



CONFERENCE

September 23-27, 2024

BELONGING
"Looking for a home"



Theology in The City, 2024 edition

Looking for a Home

INTRODUCTION

The overarching theme of Theology in the City 2024 Edition is **“Looking for a Home.”** From September 23 to 27, 2024, different groups will approach the theme from various angles and gradually zoom in from planet Earth as our home to Canada, Montreal, and downtown as the home of thousands of people.

Coming from many different backgrounds, whether students or businesspeople, homeless people and older people, Indigenous people, and tourists, they all try to make this beautiful city a temporary or permanent home for themselves and others in many different ways.

On **Monday**, members of the **Montreal Biblical Colloquium** will discuss the earth as God’s creation. We will ask ourselves whether the Bible is still relevant today and what we can learn from Scripture regarding ecology and peace. How can we keep our planet free of climate catastrophes, war, conflict, and forced immigration?

On **Tuesday**, the **Loneragan Group** will examine his philosophy of lifelong learning and how it can contribute to a better awareness and orientation towards the real and the good. They will also discuss how one can practice this daily and apply it to the many challenges of his world.

On **Wednesday**, members of the **St. Jax** and **St. Andrew & St. Paul Church** communities will look at the challenges the digital world poses to all of us. Especially young people, who, after years of COVID-19 forced lockdown, loneliness and anxiety about the future when looking for a home for themselves, often seem to turn to an increasingly virtual reality.

On **Thursday**, members of the **McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life** and **Concordia's Multi-Faith and Spirituality Center** will examine the challenges that interacting with people of different backgrounds, religious views, and political views poses to daily life as a student in Montreal.

On central moments of **Monday to Thursday**, **all** involved groups will contribute with a celebration of inclusiveness and hope, inviting the many less fortunate in this city to join a table of shared meals.

On **Friday**, a closing panel will conclude the week.

Locations: Concordia University, McGill University, MORSL, MFSC

PROGRAMME (SUMMARY)

1. Theology in the City 2024 Program

Monday, September 23, 2024

Montreal Biblical Colloquium

Gerbern S. Oegema

The Earth as Our Home

Keynote Speaker: **Gerbern S. Oegema** (McGill University), Homeland, Homelessness and Home in the Life of Abraham

In this Colloquium of the Montreal Biblical Colloquium, the theme is **the Earth as our home** and God's home. This theme will be discussed by interpreting Biblical texts through the lens of the Jewish-Christian tradition and in light of the many challenges of today. The main focus will be on man-induced climate change, war and conflict, and immigration, and how this has affected both the earth as God's creation and the world as an ever more contested home for millions of people. How do climate catastrophes, war and conflict between neighbours over land, such as in the Middle East and Ukraine, as well as forced immigration worldwide, affect the way people can live peacefully together? How do we respond to these challenges from a Biblical-theological perspective?

Tuesday, September 24, 2024

Loneragan Day

Karen Peterson et al.

At Home in the World

Keynote Speaker: **J. Michael Stebbins**, PhD (Boston College), “Being at Home in an Incomplete Universe”

“At Home in the World: Lonergan’s *Topics in Education*”: Theology in the City 2024 seeks academics (students and scholars) to share research around the theme of “Finding a Home” and to generate public discussion on this theme beyond the academy. In his 1959 lecture series for Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, later published as *Topics in Education*, Bernard Lonergan, S. J. outlined a philosophy of education based on his conviction that human learning is oriented toward the real and the good. On this premise, teaching and learning become moral acts; they are how we shape a world worth inhabiting. Therefore, Lonergan Day of TCIC 2024 seeks papers on contemporary education in its ethical dimensions, inspired by Lonergan’s approach in *Topics in Education*. Possible applications include the university/seminary and the human good, science and the human good, racism and education, inter-religious education, historical pedagogy, teaching and indigeneity, the good in art and architecture, etc.

Wednesday, September 25, 2024 - morning

MORSL and MfSC

Volunteer with MFSC and MORSL: **Welcome Hall Mission**

Join students and staff from the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Concordia’s Multi-Faith and Spirituality Centre in service at the Welcome Hall Mission. We’ll help [Welcome Hall Mission](#) staff prepare food donations for clients of their [Marché Bon Accueil](#), a grocery-store-like market that serves up to 3000 low-income Montrealers a week. Inspired by Eboo Patel’s Interfaith Youth Corps programming, this service-learning opportunity allows individuals from various backgrounds to support a good cause in the local community while working together to get to know each other and build links. MfSC and MORSL staff will facilitate reflection during the morning so that participants can articulate the values and desires that motivated them to engage in community service and hear others’ perspectives on the same question.

