

MICAH CENTRE

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2023

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The Work of Shalom: Renewing Relationships

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning

Micah Centre Program Director

One of the great joys of my work at the Micah Centre is the opportunity to build friendships with so many amazing people here at King's, in Edmonton, and around the world. Whether I am having a thought-provoking conversation with a King's professor in the hallway, sharing lunch with a local Indigenous leader doing creative work in a challenging neighbourhood, or planning our next service and learning experience with our partners at WorldRenew in Honduras, each day brings a reminder that the world is teeming with inspiring and inspired people whose life and work point to the presence of God's liberating Spirit.



Sharing a meal in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Lately, I've had lots of reason to reflect on these relationships. This February, I was able to return to Cuernavaca, Mexico with a group of students for the first time since 2020 for our Quest Mexico course on globalization, justice, and global citizenship. And, in just a few days from writing this, I will be travelling to southern Honduras with a group of students to work and learn with WorldRenew and their local partners on a water project, for the first time since 2019. It has been wonderful to reconnect with friends in Mexico and Honduras, to hear about the great work that has been happening in their communities since we last met, and to

reweave the threads of friendship that unwound a little over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of the Cree partners with whom we work use the phrase 'all our relations' when talking about the many and varied relationships that sustain them – the family, friends, extended communities, and non-human creatures that give us life and meaning. Living in awareness and gratitude for all our relations and the way they sustain us is such an integral part of the Christian call to love God and love neighbour.

In an early sermon, Pope Francis declared: "Do not be afraid to love everyone, because the strength and treasure of the believer lies in a life of love!"

Our strength and treasure does indeed lie in a life of love – gratefully acknowledging 'all our relations', as we seek a life of justice for the sake of God's movement of shalom. I, for one, am grateful for the many relationships that sustain the work of the Micah Centre – in Honduras, in Mexico, here on Treaty 6 territory, and beyond.

Refugee Student Arriving in August!

A New Partnership with World University Services Canada

Ellen Algera

Micah Centre Administrative Assistant



In August, The King's University will welcome a sponsored refugee student, the first in King's history, in a new partnership with World University Services Canada. This campus-wide initiative is housed in the Micah Centre. In a program similar to private sponsorship of refugee families, King's has committed to providing a full-year study package valued at over \$27,000, partnering with the Student Association and the broader King's Community. This sponsorship is a direct extension of our mission to provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King.

King's is joining 100+ universities across Canada, building on an endeavour that began in 1939. Post-war Europe had an abundance of university students who were no longer able to return home to finish their studies. A group of faculty, staff, and students at the University of Toronto created a way to fill this need, sponsoring the first university refugee students in Canada. Since 1978, the WUSC Student Refugee Program has assisted over 2,100 highly motivated, university-bound students from 39 countries of origin, of whom 90% complete their degrees, paying their own way after their first year of sponsorship. We are excited to be a direct partner in this endeavour!



The SRP student will arrive at King's this August, directly from a refugee camp situation. Though the university will be providing tuition, housing, and meals, the Micah Centre is seeking donations for basic daily living requirements such as dorm room linens and towels, groceries and toiletries, clothing and winter wear, books and school supplies, laptop and cell phone, sports and co-curricular fees, and arrival flight costs.

If you are interested in being a part of meeting these specific, tangible needs, we invite you to partner with us! Please follow this link to learn more and join us in this endeavour. Alternatively, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person (send an email to Ellen.Algera@kingsu.ca).



What a privilege for us to be able to welcome a new student to Canada! I am excited to meet the SRP student and humbled by the role we get to play in their life. We as a community get to live out the mission of King's to inspire this student and equip them to bring renewal and reconciliation to the lives they will touch... our time with them extends beyond the walls of King's.

Welcoming this student reminds me of King's vision to build a more humane, just, and sustainable world and our call as Jesus' followers to welcome the stranger and extend hospitality to all.

-Lisa Teigen,

Student Support and Accessibility



Quest Mexico 2023!

