VAD Foundation which builds a school complex in post-conflict South Sudan.

mcgill@standcanada.org  www.standcanada.org  Tuesdays@ 5:30 in the Arts Lounge
FREE ADS FOR SPIRITUAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUPS!

Orthodox Christian Fellowship
Are you an Orthodox Christian, or interested in Orthodoxy? Come out to our weekly meetings in the Claude Ryan Library in the Newman Centre (3484 Peel, 3rd floor) at 6-7:30pm every Thursday for discussion with a great group facilitated by an Orthodox priest. Otherwise, join us for a potluck, event or monastery trip! mcgillstudentsocf@gmail.com

Radical Christian Student Association
To contact email: rcsa.mcgill@gmail.com.

The Muslim Students Association of McGill
We aim to provide spiritual, social & educational services. We offer weekly study circles, free Islamic educational materials, Ramadan services, lectures/conferences, and a wonderful library called House of Wisdom. We also have many community events to serve others (ex. Project Downtown), as well as exciting social events (ex. ski trips, cultural dinner nights, MSA Frosh, and so much more!) Come drop by & say hi to us in our office (Shatner building, room B09.)

Maison de l’amitié
Student Residence
www.residencema.ca
experience@maisondelamitie.ca
Community
Diversity
Spirituality
120, rue Duluth est
Montréal, QC
(514) 843-4336

OIKOS Project – what’s life worth to you?

Economy – Ecology – Ecumenism

Join the conversations!
neil.whitehouse@mcgill.ca
McGill Ecumenical Chaplain

Radical Christian Student Association
To contact email: rcsa.mcgill@gmail.com.
I was on my way to New York City for the first time in my life. I decided to take a bus from Ottawa to Montreal and then a 10-hour train to New York.

I hadn’t thought much about the process of going through US customs on a train. How different could it be, compared to flying to the States, which is probably the most harrowing?

The train was comfortable. Very comfortable. Large, wide seats. Ample legroom. Reclining chairs. Foot rests. And two seats to myself.

What was uncomfortable was the customs inspection at the US border. I wasn’t really nervous about it, since I had confidence in myself, and who I am as a person. I knew my story, and I had nothing to hide. It was really quite simple.

The first two officers who requested that we have our passports and customs documents ready seemed pleasant. It was the third officer who made me question everything. Everything.

The officer was smaller in stature and wore the Customs Border Patrol baseball cap as if it were his birthright. I was the third person in the carriage that he interviewed. As he interrogated the first two passengers, my anxiety rose. He grilled them on every detail of their trip, barely allowing any time to think, let alone breathe before he fired off his next question. I wondered whether he was defending his country, or abusing his responsibility.

Something about his mannerisms unnerved me. As he asked passengers questions, he constantly looked up and down the aisles with his little beady, scheming eyes.

I imagined scenarios of what I would do if the officers decided to pull out their guns on me! How should I disarm them? I started questioning my behaviour: Was the way I was sitting arrogant? I uncrossed my legs and sat straight.

He came towards me. I handed him my customs documents and passport.

“Where do you live, Nawaaz?”

“In Ottawa.”

“Where are you going? What’s the purpose of your visit? When’s the last time you saw the friend you’re visiting? What’s his
name? When's the last time you visited the States? Who do you work for? A private company? What do you do? Religious educator? Of what religion? How long have you done that for? What did you do before that? Are you leaving anything in New York with your friend? How much money do you have on you? And what about Canadian money? Do you have a return ticket? Let me see it. Which bag is yours?”


It was at this very moment that I felt hopeless. How could someone in my position possibly be allowed to enter the States? How could this man allow me to enter the country? The large seats seemed to shrink, as this man’s presence inflated to an uncomfortable level.

What was more concerning to me was that for a split second, I had regretted it all. Being a Muslim. Being proud to be a Muslim. Having studied Islam at the Master’s level. Teaching students in my community about faith and how to articulate their faith to others successfully. Teaching youth to be proud of their identity. Making a career out of empowering young Muslims with knowledge.

I hated it all. I hated myself for not wanting to be a Muslim in that moment. This level of discomfort, anxiety and feelings of being judged were too overwhelming. In that moment, I was at my most vulnerable. I felt exposed. More naked than I’ve ever felt fully clothed.

I didn’t know what to be more ashamed of; the fact that I had the audacity to try and enter the United States of America as a Muslim, or the fact that I wish I didn't have to admit all of these facts to a stranger that I’ve never met before, without having any control in the conversation or the outcome.

I’ve spent my whole life struggling to be a good Muslim. Why have I been striving my whole life to be a good Muslim, let alone a good human being if this is how I’m made to feel? What’s the point of always trying to be good in my life when this fractional interaction makes it seem like it’s not worth it? Would I have felt better if I lied about my education? My career? My faith? Who I am as a person?

I imagined the custom agent nonchalantly calling over his colleagues to arrange a shooting squad for me on the account of my being Muslim and trying to enter the United States of America. Here we go…