Wednesday, September 25, 2024 - afternoon Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul

Susan Brasier (with Gerbern Oegema)

Home in a Digital World

After a simple **free lunch** at noon, the TITC conference will continue with an afternoon of dynamic presentations. The **Rev. Jenna Smith** will present her ground-breaking work regarding the Quebec religious response to the concept of home and intimate partner violence. Professor and documentary filmmaker **Dr. Eric Weisman** will present his video essay, *Subtext: Real Stories* (the idea of home when one is homeless), followed by a lecture. The afternoon will conclude with a **concert** featuring the acclaimed musicians from the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul's music department, followed by the keynote address from **Dr Cory Labreque** – There's No Place Like Home: Theological and Ethical Reflections on Artificial Intelligence and Aging at Home in the Digital Age.

Thursday, September 26, 2024

Concordia and McGill Chaplaincies

Jennifer & Carlene Gardner

Religious & Spiritual Diversity on Campus

Theme: Spiritual and Religious Homes on Campus: Talk & Walking Tour

Location: McGill and Concordia Campus (for details, see schedule below)

Organisers: Jen Bourque, Multi-faith and Spirituality Centre and Carlene Gardner, McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life

Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/957305846557ç>

1:00 pm: Talk by **Carlene Gardner**, MORSL and **Jen Bourque**, MfSC, on the work of MORSL and MfSC on their respective campuses. Henry F. Hall Building, Concordia SGW Campus, 1550 de Maisonneuve Ouest, room 655

1:45 pm: prepare for walking tour; 2-4 pm: walking tour with visits to: Muslim Student Association space, Hall Building, 7th floor; Other Concordia religious student groups' spaces; Hillel House; Chabad House; Newman Centre; The tour will end at MORSL's office with light refreshments.

Friday, September 27, 2024

Department of Theology, Concordia

The closing panel will be held with the speakers for all four days.

Creating a Home for All

PROGRAMME (DETAILS)

Monday, September 23rd, 2024

Theme: The Earth as Our Home

Location: Birks Chapel & Lobby, 3520 University Street, Montreal, H3A 2A7

Organizer: Gerbern S. Oegema

In this Colloquium of the Montreal Biblical Colloquium, the theme is **the Earth as our home** and God's home. This theme will be discussed in the form of academic papers, in which Biblical texts are critically interpreted through the lens of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim tradition and in light of the many challenges of today. The main focus will be on man-induced climate change, war and conflict, homelessness, and immigration, and how this has affected both the earth as God's creation and the world as an ever more contested home for millions of people. How do climate catastrophes, war and conflict between neighbours over land, such as in the Middle East and Ukraine, the growing homelessness crisis, as well as forced immigration worldwide affect the way people can live peacefully together? How to respond to these challenges from a Biblical-theological perspective? And how do we re-interpret Biblical passages that have contributed to these crises in the past?

1:30-4.00: Montreal Biblical Colloquium

Paper 1: Sébastien Doane, "I have forsaken my house; I have abandoned my heritage ... The whole land is made desolate, but no one lays it to heart" (Jeremiah 12:7.11)

Paper 2: Marie-France Dion, "The Earth as Our Home: A Ridiculous and Unfeasible Divine Project or Is It?"

Paper 3: Gabriel Casola, "An Eschatological Account of Climate Change as an Act of 'God' or 'Man'"

Paper 4: Nandom Gunen, "A Theological Response to Human Trafficking Prevention:"

4.30-5.30: Keynote lecture: **Gerbern S. Oegema**, Homeland, Homelessness and Home in the Life of Abraham

Abstract: Why did Abraham become “our father” in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam if his life started by abandoning the religion and customs of his family and mainly consisted of wandering from country to country and experiencing hostility, famine, and homelessness? A close reading of the Biblical text about the life of Abraham reveals many aspects that are still relevant today.

