

# MICAH CENTRE

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2021

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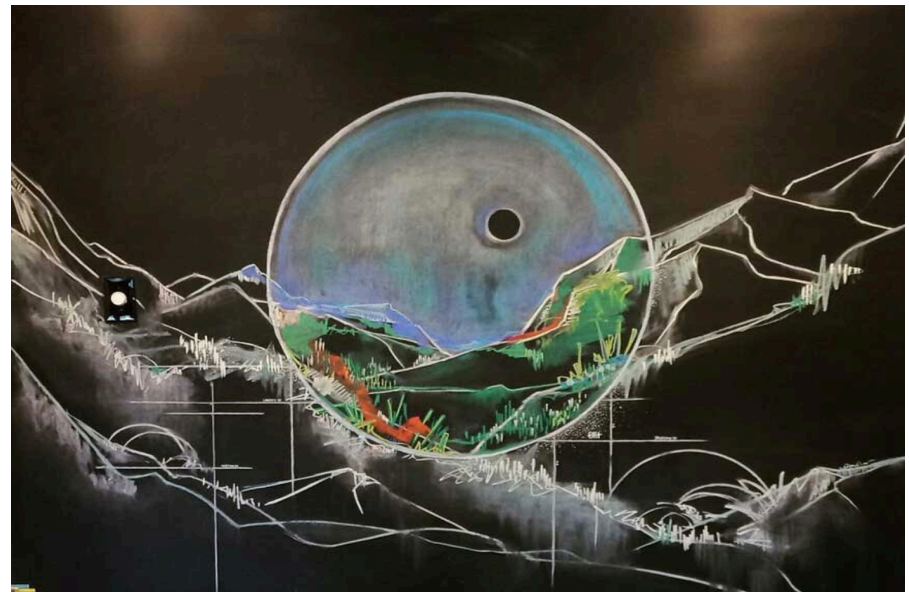
## We Don't Want to Return to Normal

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning

Micah Centre Program Director

Over the last year, whenever something disappointing happens, my 4-year-old daughter turns to my wife and I and asks 'Coronavirus?' A cancelled trip, a delayed birthday party, a closed play space . . . all of it is laid at the feet of the pandemic. Our kids have said more than once that they want things to 'go back to normal'! And who could blame them, with all of this year's altered expectations?

Our desire for an end to the ambiguity, pain, and uncertainty of this pandemic may invite us to think about what we mean by 'normal'. Bruce Cockburn said that the trouble with normal is that it always gets worse. We might add that the trouble with normal is that 'normal' by most standards of life in the 21st century global North is not normal at all. It is an upside-down vision of what life is and could be. Injustices like police brutality against black Americans and cultural genocide of Indigenous Canadians is 'the way things have always been'. Citizens in Honduras, Zambia, and other countries will wait years for their vaccination rollout and we say 'that's just how the things work'.



Mountain Chalkboard, Phaedra Jean Taylor, 2018 (5ftX6ft chalk drawing)

People of the Christian story have a different definition of normal: a world of mutual love, compassion, and flourishing animated by the Creator's love, embodied in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and extended to us by His Spirit. A world where everyone and everything have what they need to thrive. That is the way things are supposed to be; that is normal. The world around us – at least, the world's unjust pain and suffering – is not the way it's supposed to be. It is not normal.

The Micah Centre's logo is an upside-down castle growing new life. It is a symbol of the newness that springs from commitment to

God's kingdom of justice and peace. But every once in a while I look at our logo and think 'It is the unjust, dehumanizing, unwelcoming ways of the world that are upside-down! God's kingdom is right-side up! Kingdom-shaped life is living right-side up in an upside-down world.'

If this pandemic cultivates in us a longing for 'normal life', I hope it is the 'normal' of mutual love, flourishing and care that we meet in Jesus and not the normal of the current status quo. Because, as US Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman says, 'The norms and notions // of what just is // isn't always justice.'



Kena Boldt, visiting Lois Hole Provincial Park during her internship

## We All Deserve Another Chance: Interning with the Open Door

Kena Boldt B.A. '21  
Micah Centre Intern Fall 2020

I had the opportunity to participate in an internship at the Open Door Program during the fall semester of the 2020/21 school year. The Open Door Program is run through the Mustard Seed and is a place for those who have been incarcerated to meet together twice a month to discuss various topics, participate in activities, and get to know one another and the volunteers.

