

# MICAH CENTRE

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2022

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## Joyful Justice-Seeking

**Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning**

Micah Centre Program Director

**A**s I write this, a pair of geese wander in confusion outside my window. Patches of green grass poke through the remains of a mid-April snow fall, and the honking between the two geese seems to be saying something like, "Why did we migrate so early!?! What were we thinking?"

This year's slow transition from winter to spring here in Edmonton echoes the slow transition toward newness elsewhere in our lives. Anticipation for a post-pandemic return to social gatherings and in-person celebrations is tempered by fluctuating case numbers and concerns for our vulnerable neighbours. Gains made in addressing global poverty in the last generation are erased by ongoing pandemic- and climate-induced crises. Rising awareness of the call to reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbours is not matched by practical action for reparation and repair. In short, our joy and hope is frustrated by one thing or another.

In moments like these, it can be tempting to ask, "Is it time for joy yet, or do we have to wait? Can we be joyful when so much suffering and injustice persists?"

When confronted with that question, I've found the words of Jurgen Moltmann



*Walking Space*  
Matt Kleberg, 2021.  
Oil stick on shaped canvas.  
80 x 60 inches.

helpful. He writes:

*Joy in life's happiness motivates us to revolt against the life that is destroyed and against those who destroy life. And grief over life that is destroyed is nothing other than an ardent longing for life's liberation to happiness and joy. Otherwise we would accept innocent*

*suffering and destroyed life as our fate and destiny. Compassion is the other side of the living joy. We don't accuse God because there is suffering in the world. Rather, we protest in the name of God against suffering and those who cause it.*

Joy is integral to faithful witness, inspiring us to extend the experience of joy to all of God's image-bearers and turning us toward compassion for those who are suffering. Joyful celebration is a fierce commitment to the hope that God will "turn our mourning into dancing" (Psalm 30). Pursuing joy makes me think of the free-hand paintings of doors by the artist Matt Kleberg (pictured) – images of invitation and mystery and brightness that invite us to step into a new world and bring others along with us.

In the face of all that is difficult in our world, we at the Micah Centre have found much that brings us joy: seeing students' commitment to building a better world, the faithful witness of folks like Roy Berkenbosch, and new opportunities to pursue our work of educating toward the just shalom of God's upside-down kingdom. You can read about some of these in these pages.

# Learning from Youth: Internship Spotlight

Ellen Algera

Micah Centre Administrative Assistant

Through the Micah Centre Justice Fellowship, Joule Soliven secured an internship with Hope Mission's RW Tegler Youth Centre as a Preventative Programs Worker. I sat down with Joule recently (over a good cup of coffee from The Level) to learn about the impact this work has had on his vocational calling.

Joule graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from King's last spring, but his interest in the Justice Certificate nudged him to stay an extra year. His original plan was graduate school. Instead, he remained at King's and pursued a Micah Certificate in Justice and Development. I found this intriguing. Joule was drawn to the Micah Centre's experiential learning initiatives and reflective, discussion-based courses. With former plans set aside, new opportunities emerged.

Last fall, Joule took Justice in the Social Sciences as well as the Micah's Challenge class. He also completed an independent study on Sabbath and Simplicity last term. His internship, which started in October, has since turned into employment. Alongside, Joule is currently completing an independent study in liberation theology and taking a class on health and racial justice.

Through his work, Joule discovered an affinity for working with youth. So much so that he desires to further his studies through the completion of a Child and Youth Care program, either with MacEwan University or the University of Victoria. What struck me most about my conversation with Joule was his surprise insight that he has more to learn from the youth he serves than he can imagine imparting on them.

As Joule shared with me, kids need a safe and fun place to hang out, be challenged, and grow. The Tegler Youth Centre's drop-in structure provides this dependable space, boasting a climbing wall, huge indoor skate park, games room, and media arts space.

