

MICAH CENTRE

NEWSLETTER ADVENT 2023

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Death's Dark Shadows Put to Flight

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning

Micah Centre Program Director

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight

Rarely have these words from 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel' rang more true for me than this Advent season. The images of suffering and death in Gaza and Israel, the refusal of the world's most powerful countries to heed the calls of weaker nations and younger citizens at COP28 to build a more habitable and humane world together, the threat of another cold and anxious winter for Ukrainian citizens . . . the list goes on. When I read that Palestinian pastor and theologian Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac is cancelling Christmas celebrations at his church in Bethlehem, I thought "Yes." His liturgical act of solidarity reminded me of the ancient words of the Psalmist in Psalm 137: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

"How can we sing Christmas hymns of God's arrival when our brothers and sisters are dying?", respond Palestinian Christians today. Their question invites all of us to trade the sentimental holiday cheer of North American Christmas celebrations for a deeper Advent practice of longing and solidarity with God's groaning creation.



@arameanartist
Syrian Christian artist

Of course, the cancellation of Christmas celebrations does not mean that the incarnational movement of God's love toward us – the movement we remember each Christmas – will stop. In Jesus, God is God-With-Us, the love that moves the spheres taking flesh in an occupied territory on the far edges of empire in an unwed Palestinian mother who would soon need to flee with her husband and son as a refugee to save her son from the wrath of a fickle leader seemingly indifferent to human pain. The witness of today's Palestinian Christians to God-With-Us in a time of war has given new weight to my Advent waiting this year. "If Christ were born today", said Rev. Isaac in an Al-Jazeera English interview, "he would be born under rubble and Israeli bombing." The God whose 'law is love

and whose gospel is peace' comes to a world desperate for love and for peace. Can we squint through the bright lights and billboards to see Christ among those weeping?

At the Micah Centre we have the privilege of helping our community see love at work in a weeping world: supporting Indigenous leaders through our Pakitinâsowin Fund, sponsoring a refugee student on campus, visiting community leaders in Honduras and Mexico, and more. We hope you'll continue to walk with us as we 'do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly' with our Creator amid death's dark shadows.

Honduras Water Project

Celebration in Honduras!

The community of El Espino held a celebration in May as we finished working together on the Healthy Homes project. Part of an ongoing, local, collaborative effort led by WorldRenew and Diaconía Nacional, the project brings concrete floors, latrines, and water storage containers to individual homes. This provision is the final step in fresh water delivery. Next year, a team of 15 from the King's community will see the remaining homes in El Espino get these provisions. In addition, the team will come alongside the beginning stages of water delivery in neighbouring Cedrito, where a well was installed last year and next steps include water storage tanks and delivery pipes.



Community Celebration



Planting seeds



2023 Team



Quest Mexico Preparing for 2024!



The word has spread. In February 2023, our first post-pandemic student group participated in Quest Mexico, and they've been sharing their stories! In 2024, 13 students will travel to Cuernavaca, Mexico to take this 10-day, 3.0 credit experiential learning course about Mexican culture, global justice, and our role in building a better world. Students will visit communities, explore urban centres, hear from a host of different speakers, meet with Indigenous leaders, and travel to ancient ruins. We look forward to hearing how our students' perspectives have been challenged by the stories of the poor.

Micah Student Society

The Micah Student Society (MSS) has kept busy this fall! Two events were held in support of Mustard Seed initiatives: Fill the Backpack and Stock the Store! Students recognize that as the weather gets colder and Christmas approaches, people living in difficult financial situations have increased needs.



Fill the Backpack: Those in our community who live without a home are vulnerable to harsh winter temperatures. The Mustard Seed collects donations of two types of backpacks: hygiene kits (shampoo, conditioner, soap, shaving cream, face cloths, toothpaste, toothbrush) and gift kits (blanket, mittens, scarf, socks, winter hat). Students donated needed items and held a Fill the Backpack event November 30. Handmade Christmas cards were included in the backpacks.