The program provides resources to help the process of reintegrating into society. Some of the struggles that I noticed many women faced were employment opportunities with a record, housing options, transportation, and clothing. During my time at the Open Door Program I got to listen in on the creation of a phone app that was being developed by NAIT students. This app was built through requests from the inmates of what should be included to assist them in their transition. Some of the resources included bus schedules, places that will employ individuals with a record, clothing and furniture stores that are affordable, and groups, such as AA, that women can attend. Getting insight about what would be

helpful from the inmates themselves provides the students creating the app with the knowledge to create something that will be of assistance to these women and men.

Another thing I did during my internship was participate in group activities and discussions. As a group we had discussions on personal worth, forgiveness, and personalities. We participated in group art projects, like trees made out of barbed wire that we built together to raise money for the program. We also got to learn about one another's culture through discussion and a musical presentation from a local Edmontonian.

Throughout my internship I learned that everyone deserves a second chance; you are not your mistakes. I grew to form a relationship with the women in the group and got the opportunity to know them, the volunteers, and the chaplain, Debbie. I was given a chance to understand the women's stories and be a part of a safe and welcoming group of women who all cared for one another and their progress.

"Throughout my internship I learned that everyone deserves a second chance [and that] you are not your mistakes."

– Kena Boldt

### THE OPEN DOOR PROGRAM

The Mustard Seed's Open Door Program supports women and men leaving federal prison and resettling in the Edmonton area. Their work is varied: support groups, one-to-one mentorship and support, provision of practical goods like workboots and food hampers, accompaniment at parole hearings and other major moments during the reintegration journey, and broader advocacy and education on behalf of those leaving prison.

As noted by Canada's federal prison ombudsmen office, our federal prison system has ill-served a number of communities: poor communities, newcomers, and Indigenous peoples (particularly Indigenous women), to name just a few. In this environment, the Open Door Program witnesses to the faith-full vision of a world in which all are worthy of dignity and respect, a world in which no one is defined by their worst mistake and communities are restored through the faithful work of accompaniment and hope.

## A Place to Belong: Justice, Land, and Place

June 14 – 18, 2021 at Lady Flower Gardens

The Micah Centre, King's, the Social Science Faculty, and Lady Flower Gardens Partner on a New Course for Summer 2021

Our Micah Centre Director Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning and King's ecologist Dr. Darcy Visscher put on a new course for King's students this summer in partnership with Lady Flower Gardens. The course created space for students to explore what it means to belong to the land during a unique week-long interdisciplinary course at Lady Flower Gardens, in the kisiskâciwanisîpiy (North Saskatchewan River) valley just outside of Edmonton. Over the course of 5 days, students heard from Indigenous knowledge keepers, local ecologists, farmers, community activists, economists, writers, painters, and more as they reflected on the land beneath their feet and their role as people who belong to and steward the land.

Guest speakers included Cree artist and scholar Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack, King's faculty Dr. Gerda Kits, Dr. Chris Peet, and Dr. Will Van Arragon, Sundog Organic Farm, Anglican pastor and Cree leader Rev. Travis Enright, Mi'kmaq novelist Anna Marie Sewell, ecologist Dr. Colleen Cassady St. Clair, and the Edmonton Area Land Trust!

We were excited to partner with Lady Flower Gardens, a local organization committed to healthy food, healthy land, and healthy communities for those on the margins. We also partnered with the Edmonton Native Healing Centre, whose director Rev. Harold Roscher began each day of learning in reflection and ceremony.



