



THE
PRESBYTERIAN
COLLEGE
MONTREAL

LE
COLLÈGE
PRESBYTÉRIEN
MONTREAL

3495 University Street, Montreal, QC H3A 2A8
514.288.5256 | reception@pcmtl.ca
www.presbyteriancollege.ca

(From right to left) Rev. Ruth Frampton (Anglican pastor); Rev. Karen Petersen (Presbyterian pastor); Father Russel Murray, OFM (Roman Catholic Franciscan priest) converse during an ecumenical gathering at St. Patrick's American Catholic Parish in Rome (January 21, 2018).

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

- Reformation Day
- Fall Retreat Testimonials
- Student Profile: Kelvin Kagori (Master of Divinity)
- Jesus, the "New Job"?
- New Faces on Campus
- Leadership Centre Updates
- The Cost of Justice
- Justice in the City
- Read all about it! New releases from our faculty members
- Poems by Milan Rijal
- Acknowledging Gifts In Honour and In Memory
- Congratulations to our newlyweds!

A partner in the Montreal School of Theology and affiliated with the School of Religious Studies, McGill University.

Reformation Day: giving thanks for Protestantism's enduring gifts to the Church

BY REV. DR. KAREN PETERSEN, PROFESSOR OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP & ACTING PRINCIPAL OF THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, MONTREAL

As an ecumenical theologian, I am accustomed to representing the Reformed tradition in dialogue and other settings where different Christian traditions are engaging one another. This activity, and my teaching life, have given me a sense of what is enduring about being Presbyterian. When we look back to Luther's medieval theological revolution, and the endeavor of Calvin and others to form a "church reformed, always reforming," what do we see in these movements that is of continuing value?

The question is complicated by the fact that many emphases of the Reformation period on the Protestant side did not simply appear out of nowhere. For example, in seminary I learned that the Reformed movement was a "a preaching revival." This was a subtle untruth. It is

true that the late medieval period saw a revival of interest in the theory and practice of preaching, and that some preachers gained celebrity status. The reformers participated in this revival, and honed it, and directed it powerfully to their own ends; but they did not create it. In our desire to celebrate our forebearers, we must avoid the tendency to read history in a way that supports our loves and values.

With this caveat, I do see at least three enduring emphases that we can truly celebrate on this Reformation Day (October 31)¹:

1. **A Radical Christocentrism.** It was the right time for Luther to reassert the sufficiency of Christ's person and work for human salvation: Christ, the

gift of God, the righteousness of God (Romans 1:17). This assertion paved the way for the reformers to speak of salvation itself as an intimate union with Christ. In ecumenical work today, the language of “union with Christ” carries a lot of weight and is helping to inspire new agreements on ministry, the sacraments, etc.

2. The Holy Spirit’s role in salvation.

Calvin called the Spirit the bond (*vinculum*) that unites us to Christ and therefore, an indispensable actor in both our justification (being made right with God) and our sanctification (becoming holy). Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians today can meaningfully agree to this image. More importantly, an awareness of the Spirit’s person and work

keeps our daily discipleship from becoming a burden by bathing it in grace.

3. Accountability in Church

Leadership. Luther and Calvin reserved their most virulent language for the bishops of their day, including and especially the bishop of Rome. The Calvinist movement especially turned to groups, rather than individuals, as more reliable decision-makers. The questions about ideal church government that emerged in the Protestant era—Bishops or no bishops? What does ordination mean?—have continued to occupy the churches ever since. But the reforming impulse was a good one and generated the insight that it is impossible to change the church’s

theology without also changing its structure in a parallel way. It also affirmed that leadership without accountability threatens the very identity of the church as God’s holy people.

On Reformation Day in 2024, I think of Luther and Calvin’s dream of a universal council of Christians that could gather for the purpose of reforming Christ’s church, making it more closely resemble its Lord. For all its setbacks and confusions, the modern ecumenical movement still carries the same dream. That dream will only be realized if we keep our focus on Jesus Christ; if we listen to the Holy Spirit; and if we hold one another accountable in ministry and mission. For these gifts of the Reformation, I am constantly grateful. ■

Fall Retreat Testimonials



On September 13–14, the students, faculty and staff of the Presbyterian College held their annual Fall Retreat at Manoir D'Youville, located on the South Shore of Montreal. This year's theme was “Pilgrimage based on the Psalms of Ascent”. It was well attended—around 50 people

were present. Here are the reactions of some of the participants.