Elena Kroeker

King's Student, Environmental Studies, Biology Major

Quest Mexico was an unforgettable experience filled with experiential learning and friendships. I loved learning about and experiencing the authentic and beautiful culture, the friendliness and welcoming nature of all of the people, the beautiful greenery, the streets, the architecture throughout Mexico, and the history of the Mexican people. This trip was able to broaden our worldview on topics such as justice, poverty, and peace. Through this 10 day experience we were able to hear from multiple people about their role or experience in life in Mexico.

Mexico has a complicated history with justice and oppression and we were able to learn about just some of the social injustice and problems that happened and are happening in Mexico. The history of Mexico and its people has been corrupted with oppression that comes from a result of greed and power from people outside and within Mexico. The Mexican people experience a lot of poverty, human rights violations including torture, organized and sudden disappearances, non-legalized killings, gender-based violence, and attacks toward journalists or anyone who defends human rights. This just scratches the surface of issues that are happening throughout the country. Getting to hear from people who have experienced these issues first-hand was humbling and inspiring.

We were able to visit squatter settlements, a women's center, human rights organizations, ancient ruins, and an autonomous indigenous community. In each of these places we were able to immerse ourselves in the knowledge and lessons these communities had to teach us. We were able to hear from people living in poverty, people with deceased family members, people living without portable water, people without education, and even some people who immigrated to Mexico to escape previous violence or people who fled across the Mexican border into the United States seeking a better life. We interacted with multiple different people with multiple different lives and life stories but the main

message that came out of all people is that even though they may have been in a type of monetary poverty, they were rich in community and faith. Everyone relies on everyone. One of the people we visited said that "Mexico needs more people passionate about it and its people". We also learned that instead of "physically doing" something to help the Mexican people, just listening to their story and telling their story helps to spread awareness of everything happening in Mexico, whether good or bad.



2023 Quest Mexico class: Elena Kroeker (author) is pictured far right.

All the speakers were extremely interesting to listen to and I enjoyed hearing each of their stories. One speaker that really stood out to me was "Spiritual Leader" Nacho Torres. We were able to learn more in-depth about the oppression and injustice the indigenous community in Mexico had to endure as well as we got to take part in a spiritual ritual in the forest. To listen to all this oppression and damage caused by one's greed was hard to listen to but spread a message on what true value and richness is about. During the execution of the last Aztec Emperor, he was asked by the Europeans where the richness of the land was. The Emperor replied to them saying that there was not monetary richness in the land and that the true richness the Europeans were killing off. There was no monetary richness but instead the richness was in the people, the knowledge, the land, and the community around them. From the beginning, people in Mexico have been

problems. When someone grows old or becomes ill their family would take care of them and if they had no family there, their neighbors would take them in.

Everyone in Mexico was really friendly and inviting. Their willingness to share their stories was inspiring and I hope to carry the stories and lessons I learned in Mexico throughout my life. I hope to be able to take what I have seen and learned in my time in Mexico and apply it to the way that I live. I hope I can cultivate environments and live in a way that is aware of interconnectedness and the relationships around me. I am hoping to take what I have learned about the culture and the people in Mexico and advocate for justice, peace, stewardship, and community. Through the friendships made, stories told and experiences that I got to experience, Quest Mexico will always have a special place in my heart.



Honduras Water Project

Returning in Person!

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning
Micah Centre Program Director

In March 2020, the Micah Centre celebrated what was supposed be the 25th King's Honduras Water Project. Past participants and friends from King's, WorldRenew-Honduras, the Flaman Foundation, and NADC gathered at King's to celebrate a quarter century of empowering communities to access clean, potable water. Of course, just a few weeks later, our plans changed quite dramatically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

So it was with great joy that, on May 1st, six King's students, one King's staff person, and I boarded a flight to return to southern Honduras for King's 25th Honduras Water Project!

