

radix

MCGIL'S STUDENT SPIRITUALITY MAGAZINE



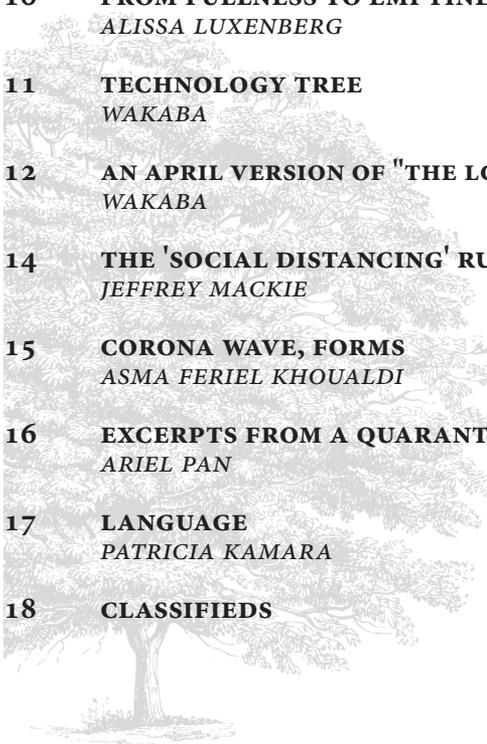
LIVING APART, TOGETHER

SUMMER 2020

CONTENTS

- 3 **INTRODUCTION**
 RADIX ADVISORY BOARD
- 4 **TO BE APART**
 GILLI COHEN
- 4 **APPRECIATION DURING A PANDEMIC**
 RUSAN LATEEF
- 5 **A ROADBLOCK, A HALT, A LESSON FOR LIFE**
 IBANI KAPUR
- 6 **FORGIVENESS AT EDEN'S GATE**
 KATIE SOKOLOVA
- 7 **REQUITED, REQUIETED**
 SAVANNA SGUIGNA
- 8 **EXPANDING OUR SPHERE OF COMPASSION AND EMPATHY**
 ANONYMOUS
- 9 **THREE MONTHS**
 RIANNA DUTCH
- 10 **FROM FULLNESS TO EMPTINESS BACK TO FULLNESS**
 ALISSA LUXENBERG
- 11 **TECHNOLOGY TREE**
 WAKABA
- 12 **AN APRIL VERSION OF "THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK"**
 WAKABA
- 14 **THE 'SOCIAL DISTANCING' RUN**
 JEFFREY MACKIE
- 15 **CORONA WAVE, FORMS**
 ASMA FERIEL KHOUALDI
- 16 **EXCERPTS FROM A QUARANTINE DIARY**
 ARIEL PAN
- 17 **LANGUAGE**
 PATRICIA KAMARA
- 18 **CLASSIFIEDS**

Radix is a student-centred magazine providing literary and artistic space for expression on spiritual themes, produced by the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life.

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- 17 **LANGUAGE**
 PATRICIA KAMARA
- 18 **CLASSIFIEDS**
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INTRODUCTION

What a time to be alive. While writing this in July, we are presently working from home, arranging an office space out of a kitchen table, a mattress, or a spot of grass. We engage in virtual conversations, conferences, and cohabitations. We now wear a mask wherever we go, only taking it off to eat some ice cream. We're better at adapting than we think we are, but adaption doesn't mean a lack of contemplation. There is much to think about, to discuss, to reflect on, to pray about. It feels like there might be too much, but yet the days continue pattering on, like all the summers that came before.

In general, we try to keep our themes broad to allow for room for exploration of all kinds. This theme is broad in content, but specific in time. We have no idea if we will live through another pandemic. We do not know when this one will end. We all recognize this, and in this Summer 2020 edition of *Radix* our contributors reckon with our unique situation. What changes in a pandemic? What does living look like when we are separated from each other? Nearly four months in, it is difficult to say if anyone truly has concrete answers; thus we keep our mould wet, flexible, willing for change.

We encourage you to browse this issue and take a moment - or several - to think for yourself, *how do we live apart, together?*

The Radix Advisory Board

Written Word
Andrew Yang
Muzi Li

*The cover art for this issue was produced
by Jassim Ahmed.*

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Promotion
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Production
McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life



GILLI COHEN & RUSAN LATEEF

To be apart,

To part from you,
societies way of reminding one another
one more day until tomorrow.
An anticipation I've held near,
every yesterday for the past month.
It will be over for all. Once life has been lived.
But when we are apart,
How do we know if we've lived enough.
I can't hug my mother
She is too scared.
Patience now,
I must exist proudly to start living once more.