“I began this year’s Retreat with a good meal on Friday evening and ended it with another on Saturday evening. Although the food was abundant and delicious, it was the wonderful fellowship and varied conversations that “made the meal”. I didn’t want them to end; learning and growing in communion, right up there with the organized sessions.” (Gordon McPhee)

“The retreat offered a beautiful moment to sing, play music and praise God together, reflect on Psalms, meditate in the tranquility of nature, as well as meet the families and their children.” (Milan Prasadrijal)

“Nous avons eu l’occasion de vivre deux jours ensemble pour prendre un temps de réflexion et de partage, le tout dans un cadre idyllique à Châteauguay. Ces temps furent précieux pour établir des contacts, échanger sur nos intérêts de recherche mais aussi partager la Cène et célébrer Dieu ensemble. Belle expérience!” (Fabien Calu)



1. The traditional “start date” of the Protestant Reformation, when Martin Luther, in 1517, purportedly nailed his 95 *Theses* to the door of the Cathedral in Wittenberg, Germany.



"This retreat was a time to reflect on the 'hand of God' that has guided my life so far, a time to enjoy the peace of grace by recovering the 'hand of God' that I had forgotten in the moment, and a time to get to know each other more closely in



God and to pray, which was a precious treasure for me." (Hanvit Lee)

"Attending the Fall Retreat was a wonderful opportunity to share in devotion and worship with all the members of our academic community. In particular, it was a blessing to have a chance to get to know students and professors studying in different programs and whom I don't often see during the regular academic year. What a fantastic way to start the year!" (Jack Bradley)

"As we gathered for this year's retreat, the theme of 'Pilgrimage' couldn't have been more fitting. Through shared moments of prayer, scripture, songs, and

communion, I found new resonance in the Psalms of Ascent, especially Psalm 122. Reflecting on it reminded me that despite the challenges in my academic journey, my ultimate purpose remains to worship God through both my intellectual and spiritual devotion. In this sense, I am glad to journey as a pilgrim." (Mathew Birgen)

"I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made the heaven and earth' (Psalm 121:1–2). We thank the Lord Almighty and Presbyterian College faculty for preparing a wonderful retreat for us. As we gathered, meditated on the Psalms of Ascent, heard messages, prayed, worshipped together and shared our collective experiences as students, we were very much encouraged and exhorted for the challenges of pastoral education and theological studies this fall. We thank everyone who organized and served us at the retreat!" (Andrew Christopher)

"The fall retreat was not only a deepening of my spiritual journey but also offered me an opportunity to connect with the community on a more personal level, to enrich our shared faith and sense of purpose. May we find joy in following God's will and strive to walk in His ways together." (Mi-Sen Wu) ■

Student Profile: Kelvin Kagori (Master of Divinity)

BY REV. DR. LUCILLE MARR, PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE CHAPLAIN

On a hot and muggy August day, as Kelvin Kagori and I sat on the McGill campus enjoying generous scoops of ice cream, he told me how he misses the African rain. The loud

thunderclaps—deafening, he said, and the comforting smells. Kelvin has immersed himself in studies and is fully embracing his experience of Canadian culture, but he also longs to return to

Kenya, the land of his birth and even dreams of retiring there.

Kelvin was born in Nyeri, a small village that looks towards Mount Kenya,



north-east of Nairobi. He grew up in the Rift Valley in a blended family, and his grandparents were his primary parental figures at the young formative years of his childhood.

His grandparents were farmers, and Kelvin recalls running around barefooted to look after the animals, milking cows before and after school, and going down to the river with jerry cans to fetch water. Just like in many parts of rural Kenya, hardship and poverty were a constant part of everyday life. Kelvin had to grow up quickly and learn to work with his hands to help support his family. Whether it was helping out in the fields, fetching water, or taking care of the animals, every little task mattered. It wasn't easy, but those early lessons taught him the value of hard work and the importance of family. At the age of fourteen, Kelvin began to attend government schools throughout his high school years, becoming fluent in English and Swahili, making him trilingual (his mother tongue is Kikuyu).