After pandemic re-opening, participation was low. Joule described days where the staff to youth ratio was six to two; pre-covid numbers included up to 60 participants. During the recent reboot, a quiet girl showed up for drop-in when only a few other kids were there. Over subsequent weeks, she apparently spread the word, bringing friends who brought friends. Her actions resulted in the consistent presence of 40 youth over the past three months! Numbers are just a fraction of the story, though. Relationships are being formed, and the kids are reflecting kindness to the staff and their peers; I could tell from Joule's stories that underneath the surface, hearts are changing.

The rock-climbing club includes a time of Bible study. During break time, youth are learning how the Bible is organised. They have embraced reading the Bible, even to the point of spontaneously acting out passages for each other! Needless to say, it has messed up the climbing schedule!

Joule has thoroughly enjoyed watching the youth grow in personal confidence as their sports skills develop. He has also appreciated working in a Christian environment where trying new approaches is encouraged, and grace is extended if outcomes aren't perfect.

*"There is so much to learn (from young people). It's not about what I can give, but what I will gain from the youth, what God will teach me."*

*-Joule Soliven,  
Justice Fellowship student*



Joule has found immediate life application derived from King's classes, specifically in how "helping work" should be approached. Joule saw first-hand how treating clients with dignity was key to success. Social service work often involves the provision of perceived "handouts", either in the form of services, education, or material goods. For recipients, shame might be foremost in their hearts as they navigate our independence-focused society during a time of need, and it's important to recognise that this shame can impact their response to provisions. When recipients actively participate, they feel empowered. For example, a popup clothing shop at Tegler asked shoppers to pay \$ 2 a piece for clothing, allowing them to participate in the procurement and ultimately, preserving their dignity.

As his internship concludes and vocation begins, Joule is hopeful for the future, and he is confident in God's equipping in a timely fashion. We send our congratulations to Joule, as he completes his academic career at King's! We look forward to hearing future alumni updates as he walks out his path.

# Water Awareness Campaign

Ellen Algera

Micah Centre Administrative Assistant

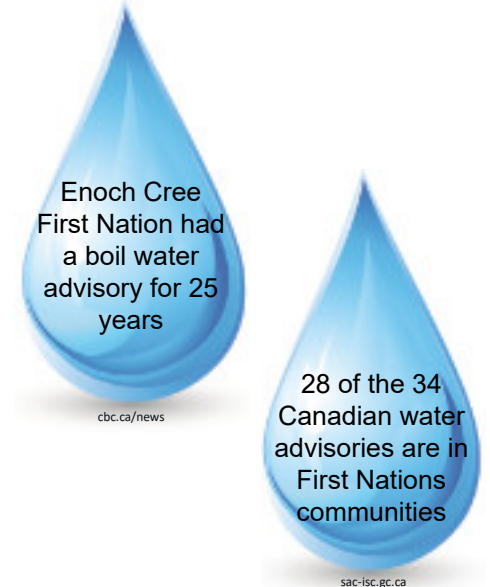
In the six weeks surrounding World Water Day (March 22), Micah Centre staff and students engaged the King's community in a Water Awareness Campaign, using social media and campus events to teach about water. The first two weeks highlighted the overarching United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 6, Clean Water and Sanitation for everyone.

As a community, we explored the centrality of water to life, and the global status of access to this basic necessity. We studied issues surrounding the Canadian public water supply, and encouraged students to be thankful for the abundance of clean tap water on campus. We offered pledges to boycott bottled water and played a campus game, Find the Water Bottle Filler, where friendly competition surrounded the chance to win a King's water bottle!

Students took pause when finding a new poster in the bathroom stalls: "Who Cares About Toilets? 3.6 billion people do, because they don't have one." This fact sheet helped us to be thankful for all the things toilets do for us – taking our waste away, protecting us from disease, maintaining our dignity, providing clean working and living environments, and providing sustainable jobs in sanitation services! A poignant video from our friends in Honduras included a tour led by the proud owners of a new latrine!

