

MICAH CENTRE

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2025

IN THIS EDITION:

- ▶ A Note from the Director
- ▶ WUSC Student Refugee Program - 3 Students!
- ▶ Honduras Water Project - 30 Years!
- ▶ Community Garden Open!

Remembering Our Amigo Gerardo – A Path Less Travelled

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning

Micah Centre Program Director

On Sunday May 18, Micah Centre friend and partner Gerardo Debbink passed away in Cuernavaca, Mexico after a months-long battle with illness.

Gerardo was a treasured companion on our journey toward God's dream of a just world, most recently through his role as the director of the Quest Mexico program in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Each February for over 10 years, Micah Centre students participated in a 10-day visit to Quest Mexico, where they encountered examples of justice seeking, peace building, and Indigenous resistance while exploring central Mexico's beautiful culture, landscapes, and history. King's alum often tell me that their week in Mexico with Gerardo held some of the most impactful moments of their time at King's.

Gerardo was integral to the Quest experience. He served our students as program director (students will remember his justice-themed 'quest' activity into downtown Cuernavaca), guest speaker organizer (all of our speakers were Gerardo's friends from his past justice and development work), translator, driver, host (we stayed and ate at Gerardo's home for the entire week), and storyteller.



Gerardo Debbink

Each year at Quest, I would challenge students to convince Gerardo to tell them his own story. He was always reticent to talk about himself, preferring to share the stories of the poor and the justice-seekers that he had come to love. But our students' persistence would inevitably wear him down, and he would share his own remarkable story: a story that began with his participation in a cattle drive from Edmonton to central Mexico as a young dairy farmer from Leduc, and ended decades later with his role as a community-builder and organizer in Cuernavaca, Mexico (with many entertaining and difficult bumps along the way).

Gerardo reintroduced me to the pedagogy of 'see-judge-act' which he learned from the Latin American liberation theologians, a teaching practice that has

become core to my own teaching at King's. He encouraged our students to see the world around them with curiosity and empathy, to judge (critically engage) their world according to a faith-inspired vision of justice and peace, and then to ask how they should act differently as a result.

On the wall of the classroom at Gerardo's home, you will find a Lilla Watson quote that he loved:

"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Gerardo shaped the Quest student experience according to this vision. More importantly, though, he lived out of the same conviction. He will be missed by all of us at the Micah Centre.

Honduras Water Project: 30 Years and Counting!

A Return to El Cedrito

Ellen Algera

Micah Centre Administrative Assistant

Honduras Water Project is celebrating 30 years of partnership with The King's University! From May 6-23, a team of 5 students and 2 faculty were in the settlement of El Cedrito in southern Honduras, near the Nicaraguan border. Honduras Water Project comes alongside year-round, ongoing efforts headed by World Renew Honduras. King's teams travel to the region each May to learn about sustainable development and the importance of local oversight and input. The project has several partners in addition to King's and World Renew: Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference, the Frank Flaman Foundation, and Diaconía Nacional.



Team photo with community: King's team 2025 members are Nicholas Apoll Gray, Natalie Elgersma, Santiago Rojas Garcia, Celena Wilson, Kayla Soetaert, Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning, and Will Van Arragon.

While there, the King's team lended a hand digging trenches and establishing water storage and transport systems as well as improving sanitation practices. They also learned about development initiatives already established: health clinics, hydroponics, small-scale farming, and local water board governance. Finally, the team visited the offices of ASJ (Association for a More Just Society), a non-profit organization founded by Jo Ann Van Engen and Kurt Ver Beek 27 years ago whose mission is simple: "We strive to be brave Christians, dedicated to doing justice in Honduras and to inspiring others around the world to seek justice in their own contexts." ASJ is a leader in putting their mission in action, exposing complex societal corruption, empowering citizens to demand justice, and achieving equitable local solutions.

Kayla Soetaert, a 2025 graduate (and Valedictorian), returned to Honduras for a third year in a row! I asked her why she was so eager to celebrate her graduation with this trip:

I return to Honduras each year to witness the local community become empowered – it is truly remarkable. We often think of this project as just building a waterline, a pila, or a floor - and while people experiencing poverty have real deficits in those material areas, I think the deficits go much deeper. A lot of times you also see a lack of self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence. So, when you're working on the water project, you can see people coming together as a community to not only rebuild a waterline, floor, or pila, but also rebuild their sense of self; you witness them using their gifts and talents. And especially, seeing the sense of community that they have is truly inspiring. When we are living with them in the village, we are not only just helping out with construction, we are sharing meals, and sharing laughs when I mess up in Spanish! Building these relationships has been crucial for me and is the reason that I return every year! (edited for clarity)



Digging trenches



Home visit

"I return to Honduras each year because witnessing the empowerment of the community is truly remarkable."