Kelvin recalls how the church was a sustaining presence through all the changes of his growing up years. He was baptised

into the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, where he was involved with the Boys Brigades, played piano in church, and enjoyed the sense of being part of a large community.

After graduation from high school in 2008, he was offered the opportunity to work in the Hospitality and Information Technology industries in Rwanda in 2011. With no Presbyterian Church close by, he joined a Pentecostal congregation. In 2013, he was invited to serve with Christian Life Ministries in a church plant in Burundi where he stayed for seven years. He served as the main custodian of the church, and assisted with technology and a variety of church productions. A scholarship brought him to International Leadership University.

As part of his duties at the church plant, Kelvin was involved in overseeing a construction project for a satellite campus in rural Burundi, three hours from the capital, Bujumbura. Alongside other pastoral responsibilities, he mainly served and gave oversight of the discipleship ministry.

At the end of 2019, Kelvin transitioned out of full-time church ministry in this church and in 2020, he started working with a corporate organization in Burundi, where he supported programs that equipped youth with employability skills for government and private sector industries, including banks, factories, hotels, and NGOs. In 2021, an offer to take on the challenging job as project manager for the construction of a coffee-washing station, owned by a company based in the USA and East Africa, brought him to Uganda. He also led social impact efforts, facilitating connections between the organization and the local community. This helped pave the way for discipleship initiatives with local

farmers and churches, as well as distributing resources and Bibles. Monday mornings were special times when he gathered the 250 people that worked under his oversight for prayer.

New dreams brought Kelvin to Montreal in Summer 2023. In 2022, a major road accident, combined with significant changes in his personal life, had led him to reevaluate his future in Uganda. As he pursues studies in theology, Kelvin carries his dream of continuing ministry back home close to his heart. He is diligently acquiring further expertise in leadership, combining a minor in International Development with his Master of Divinity Studies.

Kelvin is a gifted resource to the college. As a community, we are benefitting from his leadership and community-building skills as Dean of Residence, and in a variety of maintenance projects. Kelvin still dreams of returning to Kenya once he has completed his studies, to that place where the rains bring lush foliage and the thunderclaps deafen. But for now, he is a true asset to our urban Montreal environment and to our community here at the college. ■



Jesus, the “New Job”?

By DR. ADRIAN LANGDON, DIRECTOR OF THE LEADERSHIP CENTRE, PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

This text was originally delivered as a sermon during the chapel service of October 9, 2024.

The book of Job has always been one of my favourite books in the Hebrew Bible. One of its primary purposes is to explore innocent suffering, a topic with which we can all identify and will all encounter in our ministries and vocations.

The book contains the narrative of Job, a righteous man, who is inflicted with numerous forms of suffering: he loses property, family, and is finally inflicted with loathsome sores “from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself and sat among the ashes” (Job 2:7–8).

But *why* does Job suffer? The book that bears his name explores a variety of answers. One answer comes from Job’s friends. After hearing about Job’s plight, they travel to be with him, to mourn with him for seven days and seven nights. However, in the poetic dialogues that follow, his friends make it pretty clear that they think Job must have done something wrong in order to deserve all this. They have a *retributive* view of suffering, that there is a connection between things we have done in the past and our sufferings in the present. “The righteous prosper, and the wicked suffer”. This view is found throughout the Bible. One could read the story of the Adam and Eve in the garden as an example of this—there are consequences for our disobedient actions. And we can look at our own lives or the lives of others and see how suffering can sometimes follow bad choices.

But as a full explanation for suffering, this won’t do. Job maintains his innocence, that there is nothing he has done to deserve this. And we know full well that sometimes bad things happen to good people.

A second explanation comes from the book’s introduction and conclusion (chapters 1–2, 42:7–17), which some scholars suggest may have been added to the book’s poetic sections at a later date. God allows *ha-satan*, the accuser, to test his righteous servant Job with various forms of suffering. In his case, Job’s suffering is a way to *test* him or perhaps *build his character*. And since Job passes the test, in the end, he gets back all that he had lost, but now as a double portion.

No doubt there is truth to this view that suffering can build character and times of loss can often be followed by times of prosperity. But again, as a final explanation for suffering, this view is inadequate. We all know too well that there are horrendous evils that go beyond a test or a way to build character. If we took this as an overarching view, it would come too close to the prosperity gospel, which suggests that God blesses us based on the portion of our faith. But I don’t think divine grace works in such a crude transactional way.