Bio: Gerbern S. Oegema is a Professor of Biblical Studies in the School of Religious Studies of McGill University

5.30-7.00: Reception

Tuesday, September 24th, 2024

Theme: “A World Worth Inhabiting: Educating for the Human Good”

Location: Birks Chapel & Lobby, 3520 University Street, Montreal, H3A 2A7

Organiser: Karen Petersen Finch

Theology in the City 2024 seeks academics (students and scholars) to share research around the theme of “Finding a Home” and to generate public discussion on this theme beyond the academy. In his 1959 lecture series for Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, later published as *Topics in Education*, Bernard Lonergan, S. J spoke about education as a moral force. If human learning is oriented toward the real and the good, then teaching and learning become moral acts; they are how we shape a world worth inhabiting. Therefore, Lonergan Day of TITC 2024 seeks papers on education and the human good. How does religion contribute to such education? What are the roles of the university, scientific community, race, and indigeneity of art and architecture? Finally, what in our historical moment makes teaching about a world worth inhabiting more challenging?

10:00 Karen Petersen Finch, “Using Lonergan’s Method for Lifelong Learning”
Birks Chapel

10:30-12:20 Speakers with common Q and A, Birks Chapel

10:30-10:50 Patrick Byrne, "Encountering the Good and Doing the Good: Lonergan on Educating for the Good."

10:50-11:10 Ridge Shukrun, "Conversion in Education."

11:10-11:30 Timothy Muldoon, "Withdrawal and Return: Evaluating Toynbee's Influence ..."

11:30-11:50 Marie-France Dion, “Incarnating God’s Blessing: Listening to the Past, Committing to the Present and Building a Future.”

Common Q and A 11:50-12:20

12:20- 1:30 Lunch in the Senior Common Room or in the Presbyterian College Courtyard

1:30- 3:20 pm Speakers with common Q and A, Birks chapel

1:30-1:50 Patrick Nolin, "Poetics and Symbolic Meaning: Find a Home in the Vastness of Modernity."

1:50-2:10 Casola Gabriel, "Bernard Lonergan's Common Good, Critical Realism, and Artificial Intelligence ..."

2:10-2:30 Unassigned

2:30-2:50 Christine Jamieson, TBA

Common Q and A 2:50-3:20

3:20 Break, Senior Common Room

3:45-5:00 pm Small groups, inspired by speakers, on the following theme: What is happening in the human community now that makes it harder to create a world worth inhabiting?

[Dinner is self-paid, except for student workers]

7 pm: Public Lecture: Lonergan scholar **J. Michael Stebbins**, PhD, "Being at Home in an Incomplete Universe" (with Q. & A.), Birks Chapel

Abstract: The universe we inhabit is a work in progress. So, too, is the human good; so is each of us. The human good, which is never static or wholly secure, is changing in unsettling ways whose significance we can't fully determine. Bernard Lonergan's *Topics in Education* contains a wealth of insight into a philosophy of education that can help us become the kind of people who can meet the challenges posed by our frantic, blinkered, and perhaps very perilous age and contribute to the emergence of a world worth living in. My remarks will revolve around Lonergan's insistence that teachers should broaden their horizons "to the point where it includes the universe." What are the defining characteristics of such a horizon? How do we attain it? And why does it matter that we attain it, or at least try to? Sketching the main lines of an answer to these questions will require brief forays into (1) Lonergan's notion of the good as concrete, (2) his analysis of the three "differentials" or forces that bring about changes in the human good, namely, intellectual development, sin, and redemption; (3) his theology of grace and providence; and (4) what he calls the "ethics of achievement."

Bio: J. Michael Stebbins holds a Ph.D. in Theology from Boston College. He has served as a Senior Fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center, located at Georgetown University; the director of the Gonzaga Institute of Ethics at Gonzaga University; the Executive Vice President of Mission at Avera Health, a four-state Catholic healthcare system headquartered in Sioux Falls, South

Dakota; and, most recently, the Toth-Lonergan Visiting Professor at Seton Hall University. He is the author of *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Work of Bernard Lonergan*. A revised edition of the book was issued recently by the Lonergan Institute at Boston College.