*Gilli is a lover of thought; a student of religious studies and political science trying to
succeed through process rather than goal.*

Appreciation During a Pandemic

I appreciate

The presence, long walks, laughter

With the ones I love

*Rusan is a PhD student in Social Work who loves academic life, staying active, and
spending time with the people she loves.*

A roadblock, a halt, a lesson for life

The time we were together felt like ages ago but the time we were kept apart felt like a roadblock that would just quickly go.

While stuck in the roadblock, we got out of our vehicles, standing 2m apart against a common enemy.

Some stood with overflowing shopping carts, some lost the people they dearly loved, some cried, some just stood by.

There we were getting through rough times, a long distance apart and yet in all of this together, looking through windowpanes, talking through glass, making sense of it all.

The truth was, we were amateurs knowing not how to survive this sudden halt and yet despite everything, we stood strong and tall. In that halt, we learnt an important lesson that we never would have before.

When taken away from our very source of life, the family, friends and people we cherish, or the café's and places we had come to love, we knew not how to behave; to smile, to cry or to just let go and yet despite everything, we stood strong and tall.

We learnt that the source might be far away but in our own ways we re-created them, bringing them close to our hearts. We all at some point did this by calls to our loved ones at 3am, crying our hearts out. Sometimes we were silent and hopeful as we watched the same movies together but from a distance. At other times, we sprinkled positivity through baking cupcakes and smiles and talks of happy times.

This might be an indefinite block to a long journey of life that awaits us still and it is not yet done but we still stand strong and tall.

In our own ways we learnt how to live, love and laugh from a distance and yet stay close, we learnt how to live in a world where when this roadblock ends, no-one really knows.

Ibani is a first year masters student in Experimental Medicine who is a blogger, an avid reader and just figuring out life.



Artist's statement:

The above art piece, titled *Forgiveness at Eden's Gate* is inspired by, and meant to accompany, Savanna Sguigna's poem, "Required, Required."

Katie is a Christian second year student studying Psychology.

Required, requited

to already know what it feels like,
before the ugliness of my iniquities
and your outstretched hand

just to know what family feels like,
what it sounds like
when you cried to the Father
where you opened the door for me

already keeping your promises
already seeing through the dark
still waiting
where your feet once stood

be still
 still moving

still standing
pain notwithstanding,
an ache of separation you bore
and life is born

and where the spirit
alive
looks a lot like freedom,
freedom is.

your outstretched hand
before the ugliness of my iniquities
because you already know what it feels like.

ANONYMOUS

Expanding Our Sphere of Compassion and Empathy

In the world of COVID-19, we must maintain our health, while keeping in touch with the people we love. It takes a change of perspective and often a change in what “being together” means. Similarly, we all feel strong emotions, perhaps even outrage, but with no sensible target. For many, whom we feel empathy for has changed. The suffering of the elderly, for instance, seems to have come to the forefront in this crisis.

But we should not stop there. This is a great moment to increase our sphere of kindness to other realms. Animals are one such target. Some in the Animal Rights movement focus on the fact that the current COVID-19 crisis seems to have originated from wild animal markets in China and, relatedly, that many other diseases, namely zoonotics, come from animals. Their way of solving this is to no longer raise animals for food. I feel such a narrative might not convince many. However, the expansion of kindness that the current COVID-19 situation has elicited can be made to include nonhuman animals. As no one can deny, based on our own experiences and the cases seen on television and online, people can suffer greatly, both from COVID-19 and other crises. Perhaps it is time to inform ourselves on the suffering of many pets and farmed animals, including those in wild animal markets. Hopefully, this will lead to creating a more inclusive sphere of compassion and empathy.