There is also the response of Job’s wife: “curse God, and die” (2:9). She sees Job’s suffering as too much for his piety. In our contemporary context, perhaps she would take suffering as an opportunity to *deconstruct* faith. While Job rebukes her sternly, perhaps we can’t blame her; she is likely still in a state of shock from all that has befallen her family.

Lastly, there are the speeches of God in chapters 38–42. After all the chatter between Job and his friends, God speaks to Job from a whirlwind. God asks, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (38:4). Then, Job is taken on a tour of the wonders of creation. God’s mighty works as creator and sustainer of all things is recounted with beautiful detail, especially the wild animals and beasts. The answer here seems to be that God’s ways are above our ways, and that *suffering is a mystery*.

When I wrote a paper on Job in seminary, I took this last point as the best answer to be found in the book of Job. That suffering is a mystery, though God can also use it test us and build our character. I was proud of myself, and I think I got a good mark. But the last thing my professor put in his comments was, “Do you actually find these options convincing?”

I thought he was being impious, too skeptical, especially given his commitment to the historical-critical method of biblical exegesis. I believed the Bible was the inspired word of God, therefore the book of Job must be right.

But perhaps my professor (who was also a minister) was hinting at something else: that the story of suffering does not end with these options. Perhaps they are meant to point us to the suffering that is found in the life of Christ.

When you think about it, it is a bit surprising that the New Testament writers do not describe Jesus as the “New Job”. Both Job and Jesus are innocent and blameless. They both suffer greatly.

They are both questioned by family and friends. They are both victims of larger causes and structures. Job's suffering is the result of a heavenly meeting between Yahweh and the accuser, while Jesus is a victim of religious and political authorities. Job is given room to lament throughout the book, and Jesus struggles with his suffering during the prayer of Gethsemane and cries from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Both are also vindicated by God. Job is given everything back twofold, and the crucifixion of Jesus is followed by the resurrection. There is potential here for some good old-fashioned typological reading.

But God is more fully revealed in the history of Jesus Christ than in the story of Job. God is not merely the almighty Creator who questions and overwhelms Job. As Karl Barth emphasizes in *Church Dogmatics* volume 4, God is also the divine Son who receives suffering and death in the life of Jesus. Besides being the almighty Creator, it belongs to the very nature of God to become humble and obedient: Jesus is "the Lord as Servant". God's presence and power is also found in weakness and suffering. The Christian

gospel is not escapist, nor a get rich scheme; rather, it calls us to face the realities of pain, suffering, and death where and when they occur.

What does this mean for us? Does that mean we cannot ask tough questions? Of course not. Nor does it prevent us from further reflections on the problem of suffering. Nor does it mean we can stand passively by and accept suffering.

But it does mean, firstly, that God is with us in suffering. God does not will these forms of suffering, but God is present nonetheless. I cannot speak for the suffering of others, but strangely, at some of the deepest points of suffering in my own life, I sensed God was there. It seems central to the gospel that God is mysteriously with us in suffering; whether it takes physical, mental, relational, or other forms. But that is not always the case; sometimes it feels that God is silent.

So, secondly, we need to be there for others. If we go back to Job's friends, they did do some good things. They travelled from afar to visit Job, had compassion for him, and mourned with him

for days. But they couldn't resist the urge to explain and blame—not unlike Adam and Eve in the garden. If they had stayed longer with the compassion, which literally means "to suffer together", they would have been closer to the God who is revealed in Christ. The Church, then, is called to the ministry of compassion in a multitude of ways, including advocating for innocent victims.

In other words, the most important question is not *why* is this happening, but rather *how can we imitate the God who takes on the suffering of others?* We will fall short in this, but we must attempt it as we are led by the Spirit into the lives of others. It is also important to remember that God is not a cosmic trickster or an ineffable mystery. God is eternal, self-giving, merciful, and gracious love. Christian faith turns on the possibility that this is ultimately stronger than suffering.