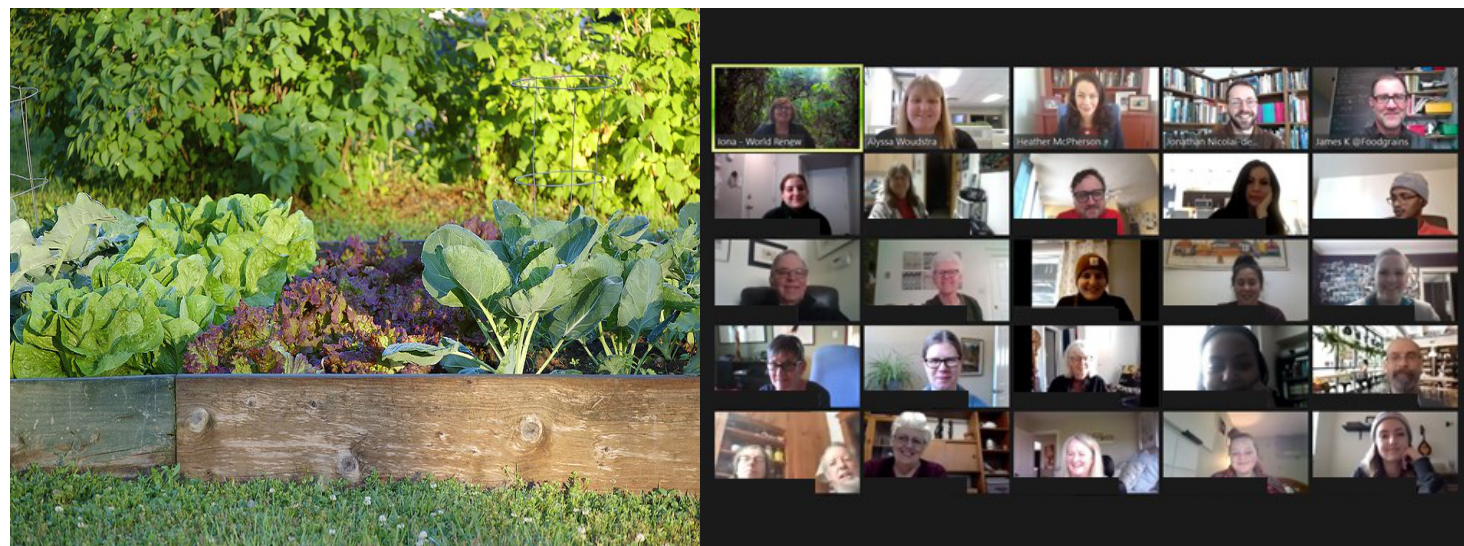
Top: Artist and scholar Lana Whiskeyjack (pictured) leads a discussion circle on art, land, and identity//Bottom: James Vriend and Jenny Berkenbosch of Sundog Organic Farm discuss the mysteries of soil

## A New Way to Support Micah Centre Students: The Global Justice Seekers Bursary

The Micah Centre is excited to announce the creation of a new bursary! Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton created the Global Justice Seekers Bursary to support students with financial need to participate in the Micah Centre's bi-annual Justice Fellowship and annual global learning opportunities in Honduras and Mexico.

We believe that encountering the kingdom-inspired work of justice and peace can prompt students to embark on their own journey of seeking justice and building peace. We facilitate a number of these opportunities, like our year-long Justice Fellowship at King's and off-campus learning tours like the Honduras Water Project and Quest Mexico. These encounters often motivate students to return to their home places with renewed energy to build community with those on the margins and create a more just and inclusive world – wherever they find themselves.

These learning opportunities often carry extra financial costs. If you are interested in contributing to this new bursary fund to help off-set these costs, please reach out to our Director ([jonathan.nicolai-dekoning@kingsu.ca](mailto:jonathan.nicolai-dekoning@kingsu.ca)) or donate through the King's website ([kingsu.ca/give](http://kingsu.ca/give)) and designate your gift to the Fellowship Global Justice Seekers Bursary.



(Left) The Micah Centre Community Garden in morning light// (Right) A screenshot from our Justice and Global Relationships session with MP Heather Macpherson and James Kornelson from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank on the role of government and advocacy in global justice work

## Micah Centre News & Notes 2020–2021

### Justice and Global Relationships

From January to April 2021, the Micah Centre co-hosted a series of seminars with WorldRenew on 'Justice and Global Relationships'. Guest speakers joined us via Zoom from around the world, sharing with King's students and the WorldRenew community about a wide variety of topics: the impact of climate change on communities in Bangladesh & Kenya, gender justice, supporting refugees and refugee claimants, the difference justice makes in development work, the role of government and advocacy, and the practice of hope in a world of suffering. Edmonton MP Heather MacPherson, renown Latin American theologian Ruth Padilla-Deborst, ASJ-Honduras founder Kurt Verbeek, and Kinbrace director Loren Balisky were just some of the inspiring speakers who joined us.

### Why Biblical Justice? With McKernan Baptist Church

This April, founder Roy Berkenbosch and director Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning joined McKernan Baptist Church in Edmonton for a public discussion on biblical justice: what it is, why it is so often eclipsed in the church, and how to pursue it in a world of injustice and suffering.

### 1Life 5Callings with BC Churches

Our director Jonathan led a session with a BC-area Christian Reformed Church initiative called 1Life 5Callings titled 'We're Not All in the Same Boat': Poverty, Pandemic, and Prophetic Justice', exploring the story of prophetic justice in the Bible and what it could mean for engaging issues like the global vaccine rollout and the opioid crisis.

### \$16,000 for Clean Water

Many thanks to the Flaman Foundation, who generously donated \$16,000 to the Micah Centre to support our work in southern Honduras with WorldRenew-Honduras and their local partners Diaconia Nacional to build community-based clean water systems! This year, our partners in the community of El Espino will continue the work began in 2019/20, bringing water from central water pumps to family homes throughout the village.