Stock the Store: In early December, The Mustard Seed opened a pop-up toy store, allowing families to purchase Christmas gifts for their children at a discounted price, helping to create a dignified holiday experience. King's MSS students filled a volunteer slot to help with set up and take down.



MSS
Instagram

"We recognize that poverty goes much deeper than material needs, but we appreciate the Mustard Seed's recognition of this and how they try their best to help out on a more holistic, personal level wherever possible."

– Madi Tovell and Abby Sparrow



Dressember

Ellen Algera

Micah Centre Administrative Assistant

In a partnership with first-year student Hannah Kalamoutsos, the Micah Student Society brought Dressember to King's this season. Dressember is a challenge-based fundraiser, with proceeds going to International Justice Mission, a global organization that has been working to end human trafficking for over 25 years. IJM partners with local organizations, using local expertise, knowledge, and relationships, to execute effective programs that address violence against women, men, and children.

Hannah's goal is not only to raise money for IJM programs, but also to make Dressember as common a household word as Movember. The team at King's is close to meeting their financial goal as we go to print. Check out the QR link to see how they're doing!

Hannah was introduced to Dressember during her years at Strathcona Christian Academy, and she felt immediately called to the simplicity of this initiative. Dressing up for a month was an easy way to make a great impact. Her high school alma mater continues the tradition and this year they added a noon-hour formal gala to increase participation and awareness!



Dressember
Team at King's

"When I think about some of my greatest fears, and then acknowledge that there are people living in the reality of those fears right now, I can't just sit comfortably with myself and do nothing. Children, men, women, entire families are being exploited. Sex trafficking alone is used to generate billions of dollars of profit every year. It breaks my heart to think of all the hurt happening in our beautiful, but so very broken, world. So, if wearing a dress for a few days might end up helping someone, I am going to wear a dress."

–Hannah Kalamoutsos



Student Refugee Program

What We've Learned So Far

Ellen Algera

Micah Centre Administrative Assistant

For over a year, the Micah Centre has been preparing for a student arrival unlike any other. We have joined 100+ Canadian institutions of higher learning who welcome 150+ students annually – university students deserving of post-graduate education who for reasons beyond their control, remained displaced and unable to pursue their education through traditional applications. It was an exciting start to the school year as we welcomed the first WUSC SRP student to Kings!

Anticipating the SRP student's arrival led to material preparations, answering the call with items a Canadian student might need, and anticipating the desires of someone we only knew on paper. Typical bedding, toiletries, snacks, towels, soap, tea mugs, and a kettle came together quickly. While all of these proved quite useful, and made the transition smooth, what was necessary in the long run was relationship and a listening ear. Sharing meals together brought understanding of career and personal goals, cultural lessons, and even recreation!

As I witnessed the unique small-campus, relational support King's is able to provide, I see how we've been placed here for a time such as this: to support fulfillment of long-awaited educational dreams. It's a joy to walk together.



SRP
Web Site



King's welcome committee at the Edmonton airport
August 31

Stop. Listen. Hear.

Ellen Algera

Micah Centre Administrative Assistant

We started off with talking, lots of talking. This is how you use a meal card, this is how you order food, this card works for the elevators, another for the laundry machines, another for the bus, and yet you need a key to get into your room. What's a key? Let's go buy a wallet for all of those cards! Here are 10 different web sites and apps that you need to access class materials, textbooks, campus activities, the library, hair cut appointments, bus routes, and a myriad of services. Web sites, usernames, and passwords - many, many passwords. Can you relate?

So much information. So quickly. Tools for surviving. Thriving came later, after our talking, during our listening. Once daily needs were met, we could all take a deep breath and listen, just listen.

We are learning about far-away culture, how it differs from life in Edmonton, and how personal history and heritage shape dreams - career aspirations that were set at a young age. We listen, we hear, we learn, we try to answer. We attempt to accommodate personal desires, adapted to the Canadian context, without losing identity and rich history.