So, may God grant us the wisdom, compassion, and love needed as we are present with each other in all forms of suffering. Amen. ■

New Faces on Campus

There is a new face at the College's front desk. Maya Deiratany has been filling in as our acting Administrative Coordinator since April 8, 2024. Her husband, Daniel Norman, is a first-year M.Div. student and is the President of the Student Association. Thanks Maya and Daniel for all you do for our College community! ■



Leadership Centre Updates

By DR. ADRIAN LANGDON, DIRECTOR OF THE LEADERSHIP CENTRE, PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

The Leadership Centre continues its work in supporting pastors and laity through its mentoring program, on-line studies, and its annual Pastors Conference.

Besides our current mentoring groups, this fall two new thematic groups were launched. Marc Potvin, Director of Field Education at MST, is leading a group on rural and small-town ministry, while Don Shields and Helen Holbrook, two experienced chaplains, are co-facilitating a group for health care chaplains.

In January 2025, we will add two more groups to the mentoring program. One will support Francophone graduates as they transition into ministry, and another will work with pastors on community engagement and local mission. This fall we will also see the completion of a two-year group on “Transitional

Ministry” led by the Jeremy Bellsmith. We would like to thank Jeremy for his work with the program, as well as Chuck Congram and Chris Clarke as they continue in their mentoring roles.

This fall, we continued to offer online studies. In October, Adrian Langdon led a five-week study entitled “Climate Change, Theology, and Church” which surveyed biblical, theological, and practical responses to our ecological crisis. The Centre will also launch an on-demand study entitled “Your Work and the Kingdom” focusing on integrating faith and work. It is suitable for both group and individual study, and will include teaching videos, a study guide, and practical suggestions for each week. Watch out for the launch.

Beginning in the new year, we are also excited to start a new series of online

workshops entitled “Equipping all Believers.” This series will focus on training and supporting lay leaders in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The first one will be in April and be led by our principal Roland De Vries, focusing on forms of prayer in ministry. Other workshops will cover preaching, pastoral care, and the missional imagination of the session.

Lastly, the Centre is also busy planning the annual pastors conference Equip and Encourage held every May in Montreal. The conference this year will be from May 13–15 and feature Dr. Todd Bolsinger from Fuller Seminary. Watch out for registration sometime in January.

If you have any questions or interest in these programs, please contact Adrian Langdon at alangdon@pcmtl.ca. ■

The Cost of Justice

By DR. MARC POTVIN, DIRECTOR OF FIELD EDUCATION, MONTREAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

This text was originally delivered as a sermon during the chapel service of October 2, 2024, based on the Lectionary readings for the day (Esther 8:1–17, Matthew 18:6–9).



Perhaps you don't recall the last time you read the book that bears Esther's name, but it reads like a good suspenseful novel. It is expertly written, with heroes and villains, events that leave the reader on the edge, wondering what will happen next. Will the plot find a resolution?

Chapter 8 has the reader wondering if the Jewish people can be saved, the same way that Mordecai had been saved as an individual. You might remember that Haman, the king's right-hand administrator, had plotted to destroy the Jewish population of Persia and kill Mordecai,

his nemesis. Haman despised Mordecai because he would not bow to the high official or worship the Persian king.

Esther, distraught, had brought the matter to the king, at the risk of her life. Haman was then executed for treason and Mordecai was given the king's seal. We pick up the story with Esther returning to plead with king to undo the evil edict that Haman had issued in the king's name.

The story continues as a somewhat exasperated king Xerxes, who thought

the matter had been closed, deliberates. “Haman is gone, you received his estate, and Mordecai is now the holder of my seal. What more can I do?” The text tells us that with all the power that Mordecai has, he can do something about it. How the tables have turned! It was Haman who had sought to destroy the Jews and kill Mordecai. It is now Mordecai who can ensure the Jewish population of Persia will be able to defend itself and who even wears royal robes as a symbol of his power and closeness to the king.

In some way, the story of Esther is an answer to the question that Jeremiah had put to God over 100 years before and which is recorded in Jeremiah 12:1, 4: “Lord, you always give me justice when I bring a case before you. So, let me bring you this complaint: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy? How long must this land mourn? Even the grass in the fields has withered. The wild animals and birds have disappeared because of the evil in the land. For the people have said, “The Lord doesn’t see what’s ahead for us!”