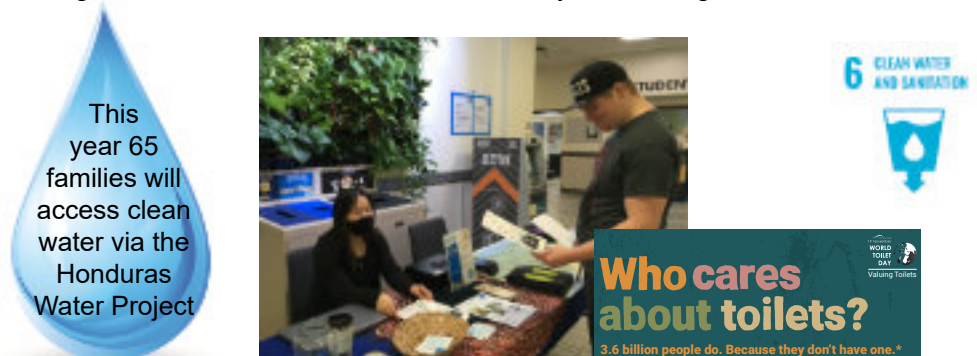
Phase two of our campaign focused on the Micah Centre's Honduras Water Project, an initiative unique to King's. For over twenty years, we have worked alongside World Renew and Diaconia

Nacional to provide clean water solutions in remote Honduran communities. In non-COVID times, King's students travel to Honduras in May for three weeks as part of a learning experience where they assist in construction, learn about development issues, and gain an appreciation for the resilience of the poor, all in a cross-cultural context. Even though we were unable to travel to



Honduras this year, we connected online with a Conversation from the Field event.

Rolando Pinzón, Community Bridger for WorldRenew Honduras, led the online session that celebrated the impact of the Honduras Water Project. We heard first-hand how the provision of clean water has changed lives in the arid El Triunfo municipality. Climate change has made water procurement difficult and dangerous in this area. Women are especially vulnerable as they travel long distances to remote



(unstats.un.org/sdgs/report.2020/)

areas to procure water for their families. Even basic services such as private toilets have been unavailable, forcing women, alone, into remote forests.

Today, residents who have benefited from the Honduras Water Project are growing food and raising fish with aquaponic systems, building bricks to improve their homes, and enjoying regular access to toilets and showers.

The final phase of the campaign brought the story back home, illuminating the continued plight of fellow Canadians in First Nations communities who still do not have access to clean water. Students engaged in a letter writing campaign, urging the federal government to keep its promise to end boil water advisories in First Nations communities. In April, a screening party was held to watch an interview with Autumn Peltier and Greta Thunberg as well as the short documentary film The Water Walker, by James Burns, documenting Peltier's advocacy work on behalf of First Nations communities in Canada (available on Crave).

Student and community engagement remained high throughout the campaign. We encourage you to check out our Facebook and Instagram sites where many of our resources are shared, and be sure to watch those channels for future communications from the Micah Centre!



cbc.ca/news

<https://www.freepngimg.com/png/76727-vector-of-drop-water-drop-water-free-download-image>



# Roy Berkenbosch

## A Tribute to our Founder

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning  
Micah Centre Program Director

Roy Berkenbosch served as the founding director of the Micah Centre for close to two decades, after holding numerous other posts at King's ranging from Interdisciplinary Studies Director, Campus Minister, and Dean of Students – all the while teaching regularly in King's Theology program. Roy's long-standing relationships with organizations like WorldRenew allowed dozens of students to pursue internships and learning opportunities around the world. He initiated the Micah Centre's off-campus courses in central Mexico and Bangladesh, facilitated our yearly Honduras Water Project, and hosted countless international guests at King's to give our students and staff the chance to learn from justice-seekers around the world.

Closer to home, Roy's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous communities led to a course on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, strengthening partnerships with local Indigenous leaders and eventually, to King's participation in Alberta's TRC event in 2014. Roy's passion for social justice, reconciliation, international development, and global citizenship spurred students to take the call of the prophet Micah – to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God – around the world, to contexts ranging from grade school classrooms and government development agencies to rural Kenyan villages or their own kitchen tables.