While the Micah Centre has been supporting the work of WorldRenew-Honduras and their local partners Diaconia Nacionale over the course of the pandemic through continued support of clean water projects, drought relief, and pandemic-related public health initiatives, we were thrilled to return in person to visit with and work alongside friends in El Espino (where we have been partnering with WorldRenew since 2019), to see the excellent work that WorldRenew is doing in El Espino and La Campa, and to celebrate with the people of El Espino as they took over full ownership of the water project from WorldRenew and Diaconia Nacionale.

Our visit was marked by hot temperatures (daily temps regularly reached 45 degrees!) and dry weather due to a delayed raining season, both of which are becoming more common with rising global



2023 Honduras Water Project Team:
Kayla Soetaert, Andrea Klooster, Merna Guirguis, Bethany Groenewold,
Melvin Adekanye, Alyssa Yorke, Casey Belway

temperatures. Nevertheless, our students and our hosts would not be deterred. We worked alongside our host community on local water, sanitation and health projects from 5-11 AM to beat the hot temperatures. The rest of our days were filled with a variety of activities: visiting homes in the village, shadowing Diaconia Nacionale's infant and maternal health programs and their new 'gender champion' program to address domestic violence, meeting CASC (WorldRenew's newest partner in western Honduras), hosting a fiesta for the village's children, and dancing late into the evening to celebrate the end of El Espino's water project and the beginning of next year's project in a neighbouring village.

Each evening, a student led the team in a reflection and discussion. These daily moments were always a highlight for me – small windows into the questions, thoughts, and wonderings of the students as they encountered the lives of those living in poverty for the first time. This year's students wrestled with the inequities of a world in which some have the luxury of flushing clean water down the toilet while others carry water buckets 30 minutes from a nearby river to cook, clean, and bathe.



School garden initiative:
El Espino, Honduras



School garden visit:
La Campa, Honduras



Coffee seedlings:
La Campa, Honduras



Cathedral: Comayagua, Honduras



Thanks to long-time support from the Frank Flaman Foundation:
Main water cistern, El Espino, Honduras



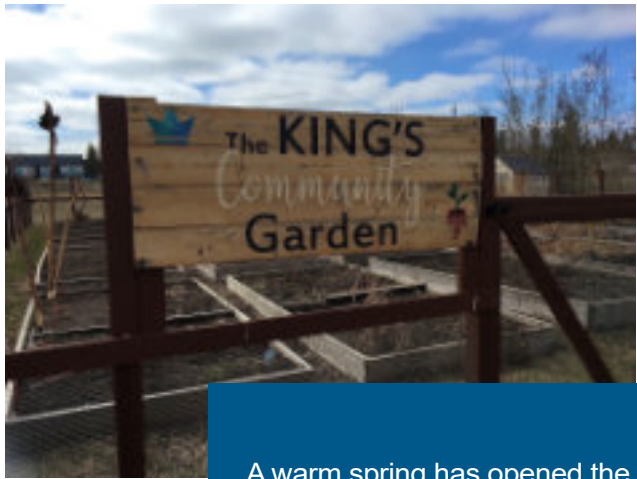
Aquaponics project:
El Espino, Honduras

At the same time, the students were inspired by the profound dignity, generosity, and hope that they encountered in El Espino as they built relationships with those whose lives are so different from their own. It is our hope at the Micah Centre that the Honduras Water Project can continue to prompt such transformative questions in our students.

I am thankful for several rich weeks of learning, sweating, relationship building, tortilla-eating, and neighbour-making with our hosts in El Espino and La Campa. I am especially grateful for our decades-long partnership with WorldRenew-Honduras, a partnership that continues to inspire the Micah Centre in our work of 'doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God' alongside the global poor.

Community Garden Update

Ellen Algera
Micah Centre Administrative Assistant



A warm spring has opened the Community Garden early this year! Our Community Garden Coordinator this year is Andrea Klooster, a third year Psychology student at King's. Andrea has organised the overwhelming requests for plots this year, welcoming the broader community to campus. She will be responsible for maintenance of the garden pathways, equipment, compost piles, and water supply. She has already adeptly responded to the flood of inquiries, deposits, and plot location requests as we enter this our 12th year as an established neighbourhood community garden.