Cries for justice were uttered well before Jeremiah and they continue to be heard today, if not even more so with all of the horrible conflicts taking place throughout the world. Images of the conflicts in Sudan, Congo, Yemen, Ukraine, Gaza and Lebanon—to name but a

few—flood the screens of our devices. Yes, we seek justice for the innocent children, women, and men who are caught in the madness of war, let alone other injustices that abound.

Like Jeremiah, I too ask God why justice is not happening. Of course, what I am really asking is for my pain, my emotional and psychological pain at seeing all this misery surrounding me, to cease. Perhaps you cry out as well. But what if God were to reply, “Do you really, really want me to exercise my power and manifest my justice?”

There is, I think, a fact that we often miss in the Esther story. We speak of her courage, and rightly so. We speak of God’s rescue of the tribes of Israel dispersed through Persia, and it is right to celebrate it. But did you notice how God’s justice came? It was costly, even violent, to say the least. People were killed, including women and children. Property was plundered, that is to say, stolen from its former owners.

Yes, God’s justice can be and is indeed costly. Jesus himself said so in Matthew 18:6–9. God’s justice in the end leads to the eternal fire. What an eternal cost for rejecting God!

I am telling you all this because our God is more than the image we often have

of the benevolent God who happily watches us from above, giving us what we need when we need it. God’s ways cannot be fully understood.

I believe that much of what we are experiencing in the world these days is nothing less than evil. Jesus said, “Woe to the world because of things that cause sin! Such things are bound to come, but woe to the one through whom they come.” I sometimes wonder if some aspects of the violence that we witness, especially in wars, do not also contain some of God’s justice being applied. However, this is a question that is far greater than I can ever answer.

At the end of the day, as a reader of the Bible and a believer in Jesus Christ, I know that God is in control and that God is good. I will never fully understand why things happen the way they do and will continue to mourn the violence that besets our world in so many shapes and ways. But I also know this: that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38–39).

And so, I take courage and continue to pray that God will bring peace to this distraught world and guide me to live as one who is just, loves kindness, and walks humbly with God (Micah 6:8). And I pray the same for you. ■

Justice in the City

By TIM KEENER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHRISTIAN DIRECTION

It’s clear to see that some of the most pressing needs of our city today are housing and food security. Both are connected to immigration and economic opportunities. Love of neighbour, compassion, and hospitality are the timeless hallmarks of the Christian faith. For this

reason, they are the lenses for all our programs at Christian Direction. Over the last year, I’ve seen amazing examples of Christians putting their faith into action and practising the care and compassion of Christ in the city.



Social Inclusion

Between 2022 and 2023, the number of people living in downtown Montreal rose 14%, mainly by the arrival of immigrant families. This has created challenges and opportunities for social inclusion in the Peter-McGill neighbourhood. Every week throughout the school year, our children's library at Innovation Youth, operated out of Evangel Pentecostal Church, welcomes parents and their children to French social-immersion programs. Participants grow in their language skills as well as building relationships with others who are also new to the area.

Food Security

Elsewhere in the Peter-McGill neighbourhood, in the lobbies of two low-income seniors' residences, Innovation Youth is setting up their Mobile Seniors Market, a food-solidarity program funded partially through public funding. Offered twice a month, these markets are helping remove the economic and physical barriers between older residents and the food they need. Innovation Youth is presently serving over 200 households and engages around 30 volunteers who together, invest hundreds of volunteer hours in the markets each month.

Housing

In the eastern part of the city, in the Saint-Michel neighbourhood, we recently celebrated the opening of a new transitional housing site for refugees and asylum seekers. This opportunity arose when a local Haitian church asked us to help them repurpose a multi-apartment presbytery attached to their church building. Through our consultation, they were able to form a partnership with another local nonprofit, providing some supplemental income for this community of faith, and more importantly, opening up 12 beds in 8 apartments for vulnerable newcomers to our city.

Intimate Partner Violence

There are less visible issues being addressed by Christians as well. Two years ago, we began a critical research project concerning domestic violence and the church. The project began with a survey of over 500 Christians in Quebec and 12 individual interviews of survivors of intimate partner violence. It led to seven focus groups with 39 church leaders, three in-depth reports, and specific recommendations for churches to follow. The project has gathered researchers, intervention workers, counsellors, nurses and church leaders, who are all passionate about making a holy interruption to domestic violence.