### Justice Fellowship Cohort '21–22

12 students have been accepted for the 2021–22 Justice Fellowship cohort! These students will take classes in Christian theologies of justice, development, and peace;

urban poverty; globalization and poverty in central Mexico; and the history of health, disability, and injustice among Black Canadians. The cohort will also be meeting regularly for meals and discussions to explore their own role in creating a more humane and liveable world for all.

As a student from the 2019–20 cohort put it: "No matter what degree you are in, what career you want to pursue, or what experiences you've had prior to this point, The Justice Fellowship will be challenging, eye-opening, and beneficial to your life going forward."

### Community Garden 2021

Our newest community garden facilitator, Julia Slomp, has begun her work for summer 2021! Julia is coordinating the Micah Centre's community garden, which rents out plots to King's students, staff, and local community members to grow veggies and community over the summer months. If you happen to be driving past King's this summer, look just south of the King's Residence Apartments and marvel at the corn, carrots, radishes, and beets growing right on campus!



A panel from Sophie Blackall's picture book 'If You Come to Earth' (Chronicle Books, 2020), on our director's summer reading list

And the norms  
and notions//  
Of what just is//  
Isn't always justice

from 'The Hill We Climb' by  
United States Youth Poet Laureate  
Amanda Gorman

## Summer Recommendations from the Micah Centre

Here are some more recommendations from the Micah Centre about what to watch, listen to, and read this summer!

### Luminaries: 20 Lives that Illuminate the Christian Way, Rowan Williams

Rowan Williams reflects on the lives of Christians from across the centuries in an attempt to 'make sense of lives that make sense of the world, and which may also help us make sense of God'.

### Brené Brown Interviews Clint Smith on 'Unlocking Us' Podcast

Brown's curiosity and intellect creates space for poet and scholar Clint Smith to explore history, memory, and racism in profound and moving ways.

### Poetry Unbound Podcast

Poet Padraig Ó Tauma unpacks a new poem each week, plumbing the poems' depths with humour, honesty, clarity, and wisdom.

### Ted Lasso (Season 1 streaming, Season 2 forthcoming)

An endearing comedy about an American coach out of his depth coaching a UK football club. The series shows the subtle power of kindness, humour, enthusiasm, and forgiveness.

### Jesus and the Disinherited, Howard Thurman

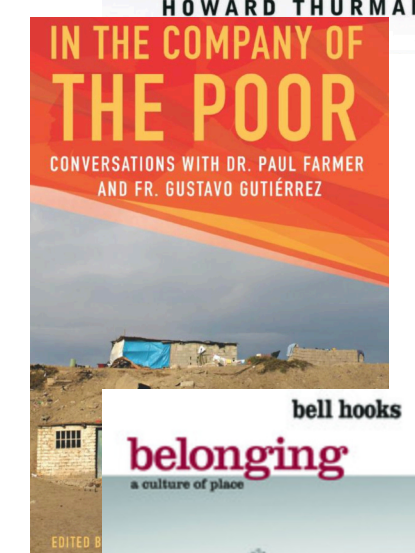
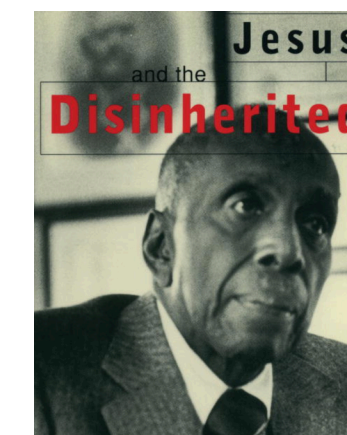
Civil rights leader, pastor, theologian, and mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr., Howard Thurman was instrumental in the faith-inspired work of civil rights advocacy and justice in the United States. *Jesus and the Disinherited* is his most influential work, a series of reflections on the meaning of faith in Jesus for those on the underside of history.

### In the Company of the Poor, Gustavo Gutierrez & Paul Farmer

Famed liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez and founder of Partners in Health Paul Farmer discuss God's love for the poor, the spiritual practices of accompaniment, and the importance of our nature as God's image bearers in this accessible series of interviews and essays.

### Belonging: A Culture of Place, bell hooks

In this series of short essays first published in 2009, writer and educator bell hooks tells the story of her return to her childhood landscape in the hills of Kentucky, and the importance of land, place, and belonging from her perspective as a black woman in America.





## 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.

If you are interested in supporting us financially, you can use the envelope included with this newsletter. You can also visit [kingsu.ca/give](https://kingsu.ca/give), and designate your gift to the Micah Centre.