Roy officially retired from King's in 2017 and continued his work with WorldRenew until very recently. Roy continued teaching at the Micah Centre beyond his retirement, co-teaching our Honduras Water Project, Quest Mexico, Micah's Challenge, and Theology of Mission courses with our current director Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning until last year (something Jonathan considers a real highlight of his time at the Micah Centre so far).

As Roy invests his energy in his burgeoning small farm northeast of Edmonton, stepping back from his teaching at King's and formal work at WorldRenew, we thought it would be fun to hear from a few students whom Roy taught and inspired over the years.



Roy in Honduras



Jesse and Roy pictured with friends in Honduras

## Appreciation from Jesse Edgington

Roy has been a blessing and mentor to me, as I am sure he has been to many others. I have had the privilege to know him as a family friend, while being a student at King's and within the CRC community. I am so lucky to know him and learn from his wisdom and experience in many theological, justice, and general good human ways. I have observed his love for family, farming, travel, and people around the world and it has expanded my own compassion and service to others in turn. A highlight for sure would be the opportunity I had with him in Honduras in 2016 for a Honduras Water Project learning journey. There, I was able to witness the depth of his justice work with World Renew, the way he connected with the Honduran people, and the joy he displays in serving and loving others. He is able to capture a room of students or a circle of friends with a simple song and his guitar, and he finds meaningful ways to help those around him consider a deeper connection to God, our communities, and creation.

## A note from Claire Brandenburg

Roy, I sat at the front of your section of introductory theology in my very first semester at Kings. I remember you quoted from Annie Dillard's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (where I first heard about this fantastic book, which is now one of my favourites!) and told us the tale of the Enuma Elish, sharing how the creation story in Genesis countered and resisted this bleak understanding of the world. Not only did that clarification catalyze a theologically-grounding moment for me, but it provided a fairly good introduction to your way of being, as a teacher and a friend; you quickly struck me as someone committed to the deep details of "how" and "why", while also being open to embracing the mystery of the findings.

I also became quite familiar with your work as Director of the Micah Centre, given that you provided a lot of support to me and Abigail Hofstede as we co-led the affiliated student social justice group MASS (Micah Action and Awareness Student Society, as I'm sure you'll remember). Whenever we came to your office for advice or a justice-focused discussion, you were attentive and often had a helpful book to hand us. Looking back, I feel especially grateful for all the activists, scholars, and justice-seekers that you invited to speak at King's on behalf of the Micah Centre and MASS. It was incredible to be able to meet so many people doing on-the-ground work to create and sustain social change, and to see how you had stayed connected to them and those causes. Roy, you inspire(d) me to be relational, hopeful, and passionate. Thank you for your mentorship, wisdom, and jokes!



Students Claire Brandenburg and Abbi Hofstede at Sun Dog Farmer's Market, part of a class taught by Roy





### COMMUNITY GARDEN UPDATE

Snow has melted, soil is warming, and the Micah Community Garden beds are ready for their eleventh year on campus! Emilie Porter, a recent Biology graduate who will head to graduate school this fall, is our Coordinator this year. She will tend the compost piles, keep the water barrels full, and improve the hardscape. Stop by and chat for awhile...you'll most likely learn about composting!

The Community Garden offers 48 plots, each at the bargain price of \$ 20 for the season. The garden has gained popularity, and has become a pleasant gathering space. Stop by and check out the improvements Emilie will be working on this summer!

If you'd like more information, Emilie can be reached by email:

[community.garden@kingsu.ca](mailto:community.garden@kingsu.ca)



## Justice Fellowship Students

Over the course of the 2021-22 year, a group of passionate students embarked on a journey of justice learning together as part of the second Justice Fellowship cohort. The students took four experiential-learning classes focused on themes of justice,

poverty, and reconciliation. The students also met monthly for meals with our director Jonathan to discuss their learning and build friendships with peers who share their passion for a better world.