Refuge Canada Tent

Exhibit Coming to King's!



Canadian
Museum of
Immigration
at Pier 21



Refuge Canada Tent exhibit coming to King's February and March

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21's *Refuge Canada Tent* exhibit will be on loan to King's February 12 to early March. Plan to come to campus to explore Canada's historic response to the worldwide refugee crisis. Through oral histories, interactives, and archival images, you will be immersed in the stories of refugees who resettled in Canada, celebrating successes and enduring challenges.

Admission is free. School and church groups welcome.

Theatre Fundraiser

The King's Players will present *A Gentleman and a Scoundrel* February 15-17 in Knopper's Hall on campus. Two King's alumni and one current student will bring this romantic comedy by Jack Sharkey to life. Directed by Ralph Troschke (Vice President of Finance and Operations), and supported by a staff volunteer team, all net proceeds from ticket sales will go to the WUSC Student Refugee Program scholarship at King's, supporting the daily needs of a future SRP student. Mark your calendars and get your tickets!



Theatre
Tickets



Greeting Card Fundraiser

Future King's student (daughter of staff) found inspiration in stories brought home surrounding preparations for refugee student arrival. Those themes flowed through her paintbrush and launched a business. Lydia-Jane Algera sold New Beginnings greeting cards (alongside all-occasion cards) at craft fairs, with 100% of the sales price going to the King's SRP Fund. You can enjoy one of her creations in this newsletter's insert card. Find out more about the cards at @femke.designs.



Exciting Pakitinâsowin Fund Update

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning
Micah Centre Program Director

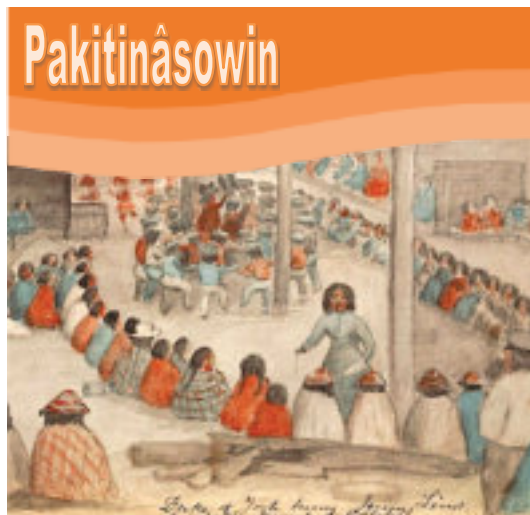
We are excited to announce that the Pakitinâsowin Fund for Reciprocity and Reparations will be providing its first two grants this winter!

Our recipients are two well-respected leaders in Edmonton's Indigenous community, one of whom will use the grant to continue his culture-based healing initiative while another will use the grant to start a much-needed program for those struggling with addiction.

Elder Russell Auger will be using the grant to run healing circles that, in his words, "create community and a family environment, and give people an opportunity to grow in a context of trauma. They are community building for the sake of healing." Verna Fisher's Oskya Metchewawin ("New Beginnings" in Cree) will host workshops combining Cree cultural teachings with elders, ceremony, and sharing circles to help those living with addiction. In keeping with the relational heart of the Pakitinâsowin Fund, our 2023 recipients will serve on an advisory and mentorship circle for next year's recipients.

We can't wait to share stories about the good work that Russell and Verna are doing with the grants in our next newsletter!

For more information about the Pakitinâsowin Fund or to contribute, visit our website.