8 pm: Wine and Cheese with J. Michael Stebbins

Wednesday, September 25th, 2024

Morning Theme: Volunteer with McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Concordia's Multi-Faith and Spirituality Centre

Location: Meet in the [Hall Building Atrium](#), 1550 de Maisonneuve Ouest; travel by metro to Welcome Hall Misson, 4755 Acorn Street, Montreal, QC, H4C 3L6 Door F

Organizer: Jen Bourque and Carlene Gardner

Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/951481987237>

(NOTE: McGill students should register on MyInvolvement)

8 am: Meet in the Atrium of the Henry F. Hall Building, Concordia SGW campus, 1550 de Maisonneuve Ouest

8:20 am: travel by metro to Welcome Hall Misson, 4755 Acorn Street, Montreal, QC, H4C 3L6 Door F

9-11:30 am: Briefing and welcome by Welcome Hall staff; volunteer project. The morning will include a time for a break and group reflection and sharing

11:45 am: participants can leave on their own or return to Concordia/McGill with MfSC and MORSL staff

Note: Welcome Hall Mission directly contacts our vulnerable community, and protecting their health and safety is very important.

With this in mind, we kindly ask that you cancel your volunteering with us if your answer is "yes" to any of the following questions:

- Have you tested positive for Covid-19 in the last five days?
- Have you experienced any symptoms associated with COVID-19, such as a cold, flu, or gastroenteritis, in the last five days?
- In the last 24 hours, have you had a fever?
- In the last ten days, have you been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for a prolonged period (i.e. without a mask within 2 meters for more than 15 minutes)?

Dress Code:

- Comfortable clothing such as a T-shirt and jeans.
- Comfortable closed-toe shoes, e.g. sports shoes. For your safety, sandals are not allowed.

Note: work at Welcome Hall Mission will include contact with food and may involve standing/walking. There is a 10-minute walk from the metro to Welcome Hall Mission. Please contact mfsc@concordia before Sept 16 with any accessibility questions or needs to allow us to make appropriate arrangements with our hosts.

Afternoon Theme: How to Belong in this World?

Location: Church of St. Andrew & St. Paul,

3415 Redpath St, corner Sherbrooke Street West

Organizer: Susan Brasier (with Gerbern S. Oegema)

11:30 am Doors Open at Kildonan Hall located at the Redpath Street entrance

Noon – free lunch featuring Lentil soup, bread, fruit, cookies/brownies

Reservations requested: info@standrewstpaul.com

12:30 **Rev. Jenna Smith – *Theological approach to home and intimate partner violence***

Bio: Rev. Jenna Smith is the Head of Outreach and Engagement for Christian Directions Urban Ministries. She coordinated the Rapha Project, which is an extensive community-based participatory research study on how the church in Quebec responds to intimate-partner violence. Rev. Smith is passionate about the intersections between faith, community and urban work amongst those living on our society's margins. Involved with fieldwork at Innovation Youth for 15 years, she saw how those on the margins – youth, immigrants, families living under the poverty line, the elderly – often become forgotten or overlooked in busy city life. She considers it part of her job to love her neighbours – ALL her neighbours – to understand them, seek them out and help them feel like they belong. She can build bridges between church, community, and city life through her work.

1:15 Panel discussion -- Practical response to the realities of intimate partner violence

1:45 Break

2:00 **Dr. Eric Weisman**, The concept of home when one is homeless

Documentary filmmaker Dr. Eric Weisman will present his video essay, *Subtext: Real Stories*. *Subtext: Real Stories* began in 2000 at Toronto's Tent City and included footage capturing the story of homelessness in various geographical locations, including Texas, Portland, Oregon, Montreal, and New Brunswick. Dr. Weisman's presentation offers the viewer a reflexive opening to changing the narratives we use to think about addictions, homelessness, housing and sense of place. His talk is quite personal and gritty. He weaves his own lived experience into and out of addictions and homelessness and how those experiences led to his scholarly inquiries and advocacy, especially his current national study of student homelessness (www.pssh.ca), frontline workers and COVID (www.flwresearch.com), and current work on improving post-hospitalization outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Dr. Weisman will show his 45-minute video essay, speak for 30 minutes on critical issues, and then have a Q and A.