Kayla Soetaert, '25 Alumna



Student Refugee Program Thriving

Two Students on Campus, Third Coming!

Ellen Algera
Micah Centre Administrative Assistant



WUSC EUMC
LOCAL COMMITTEE
COMITÉ LOCAL

For a third year, The King's University will welcome a refugee student to campus this August through our partnership with World University Service of Canada. King's is in a unique position to provide a Christian, small campus experience to a refugee student who has not had access to the university studies they have dreamed of. In fact, King's is the only Christian university in Canada to provide this scholarship and immigration sponsorship.

Students from the first two years of this program remain as students on campus. The student who just completed her first year of studies is a Computing Science major. She has much to be proud of, completing her first year of challenging classes and labs! She has thoroughly enjoyed life at King's. She has made many friends and is a delightful addition to our student body. She has a positive, persevering attitude, and is a conscientious hard-worker! She is caring and looks out for others, actively involving herself in Chapel events and social activities. We are grateful to learn and live alongside her, and we look forward to celebrating her academic path with her.

In August, a third refugee student will arrive on campus. A cohort is developing, and mentorship opportunities abound. The students at King's are even building community with other local WUSC SRP students in Edmonton!

Sponsorship of refugee students is a two-fold process. The university provides tuition support and housing, and as staff we seek monetary donations for living expenses. King's contribution to the refugee student account is valued at \$26,000 per year. Material living expenses are paid for by donors to the Student Refugee Program at King's. \$15,000 is needed each year to cover the costs of food, clothing, technology,

dental/medical needs, dorm furnishings, transportation, school supplies, and immigration coordination.

If you are interested in learning more or partnering with us, I would love to meet with you! We are actively seeking donations to support future students. We have found that King's small-campus community has proven to be an excellent match for these newcomers to Canada, providing personalized attention and relationships in a strong academic setting that is very community-oriented. Not all campus experiences include frequent coffee meetings between professors and students!

Please visit kingsu.ca/srp to learn more!



	Technology	\$1650
	Clothing	\$1000
	Medical/dental	\$1340
	Transit	\$420
	WUSC fee	\$2500
	Dorm/personal	\$2300
	Food	\$6480
	Books/supplies	\$1300



Community Garden

We are delighted to welcome Amelie Froehlich as our Community Garden Student Worker this summer! She is already hard at work revitalizing the raised beds with new wood and brackets, making them ready for planting! Interest in our 48 plots remains strong as we open the garden to both the on-campus community and our neighbours, many of whom return year after year. Amelie is a third year Business student and Music Minor, studying Voice and Piano. Her summer hobbies include running, biking, swimming, hiking, playing tennis, and baking. She loves to garden, and this year she is growing sunflowers, pumpkin, and squash in her home garden. She is very excited to meet everyone and start the growing season! If you're interested in a plot, email Amelie at Community.Garden@kingsu.ca.

Giving

Interested in supporting the work of the Micah Centre? We are happy to share more about our initiatives and programming. Please contact Jonathan or Ellen - we would love to meet with you or answer your questions! Emails can be sent to Jonathan.Nicolai-deKoning@kingsu.ca or Ellen.Algera@kingsu.ca.

Donations can be designated to specific funds, and can be received in either Canadian or United States dollars (for tax-receipting purposes). Thank you for considering a partnership with us as we help students learn to build a more just and sustainable world!

Micah Centre Funding Initiatives:

- Pakitinâsowin Fund
- Student Refugee Program
- Honduras Water Project
- Micah Centre Fund



give CAD

If you are interested in supporting us financially in Canada, you can visit kingsu.ca/give and designate your gift to the Micah Centre Fund, the Student Refugee Program Fund, or our other initiatives (listed above) using the Other designation.



give USD

If you would like to donate in USD and receive a United States charitable gift receipt, please donate through our US partner Friends of ICS (<https://fics.icscanada.edu/>) and designate The King's University, Micah Centre, and the fund you are supporting in your donation note. If you need help or have any questions, please do not hesitate to send an email to development@kingsu.ca.

Alternatively, US physical checks can be mailed here:

Friends of ICS
3091 Old Kent Rd. SE
Kentwood, MI 49512 USA
email: info@friendsofics.org

King's Charitable Registration #108085911 RR0001



Micah Centre

at The King's University

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.

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



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