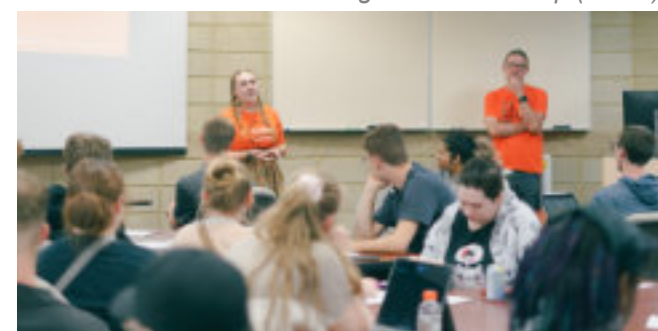
Pakitinâsowin
Fund

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

2023 Events on Campus



Ceremony near King's TRC Bench (above)



Land Acknowledgement Workshop (below)

The Micah Centre partnered with King's Indigenous Initiatives Circle to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with several on-campus events for our community.

King's alum Brigid Elliot hosted a land acknowledgement workshop with students and staff to help us think through why and how we acknowledge the land at public gatherings.

Elder Russell Auger led our community in ceremony to remember the Indigenous children lost to the Residential School and foster care systems and to prayerfully consider our role in making things right.

The Indigenous Initiatives Circle sold orange Every Child Matters shirts designed by King's alum Tirza Lanza-Bosch throughout the week, with all the proceeds going to Edmonton's Native Healing Centre.

Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat Event in January

The Lament of the Land and The Tears of God

Monday, January 22
7:30pm at King's, room N102

Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat will help us explore some important questions of creation care and calling at a January 22 event. The lament of the land and the tears of God over creational destruction run like silver threads of grief through the biblical text. How do these threads weave themselves through our lives, as we increasingly experience deep grief rooted in the devastation of our creational home?

Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat, author and founder of Bible Remixed, will come to King's for a speaking engagement and response panel in January. Dr. Keesmaat is a biblical scholar, activist, and farmer. She teaches online at Bible Remixed (www.bibleremixed.com) and is the author of *Romans Disarmed: Resisting Empire, Demanding Justice* (with Brian Walsh). Sylvia is currently writing a book on climate grief. She lives on a farm in the Kawartha Lakes with her husband, Brian Walsh, and a fluctuating number of people and animals.

Dr. Keesmaat's presentation will be followed by responses from artist and activist Céline Chuang, economist Dr. Gerda Kits, and pastor Rev. Jonathan Crane, in a panel hosted by Dr. John Hiemstra.



What We're Reading



Book: *Exit West*

Author: Mohsin Hamid

Why we suggest it: Jonathan recently read this 2017 novel that examines themes of global migration, the plight of refugees, and the need to build a more humane, compassionate world. The book is both a simple love story between Saeed and Nadia, whose relationship blossoms in an unnamed city on the brink of war, and a creative fantasy about the ways that violence, borders, and open and closed doors affect human lives.



Book: *When Stars are Scattered*

Author: Victoria Jamieson, Omar Mohamed

Why we suggest it: A booklover at King's gave Ellen a copy of this book as preparations were underway for SRP student arrival. Based on a true story, this graphic novel offers a peek inside the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya through the eyes of its children. Main character Omar, a Somali refugee, allows the reader to witness the path to resettlement, the heartfelt guilt regarding those left behind, and the reality that girls are often denied education. Jamieson effectively illustrates being stuck in statelessness, teetering between confinement and boredom, on the edge of society. How Omar uses his resettlement makes this a story of redemption and hope.



Book: *Everything Sad is Untrue (A True Story)*

Author: Daniel Nayeri

Why we suggest it: Jonathan's favourite read of the last year, *Everything Sad is Untrue* is a memoir that tells the story of Daniel Nayeri's journey from Iran to Oklahoma as a 12-year-old refugee with his mother and sister. The memoir is written from the perspective of Nayeri's younger self, and combines insights into the experience of refugees, cultural (mis)communication, family, and the nature of God with a 12-year-old's perspective on toilets, Persian versus American food, and older sisters. It's a wonderful read for everyone from junior high readers and on.



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 visit kingsu.ca/give, and designate your gift to the Micah Centre.