One issue remains, can our kindness expand beyond animals and humans? In this era of COVID-19, many treasure the short times they can go out and experience nature, almost always having to think of social distancing. Can our empathy be extended to nature? After all, the argument can be made that what we have been discussing regarding compassion and empathy is simply about what things need to flourish. Humans need contact with others and maintaining physical and mental health. Nonhuman animals flourish when they are free of unnecessary harm and can live the way they have evolved to live. Finally, and admittedly more difficult to argue, a natural system flourishes when its ecological processes are working well and the natural ecosystem is not changed. We can perhaps even feel compassion and empathy when it comes to this form of flourishing. This may be seen as too radical to many, but radical ideas are good for sparking good conversations. If nothing else, let's at least hope this crisis will expand our sense of compassion and empathy.

The author is a McGill student from Montreal.

Three months



March 2020.

I get back to Montreal from my march break trip.

The restaurant I work at closes. School closes.

Everything closes.

I move back to my hometown.

My brother's wedding is postponed.

I didn't think when I saw my friends earlier in the month that would be the last time for a long time.

March goes by in a blur.

April 2020.

Yoga, yoga, and more yoga. And journaling. And reading. And walks. Lots of walks. Lots of time alone.

I feel relaxed yet stressed.

I have now been on more phone calls, Facetimes and Zoom calls than ever before. As have many others.

I have never felt so alone yet so close to others.

Classes end.

Time flies yet goes by slowly.

Lots of paradoxes.



May 2020.

I stay busy.

I have an online summer class.

I go on hikes, jogs and walks. Sometimes with friends... six feet apart of course.

I bask in the springtime sun.

Life is good. I look up at the sky more than I used to. I sit by the water more than I used to. And I feel more connected than I ever have.

Rianna is a third year History student who, like most others, is just seeking for the reason why she's here.

Listen to Rianna read her piece [here](#).

ALISSA LUXENBERG

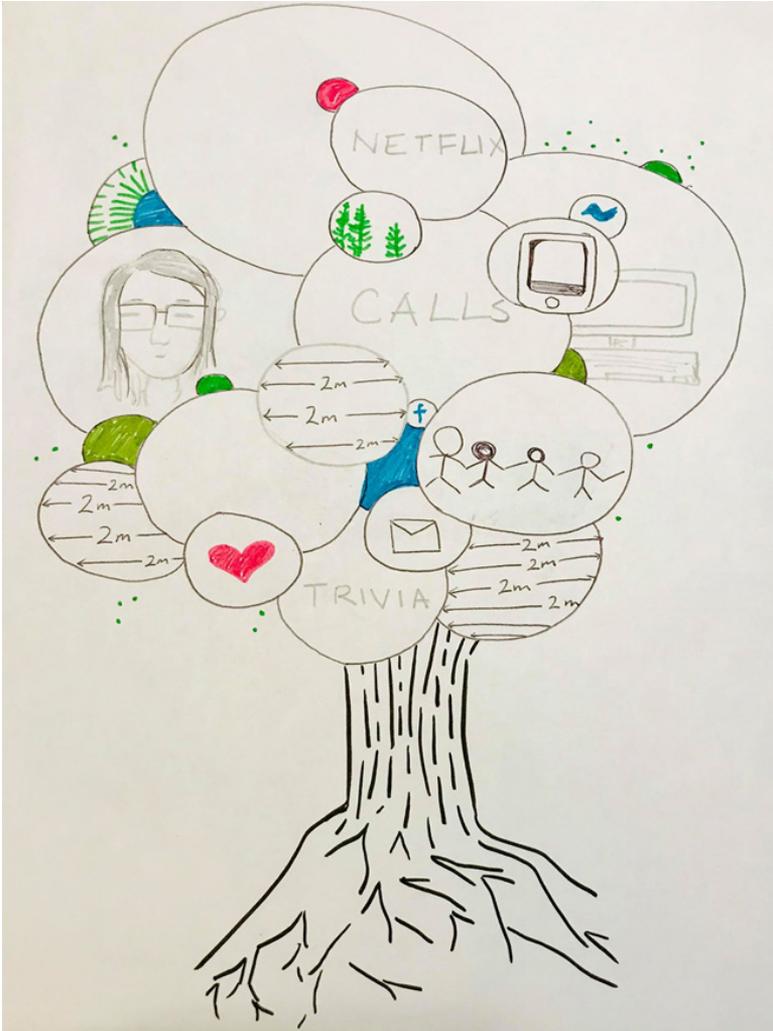
From Fullness to Emptiness Back to Fullness

My experience with Coronavirus has not been the typical one for many of my friends. I, unlike most of my friends, am for the most part enjoying this quarantine time. I take it as an opportunity to step back from the hustle and bustle of the world, the running to and from classes, the making plans with people and having to be on time, etc. Despite all of the obvious bad parts of Coronavirus, I have been enjoying this little break. I am the type of person who can spend the entire day in the house drinking tea, doing yoga, writing in my journal, drawing, and talking on the phone with friends and family. When I need a breather, I'll step outside into the fresh air and go for a nice long walk.