Bio: Dr. Eric Weisman is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John. He has been developing and applying a lived-experience form of scholarship to the study of homelessness, housing, mental health, and substance use in Canadian and US cities since 1999. This work is anchored in his struggles with addictions and episodic homelessness and his recovery, which began in 1995. Over the last 28 years, he has been writing, filming and working with people with lived experiences of homelessness and addictions and making the argument that housing is the key to harm reduction. He has written books, published articles, and exhibited photography and films. In 2014, his dissertation was awarded the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies Distinguished Dissertation Award. That worked. It looked at the provisions that make various housing models, from Housing First to tiny home communities, valuable parts of the solution to widespread homelessness in North American cities.

4:00 Break

4:30 Concert **"Finding Hope and Home"**

Featuring the award-winning musician Jonas Apeland along with members of the acclaimed St. Andrew and St. Paul choir, the Theology in the City Conference and the members of A&P are delighted to offer a concert including a new composition created for the TITC conference by composer Dr. Matthew Sutter from his up-coming opera, *The life and work of Alan Turing*.

Dr. Matthew Sutter teaches in the Practice of Sound Design and Stage Management at Yale School of Drama and is Director of the Beechman Center for Theatrical Sound and Music. Dr. Sutter is presently creating an opera based on the life and work of Alan Turing. Alan Turing is considered the father of Artificial Intelligence.

5:30 pm **Dr. Cory Labrecque** Keynote Address, There's No Place Like Home: Theological and Ethical Reflections on Artificial Intelligence and Aging at Home in the Digital Age

Artificial intelligence has become ubiquitous in the Western world. It is developing with such speed that policymakers, ethicists, and – yes – theologians (many of whom are intrigued by AI and its impact) struggle to keep up. Nevertheless, AI raises many issues and questions, and the promises and pitfalls of AI-powered technologies require interdisciplinary engagement. In this presentation, Dr. Labrecque will identify some of these issues and questions and reflect – theologically and ethically – on AI writ large. He will then move to a more focussed discussion on how AI-powered technologies (such as robot “companions” and legacy or grief avatars), especially those geared toward helping people age at home, invite us to revisit how we think about relationality, limitation, and embodiment.

Bio: Cory Andrew Labrecque, PhD, is a professor of bioethics and theological ethics and the inaugural chair of educational leadership in the ethics of life at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at Université Laval in Quebec City, where he is vice-dean and director of graduate programs in theology. Cory earned a BSc in anatomy and cell biology, an MA in religious studies specialising in bioethics, and a PhD in religious ethics at McGill. Cory's teaching and research explore how the Abrahamic religions—focusing on the Roman Catholic tradition—approach ethical issues in medicine (especially at the end of life), biotechnology, and the environment. Cory is a corresponding member of the Pontifical Academy for Life, which counsels the Vatican on ethical issues in medicine, biotechnology, and the environment; he is also a member of the AI Research Group for the Centre for Digital Culture and the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See. Cory is president of the Canadian Bioethics Society, vice-president of the National Committee for Ethics and Ageing (in Quebec), and is a member (appointed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops) of the Faith and Life Sciences Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches.

Thursday, September 26th, 2024

Theme: Spiritual and Religious Homes on Campus: Talk and Walking Tour

Location: McGill and Concordia Campus (for details, see schedule below)

Organisers: Jen Bourque, Multi-faith and Spirituality Centre and Carlene Gardner, McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life

Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/957305846557>

1:00 pm: Talk by Carlene Gardner, MORSL and Jen Bourque, MfSC, on the work of MORSL and MfSC on their respective campuses. Henry F. Hall Building, Concordia SGW Campus, 1550 de Maisonneuve Ouest, room 655

1:45 pm: prepare for a walking tour

1:00 - 4:00 pm: walking tour with visits to:

- Muslim Student Association space, Hall Building, 7th floor
- Other Concordia religious student groups' spaces
- Hillel House
- Chabad House
- Newman Centre

The tour will end at MORSL's office with light refreshments.

Notes:

- Participants are welcome to attend the talk, the walking tour or both.
- Presentations will be in English; participant questions and comments are welcome in French or English.
- Hall 655.02 is accessible to people with reduced mobility; inclusive washrooms are nearby (on the same floor)
- Some buildings on the walking tour require stairs to access--please contact us if this is a concern.
- If you need accessibility, please reach out to mfsc@concordia.ca before September 16th.

Friday, September 27, 2024 Department of Theology, Concordia University

Closing Panel with the Speakers of all 4 Days **Creating a Home for All**