

CALGARY CAMPUS MINISTRY

WHO'S WHO IN THE CALGARY CAMPUS MINISTRY

Chaplains at Univ. of Calgary
Pearl Nieuwenhuis
Paul Verhoef

Chaplain at Mount Royal Univ.
Jacqui Mignault

Jacqui, Pearl and Paul *meet monthly as a team* to check in with each other, to share joys and concerns, and to gather some of our prayers.

HEARING THE STORIES

Our hope is to assemble short *newsletters* like this three times a year, and to send out an email naming the things that are filling our *prayers* in between. If you would like to receive those communications, let one of us know.

LENDING SUPPORT

The *Calgary Campus Ministry* is officially a ministry of the *Christian Reformed Church*, and the three of us are thankful for the prayers, accountability structures, and financial support that comes through our local region of churches (called a Classis).

And *we welcome you to support the ministry too*. Email us to receive some communications, and if you wish, you may donate online [here](#) or by emailing any of us below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Student Longings and God's Invitation

by Jacqui Mignault

Mount Royal University's Interfaith Centre hosted a public event called My Story during the UN Interfaith Harmony Week this past January. Students from multiple faith traditions opened up about the ways faith and religion are a part of their stories in front of peers and guests from the community. Muslim, Mormon, and Buddhist students spoke this year.

The young Muslim woman had never worn a hijab, never sure if she was a good enough Muslim for it. But then she spoke of experiencing Allah's love, and choosing to begin wearing the hijab as a response to that love. The young Mormon man talked about the ways his faith community did and did not at times address the real issues facing young men especially around pornography and masculinity. The young Buddhist student told of his struggles to understand why he did any of his religious practices – was it because he had been told to by his mother, or was it because it was true?

I was struck by how much I recognized the longing in their questions – the longing to be known, longing to be whole, longing to know our own unique lives to be a part of something meaningful.

N.T. Wright in *Simply Christian* talks about how spirituality—connecting to something bigger than oneself—is a longing that every human has. And how this longing IS an echo of God's voice which draws people to Himself.

This longing is so evident in every student I meet. Whether they believe they know all the answers or are openly standing there with their hands out saying, "I don't know how to do this," at the core of the young adult's life is the longing to know they are

not alone. And I am with them on that. I get to participate in it when I, as a campus minister, create space for God to work—always beyond my comprehension or imagination—through questions posed, food shared, lots of laughter, and mostly just being present to their stories of pain and joy, wondering aloud where God's light might be within it all.

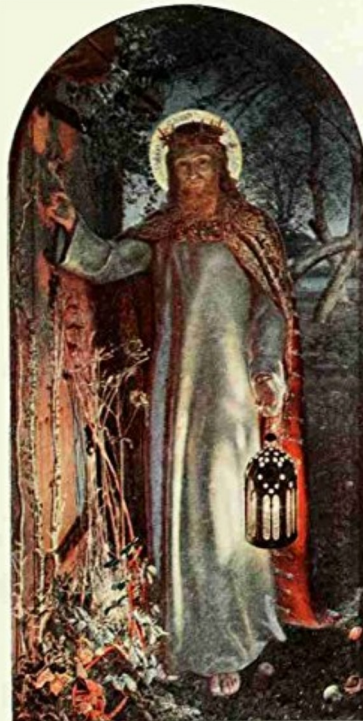
In 1951, Mount Royal's Board of Governors commissioned a series of stained glass windows for their chapel which have survived the years and now hang in a sunny south facing stairwell. A glass image of William Hunt's 1908 *Light of the World*, hangs there filtering colored light onto students who trudge up those stairs.

It's a familiar image of Jesus, the *Light of the World*, but it keeps stopping me in my tracks. There He is on the outside of a wall, his gaze exactly locked on the viewer. In this image, we are with Him outside that gate. And he stands there holding a light, knocking, his eyes inviting us in, His own self leading the way in.

I've been listening to the students—Christian students, seeking students, students who have come from other traditions—and we, the students and I, are all longing to connect to something greater, more loving, more whole, more true than anything

we can conjure up ourselves.

We, the students and I, long to come across that Jesus, holding a light, outside the gate, always waiting for us to join him in entering the loving, whole life that He is. And this is the joy and witness of Campus Ministry that I consistently cannot believe I get to be a part of. Thank you for sending me to journey with these students, and pray with me that Jesus' light will illumine our path.



William Holeman Hunt's 1908 depiction of The Light of the World.

Becoming acquainted with grief...

by Pearl Nieuwenhuis

This year, once again, I was able to serve as one of the chaplains supporting the Kaleidoscope Project: a week-long immersion project aimed to encourage a more inclusive campus community by offering students diverse religious/cultural experiences and encouraging religious/cultural literacy.

Over the week together, we visited 11 different sacred sites and had rich times of learning, conversation and ethnic food exploration. We listened to representatives from 6 faith traditions, creatively engaged in Canadian case studies around religion in the public sphere, reflected personally and vulnerably about our experiences, asked and considered challenging questions as well as goofed around teasing each other, playing board games, sharing licks of ice cream and sometimes sharing tears of struggle.

If there is one day that brought the most tears for this diverse community of students, it was the day we spent visiting and hearing from Christians. Our student group had experienced significant pain from engagement with Christians over the years. And if there is one thing that will stick with me, it is the deeply humbling experience of hearing the hurt and anger expressed by quite a number of students about their own pain and suffering caused by Christians.

It was really hard to bear witness and just receive what they needed to say. Maybe something in you would want to defend the Christian community. As for me, I so desperately wanted to

have them know Jesus who understands suffering so intimately. I wanted them to encounter the one who, during his life on earth, was "...rejected and despised, the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief"; the Christ who weeps with them and offers comfort; Christ who stands in solidarity with them and exposes injustice. I really wanted to soothe their hurt. I wanted to offer something.

And yet, somehow I knew that the best way to love them was just to listen; to shut up and receive their pain and anger and just cry along. I am so thankful for the grace given to me to refrain from doing anything, even saying anything. Maybe in doing that, I was able in my own small way, to embody the heart of Jesus.

This poignant week will remain with me, where I heard once again the way we Christians have too often acted out of blindness to our privilege of "whiteness" and "power" and "majority;" the places where we have judged and excluded first (and listened last) because we felt a need to quickly say how we have been 'right'; the places where we have hurt instead of healed. Whew.

This was an important day for all of us there. I am so thankful for those of you who held me in prayer that week. I guess sometimes (maybe oftentimes...) the role of a Christian chaplain is to receive and carry the wounds of others.



The Kaleidoscope participants in February 2018 at the Avatamsaka Monastery in Calgary.

We've come to the end of our one-page newsletter, and yet there's so much more that could be written. But if you want to read more, here's an article about the mentoring relationship between Paul Verhoef and Emerging Leader Amy Matychuk:

<https://www.crcna.org/news-and-views/university-calgary-campus-ministry-where-questions-are-welcome>

Please continue to hold all of us in your prayers—that we may the tangible presence of Christ on our University campuses.

FINAL NOTE: Jacqui, Pearl & Paul will gather with many other CRC Campus Ministers for a conference in Vancouver, May 22-25. All three of us are a part of coordinating and hosting (especially Paul) — pray with us that the Spirit will fill and use those days.