I'm lucky that I am in a position where I can enjoy these simple luxuries that make dealing with the pandemic almost a pleasant experience for me. I've decided to make the most of this time "off" and really do what I enjoy. Though I have a list of things I want to do, I am also not in a rush to do them. I am taking my time and going with the flow and slowly but surely crossing items off my to-do list. So far so good. However, problems do arise; My grandmother is currently battling Coronavirus at her seniors residence, I don't live with my father right now and due to social distancing measures, I haven't been able to hug him in over two months (which I miss), and so on. However, missing family members is not the end of the world. It is time to be strong, but there are tough moments for sure. But then I think of how lucky I am that I am comfortable in my home with my mom (who is a nurse), while many others only wish they could be doing just that. It is the time to count our blessings and focus on gratitude. Meanwhile through all this, my sister has been working night shifts four to five nights a week at the hospital (she is a doctor).

I think of all the people around me during this time: family members, friends, strangers passing by wearing their masks on the street. What a world we are living in these days. It is more important now than ever before to really embrace all of the little things in life that make us happy and conduct our lives in simple ways that bring meaning to us. Drawing hands is an example of a meaningful day for me. I enjoy creating art and came up with this art style of mine a few years back and have been developing it ever since. Picture this: a rainy afternoon, a burning candle, a pot of loose leaf tea, an art book and markers, and some Simon and Garfunkel. For me, that's the perfect afternoon.

Alissa is a second year psychology student who loves to spend her free hours drawing with a pot of tea by her side.



Artist's statement:

Staying together when we are socially distanced is difficult, but thankfully there is the *Technology Tree*.

WAKABA

An April Version of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Let us go then, you and I
When the evening is spread across the sky,
With a turn of our gaze from the computer screens;
Let us go, through deserted streets,
The hushed city retreats
Of masked figures and lowered eyes
And shopping bags of groceries with extended sighs;
To leads you to an overwhelming question
Oh, do not ask, "When will it end?"
Let us go and make our amends.

In the online portals the people come and go
Talking of Michelangelo

The clear vapour that wafts its breathe upon the masked figures,
The invisible threat that rubs its secrets on the gloved figures
Licking its tongue into the corners of your mouth
Lingering upon the space between the lines
Let fall upon its back the whispers that fall from sultry lips of spring,

The whisper slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft April night,
Peered up from the streets to invite an envelopment into the night.

And indeed there will be a time
For the clear vapour that slides along the street,
Whispering it's secrets to the masked figures.
There will be a time, there will be a time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to stay inside and wait,
And time for embracing, tears, and human heat

That life and drop a flower on your plate;
Time for us and time for them,
And time yet for a hundred decisions,
And for a single vision and visions,
Before the crowds gather for a drink and beer.

In the online portals the people come and go
Talking of Michelangelo

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "could we have known" and, "did I do what's right?"
Time to turn forward and ascend the stair,
With white hairs and wrinkled brows,-
(I will say:" How my hair is grey!)
My spring coat, the dark blue sheen that shines
My scarf, dark and warm, wound around my neck-
(I will say" But how pale and ghastly is my skin")

Do I dare
Risk my life and others?
Social distancing for some time
For public safety must be upheld until the time a statement will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have peered outside my open door a hesitant gaze;
I know not the voices dying at home, only the lurkers in the streets .
The soft music rising from a neighbour's room.
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all-
The neighbours gaze that measures the fixed distance of contact,
And when I am outside, an avatar on a screen,
When I am digitized and monotone on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To yell out the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all-
Smiles basked in sunlight from another town, the crowds of people, the terraces and bars
In the relaxed songs and shared moments
In shared spaces or so I digress
Fingertips that pass a drink or fork or touch my face.

And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone through pages and links and slides
And watched the Facebook battles that rage on screen
Of loneliness in self-isolation, sitting in small damp rooms of seclusion?...