Despite the uncertainties of the ongoing pandemic, the students had a great year. They heard from dozens of speakers from across Edmonton, western Canada, and around the world. They spent a weekend in Edmonton's city core. Discussions explored a range of issues, from the plight of migrant workers in Canada, to the consequences of microplastics in the ocean, to the role Sabbath-keeping can play in a life of justice-seeking.

We look forward to seeing what paths this year's Justice Fellowship students take in the future!



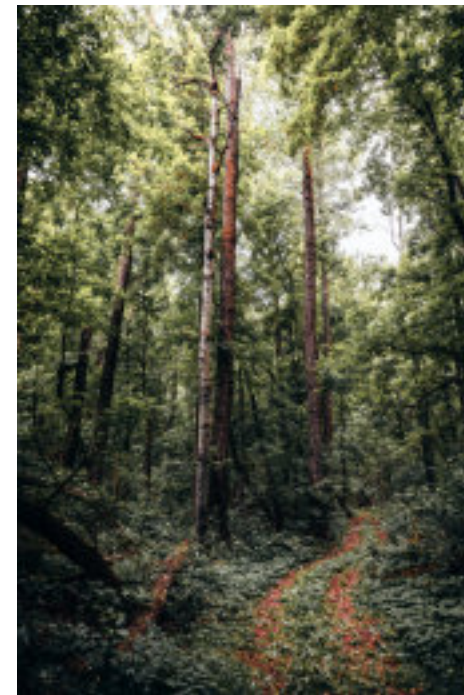
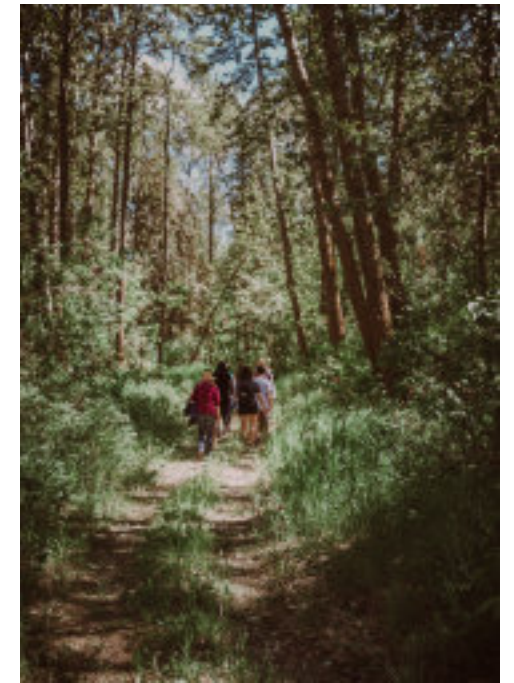
*A series of reflections on the history of injustice towards Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Sam Busch*

## A Place to Belong Course Offered at Lady Flower Gardens

In its second year, the course A Place to Belong: Justice, Land, and Place is being offered at King's in the second spring session. Open to current students and learners from the community, students will meet at Lady Flower Gardens to explore what it means to belong to and steward the land and places where we find ourselves.

Lady Flower Gardens, located in the kisiskâciwanisîpiy (North Saskatchewan River) valley just outside of Edmonton, is a community-building and farming organization committed to social and environmental justice. Their primary focus is supporting marginalised groups who have faced obstacles to community, healing, and food security.

This unique King's class allows students to explore what it means to belong to the land. Over 5 days (May 30 to June 3), they will hear from Indigenous knowledge keepers, ecologists, farmers, community activists, economists, writers, painters, politicians, and others as they learn about the land beneath their feet and their role as those who steward the land.



Key inter-disciplinary questions will be asked:

- How does this particular place help us recognize the brokenness of our relationships with each other and with the wider world?
- In what ways can we restore that brokenness, and in what ways can we empower others to do the same?
- How do we tell the story of our place and our role in it that makes space for all people and creatures here to flourish?

If you'd like to learn more, feel free to contact us at the Micah Centre by emailing our Director:

[Jonathan.Nicolai-deKoning@kingsu.ca](mailto:Jonathan.Nicolai-deKoning@kingsu.ca).



## 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.