Andrea hails from Leduc County. She enjoys gardening, reading, and exploring the outdoors. Career-wise, she's interested in Occupational Therapy for individuals challenged with developmental disabilities. And, she just returned from Honduras as part of the 2023 Honduras Water Project team!

Stop by and chat for awhile ... you'll sure to be impressed by all the activity in this campus garden. If you'd like more information, Andrea can be reached by email: community.garden@kingsu.ca



New Research Initiatives at the Micah Centre!

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning
Micah Centre Program Director

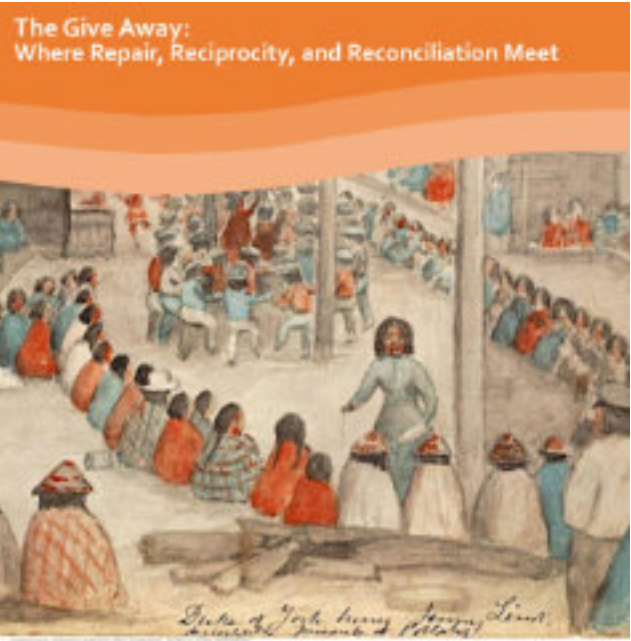
The Micah Centre is excited to announce our support for two exciting research initiatives at King's this summer! Thanks to a donor's generous gift to the Micah Centre to support King's faculty research into the systemic and structural causes of injustice, we are helping fund two projects this summer.

Environmental Studies professor Dr. Adrian Beling and his student researcher will be exploring a unique faith-based ecological justice initiative in the Amazon – the Pan-Amazonian Territorial Network – and its potential as a model for religious communities to become agents of change and solidarity in the face of ecological injustice and the climate crisis. Philosophy professor Dr. Josh Harris and his student researcher will be exploring the relationship between the ways we create meaning (or – in many cases – do not create meaning) and the potential for creating more just democracies.

Pakitinâsowin Fund Update

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning
Micah Centre Program Director

The Micah Centre continues to work with our Indigenous partners, the Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference, and Anglican, Mennonite, and Christian Reformed churches to build the Pakitinâsowin Fund for Reciprocity and Reparations. We are excited about the opportunity to work toward a reconciled future between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.



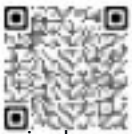
At King's, we dedicated our Giving Tuesday campaign to the Pakitinasowin Fund, and welcomed many new donors to the work of repair and reconciliation. These donations, along with additional gifts from families and church communities, went a long way to supporting the three yearly grants that our Indigenous Advisory Circle will disperse to grassroots Indigenous initiatives in the coming years.

We are also happy to support the Canadian Council of Churches' event, titled **Pêhonân: Voices of Indigenous Followers of Jesus in the Ecumenical Movement**. The event is a forum on inter-church dialogues that will focus on the leadership of Indigenous followers of Jesus for the future of the church, taking place in Edmonton June 8-10, 2023.



Micah Centre

at The King's University



give here

The Micah Centre is located on land governed by Treaty 6. We acknowledge and celebrate all the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands.

The Micah Centre relies on the support of our partners to continue our work: building a global vision of justice and renewal with King's students and community.



follow here

Thank you for your continued gifts of prayer, time, and encouragement to us and our students.

If you are interested in supporting us financially, you can follow the "give here" link (left) or visit kingsu.ca/give, and designate your gift to the Micah Centre.