I should have been a bird so free
Singing from the trees

I grow old... I grow old...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

I have seen nurses riding on banshee songs
Combing the white hair of the withered souls
When the wind blows the leaves green and brown
We have lingered outside the tense halls.
Seen unseen flowers growing wild and free.
Stood strong until the silence rings, and we drown.

Wakaba is a MSc2 student who is finding ways to reconnect with poems she read in high school during this pandemic.

JEFFREY MACKIE

The 'Social Distancing' Run

This year I was on the Social Distancing Run Group
Organized by Trevor and Angie Spencer
As we went into the pandemic
People planning to run
Virtual runs for races cancelled
But supporting others for real

Running for a medal to mark the event
To keep us focused
Online comradery from people we will never meet
Cheers from all over the world
For ourselves and for others
Running many distances
In this time of fear and anxiety
Some spoke of faith
Some of sheer determination

Some ran to prove they could
To attain a goal
Some spoke of physical pain overcome
Others of emotional pain overcome
Runs that marked achievements
And runs that marked loss
Of family, of fellow soldiers, or old friends
Runs that provided release
From work on the hospital front lines

We shared photos of places
In the beautiful world we run in
Shared advice and encouragement
Laughter and tears
Different lockdowns and protocols
Of the desire to get out
To move and to breathe

Through technology I would say
That we ran together
And we look to the future
With faith and determination.

*Jeffrey Mackie graduated in May with a Masters of Divinity from Montreal Diocesan
Theological College at McGill.*



Listen to the artist's statement [here](#) on her piece, *Corona Wave, Forms*.

Asma is a bioinformatics student who has lived in the Middle East, Africa, and North America. She presently crafts her artwork by memory.

ARIEL PAN

Excerpts from a Quarantine Diary

Day 2

As I was looking over the music for this year's Easter Triduum, I was struck by a sense of futility. This same feeling stayed with me as I sheepishly shuffled all the schoolwork I had planned for today to tomorrow, or maybe the day after. Preparing for something while knowing that it may not happen feels terrible, almost as terrible as watching all the work I saw as important take a backseat in the face of this epidemic.

As my flute teacher posted in the studio Facebook page, though, this crisis is bigger than us and bigger than individual events; some things we just have to accept. Amidst all these cancellations of work, concerts, and research, however, I am starting to see people rally together to make the best out of the situation. Fundraisers have been started to support temporarily job-less artists, orchestras have started to bring their music to people around the world via live streaming, and group chats have been busier than ever with people giving support and sharing updates. It would be presumptuous to blithely say that things are looking up, but perhaps silver linings are slowly emerging around the storm clouds.

Day 20

Quietly, wrapped in an unassuming package of Zoom video calls, the rhythm of school has seeped back into my daily routine. Now, despite there still being languid spans of time that stretch the days, my schedule is dotted with blocks of meetings and virtual lectures. The days remain slow, but there are finally pieces of certainty to anchor them.

Day 38

With the end of every school year comes Easter. Usually, this would mean weeks of extra rehearsals with my choir, and three days spent singing for the triduum. As much as the music for Easter can be a lot to organize, I always look forward to the celebration of faith with my closest friends nearby. Needless to say, Easter looked very different this year. Where there are usually a bonfire and the lighting of candles, there was a single desk lamp that served as my candle. Where there is usually a church, there was a live-streamed mass accompanied by my crucifix beside the kitchen door. My desk chair became the pews, and I, along with the singer in the live stream, was the choir. In the absence of Easter Vigil as I know it, the best I could do was make time and space to participate in the celebrations from a distance.

Ariel Pan is a Taiwanese-Canadian student in her third year of Music at McGill. She is also Choir Director at the Newman Centre.

Language

I miss us

The heys and hellos as we walked down the street

The letting go of leashes so our dogs could meet

The shaking of hands and the hugging when we greet

I miss us

Then the air grew warm and the trees turned green

And we learned a different language that our tongues didn't speak

We learned the language of distance

Composed of solitary elevator rides

Wiping the groceries down after they arrive

A tight smile and a gracious step away

As a fellow pedestrian walks in your way

My best friend lives in my screen

The vernacular is universal, it seems

The light at the end of the tunnel glows dim

But, glow it does

One day this will be a memory

Like all things this too will pass

Because the language of distance

Is also a language of perseverance

Patricia Kamara is a 3rd year FoodSci and Nutrition Student from Kenya.