Mobilising Christians

We are witness to a stirring among Christians who are increasingly passionate about putting faith into action and the social dynamics of the Gospel. We see this among young adults, some experiencing a discontent with apathetic Christianity, and among an ever-growing multi-ethnic church, many who are eager to live out their faith in the city. This is encouraging at a time when an institutionally loyal, generous, yet aging segment of the church is finishing their journey of faithfulness. We need just such a movement of compassion and generosity to fill these gaps.

Challenges and Perseverance

But I also see daily challenges to a Gospel ministry centred on compassion and care. Firstly, it is far too easy to content ourselves with critical research, a thorough exegesis of a neighbourhood, or a prayer walk with concerned Christians. I'm reminded of Martin Luther King Jr. who once preached that it was a misuse of prayer to make prayer a substitute for work. There is also the challenge of working with public partners which requires us to work within certain boundaries. Then there is the challenge from within the church itself.

We field questions about the evangelistic nature of our work and the inclusion of non-Christians, Roman Catholics, or marginalised Christians in our programs.

These challenges require promoting a more expansive theology of Gospel witness. Christians need to hear that language tutoring, home-work help, or food security are "Good News," and how those actions are establishing the way of God's kingdom on earth, "as it is in heaven." These challenges also require developing skills for working with both local communities of faith and public partners, who can be brought together around projects of common good and human flourishing. Of course, projects that promote "human flourishing" can be completely done by secular organisations without any faith orientation at all. All the more reason for people of faith to be actively engaged in our society's greatest needs, not just leave them to our secular counterparts. For it is our love for our neighbours and concern for our neighbour's well-being that is the outward sign that we follow Jesus and are God's people.

To learn more about Christian Direction, please consult their website: www.direction.ca. ■



Read all about it! New releases from our faculty members

A couple of books are forthcoming from the faculty of the Montreal School of Theology.

Dr. Glenn Smith, director of the Presbyterian College's French-language graduate program Maîtrise en Études théologiques (théologie pratique)

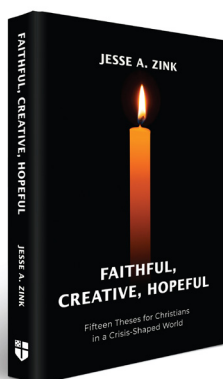
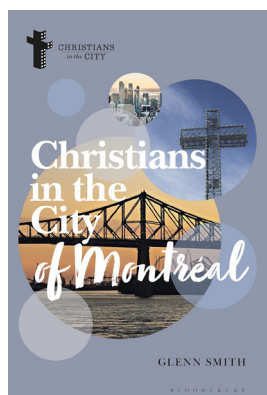
Christians in the City of Montréal (Bloomsbury: July 2025)

The book documents the roots of the Christian faith in Montréal while focusing on the present experience of Christians across the Census Metropolitan Area of 4.3 million residents.

Written by a scholar who has lived in Montréal for over 40 years, this book includes coverage of:

- The indigenous roots of Montréal and what the Christian faith looks like among the city's indigenous peoples.
- "The Quiet Revolution" of intense socio-political and socio-cultural change in French Canada from 1960.
- Immigration since the 1960s and the resulting ethnic diversity of Churches.

The book includes interviews with leading figures from Montréal as well as lay people from various traditions. Short interludes between chapters bring to life key information about Montréal culture and the national sport or "religion" of Canada, hockey.



Jesse Zink, Principal of Montreal Diocesan Theological College

Faithful, Creative, Hopeful: Fifteen Theses for Christians in a Crisis-Shaped World (Church Publishing: 2024)

From the nature of Christian hope to the challenges of modern society, the Rev. Dr. Jesse Zink skillfully weaves together theology, Scripture, and on-the-ground experience to offer a vision for a renewed faith and a renewed church in a changing and challenging world.