CLASSIFIEDS

MCGILL CHAVURAH (GHETTO SHUL)

The McGill Chavurah continues on the legacy of Ghetto Shul as a community intent on creating inclusive spaces for Jewish students. We are currently running online events, which aim to integrate the peace and comfort of shared Jewish experience into the hectic feeling of student life. We are progressive, sustainable, inclusive, traditional, non-hierarchical, and egalitarian in both structure and practice. Because we are student-run, we evolve to fit the needs of our changing community every year.

facebook.com/themcgillchavurah/

MCGILL YOGA CLUB

The McGill Yoga club aims to improve the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the community, through yoga! Although our in-person classes are currently suspended, check out our Facebook page for recordings of previous Spiritual Side of Yoga livestreams.

facebook.com/mcgillyc/

MCGILL SIKH STUDENTS

The Sikh Students' Association aims to provide an inclusive space and platform to connect with Sikh students and come together for Sikh-oriented events.

facebook.com/sikhsatmcgill/

HILLEL

Hillel McGill is an organization providing Jewish life and education for both Jews and non-Jews at McGill. They offer a wide variety of (currently online) programs, events, and connection opportunities for everyone to take part in. Hillel's vision is that every student be inspired to take part in Jewish life at McGill. Find them by their handle HillelMTL on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, or by email:

hillelmcgill@ssmu.ca

MUSLIM STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (MSA)

The Muslim Students' Association brings together Muslim students to provide resources, essential services, and educational tools needed to enhance their university experience. Through the services and events provided, the MSA aims to facilitate the spiritual and social growth of its members and the larger McGill community, supporting student needs. Like MSA on Facebook to get updates on this event, as well as all our other initiatives! Email communications@msamcgill.com to join the listserv.

facebook.com/msamcgill/

www.msamcgill.com

**McGILL CHURCH OF JESUS-
CHRIST OF LATTER DAY
SAINTS STUDENT GROUP**

We offer a sense of community and educational opportunities for students interested in the LDS movement. Everyone is welcome! For meeting times, and more info on specific scripture study classes and activities, check out the Montreal LDS Institute Facebook page: JAS de Montréal | Montreal YSA, or send an email to:

celeste.groux@mail.mcgill.ca

FALUN DAFA

Falun Dafa (aka Falun Gong) is a Chinese self-cultivation practice guided by the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. It includes five meditative exercises and, different from other qigong, emphasizes the role of virtue in improving health. Check out our Facebook page for downloadable audiovisual meditation materials!

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**NEWMAN CATHOLIC
STUDENTS' SOCIETY**

Through our vibrant spiritual and social life, we seek to grow in the love of Jesus and spread the joy of his Gospel to the McGill University campus and beyond in a spirit of friendship and service. Inspired by the legacy of Cardinal John Henry Newman, we strive to provide a point of intersection between our lives as students and our lives as Christian disciples.

mcgillcatholics.ca
facebook.com/mcgillcatholics/

**MIDWEEK QUAKER
MEDITATION**

The Montreal Midweek Quaker Meeting is continuing every Wednesday evening, via Zoom! Keep an eye on our Facebook group for updates.

facebook.com/groups/mtlmidweek

AM MCGILL

Am McGill is an egalitarian, event-based Jewish group committed to providing Jewish students with a safe space at McGill. We're currently gearing up for an adapted version of Jewish Frosh! Check out our Facebook page for more info on our group.

Looking for more community connections?

Visit MORSL's website (mcgill.ca/morsl) for additional listings, or come visit our drop-in centre! Open M-F, 10am-4pm. 3495 Rue University, Level 2.

radix

McGill's Student Spirituality Magazine



About our back-cover artist:

*Alissa Luxenberg is a second year psychology student who loves to spend her free hours drawing with a pot of tea by her side. Her piece, titled *Together, Apart*, is dedicated to all the front line workers, such as her mother and sister.*

Interested in this magazine?

Read back issues and [submit](#) your work online.

Call for editors:

We are currently recruiting for Written Word, Visual Arts, and Promotions editors for the next cycle of Radix.

[Applications](#) accepted until September 18th.