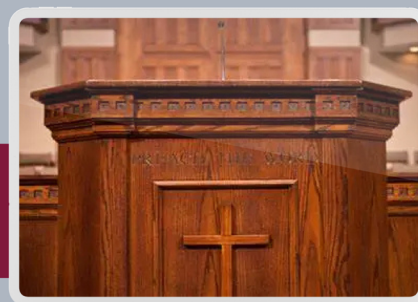
Publisher's website: www.churchpublishing.org/faithfulcreativehopeful ■

EQUIPPING ALL BELIEVERS: A SERIES OF WORKSHOPS TO STRENGTHEN LAY LEADERSHIP

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS (2025-2026):

Leading Prayer in Worship - Spring 2025
Preaching that Connects - Fall 2025
Pastoral Care and Visiting - Spring 2026
Missional Imagination - Fall 2026

EACH ONLINE STUDY WILL COST \$135/PERSON



More Info:
alangdon@pcmtl.ca
prebyteriancollege.ca



Poems by Milan Rijal



Milan Rijal is enrolled in the BTh/MDiv programs. He comes from Nepal. He is passionate about children/youth ministry, academic and creative writing, as well as composing and singing songs. He has been blessed with a couple of awards for his service as a writer, teacher, music composer, and social worker. He feels blessed to have received the opportunity to study theology at the Presbyterian College (McGill University).

A Song of Praise

Chorus:

My only trust is in you
My only hope is in you
I put my life in Jesus Christ
I live by faith and not by sight

You're before the mountains began
And forever you will remain
Word of God that flesh you became
There is no one above your name

Gracious and merciful are you
Unending love for me you do
I am the apple of your eye
For me to save you chose to die

Prophecies that came to be
Patiently me with love you see
To keep me safe, you do warn
Holding me tight assured in arm

Dwells in heaven but you're here
Despite my frailties you do care
Till eternity you will there reign
Never your promises go in vain

Cleansed me from all curse and sin
Became the way where was no mean
When you drew me to where you are
Disappeared separation and the fear

Engraved my name onto your hand
Firmly forever your words will stand
You are with me why will I fear
The most high God who is near

You are the highest of all high
Came down as slave with no shy
Humbled you to the lowest of low
So in your presence shall all bow

You'll reign here for a thousand years
Hugging me with love & wiping tears
I proclaim this with no shame
Jesus is one who knows my name

I look the sky, and sun and moon
Circumstances tell your returning soon
I praise your name and raise my hand
Till you return here firmly I stand

Fall Retreat Poem

With all hearts filled with joy
To the nature far away
Meditating in His words
Melodies of songs & chords

With the praises of the band
Unity of hands on hand
Feasting at a lovely board
Lifting Him up in accord

Celebrating Psalms & hymns
Envisioning plans & dreams
Far away from city noise
Tuning into divine voice

With the jumps & games agile
Far is hassle for a while
Stunned by the gentle ripple
Blessed as the orchard's apple

Acknowledging Gifts In Honour and In Memory

The Presbyterian College has received many gifts which have been given *In Honour* of those who have celebrated anniversaries, birthdays, degrees, or other significant milestones. Other gifts are *In Memory* of someone who passed away, and as a way of recognizing the

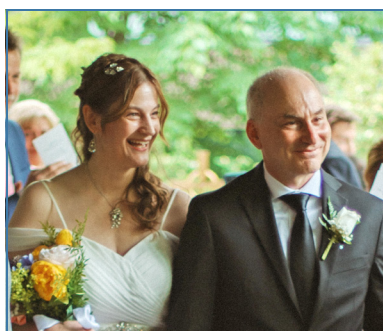
importance of their life. Since the last newsletter, gifts were given *In Honour* or *In Memory* of the following:

Mr. Robert Hill

If you would like to give a gift *In Honour* or *In Memory*, please contact The Presbyterian College for more information: info@pcmtl.ca. It is our privilege to display the names of these important people in our biannual newsletters.

Congratulations to our newlyweds!

Over the past year or so, the College community has rejoiced to see four couples get married.



May 25, 2024: Karen Petersen & Lorenzo Modafferi



June 14, 2024: Kersaint Saint-Juste & Audrey Michel



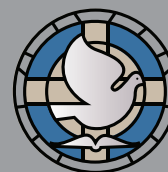
September 29, 2024: Morris & Arielle Adzah



July 8, 2023: George & Nanor Berberian



The Presbyterian College - Montreal
3495 University Street,
Montreal, QC H3A 2A8
514.288.5256
reception@pcmtl.ca



THE
PRESBYTERIAN
COLLEGE
MONTREAL

LE
COLLÈGE
PRESBYTÉRIEN
MONTRÉAL