

Canadian Theological Society Annual Conference 2024  
in association with Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences

## Sustaining Shared Futures

Montreal, Quebec  
Monday, June 17 – Wednesday, June 19, 2024



**For You Are Carbon,  
And to Carbon You Shall Return**

SaeJin Lee

*Handmade paper*

## Newman Centre Land Acknowledgement

The Newman Centre of McGill University is located on the unceded land traditionally known as Tiohtià:ke. The primary stewards of this land are the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation. It has also historically been a gathering place for many other First Nations, including the other members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Huron/Wendat, the Abenaki, and the Anishinaabeg. It is still home to many diverse Indigenous Peoples today. We are happy to have the opportunity to pray, study, and work on these lands. We commit ourselves to continue taking steps towards the transparent search for truth and fostering reconciliation and healing through the building of relationships with the Indigenous Peoples in Canada. St. Kateri Tekakwitha pray for us.

## Conference Location and the Call of Solidarity

The CTS executive recognizes concerns members have raised regarding the strike underway among McGill law professors and the ongoing situations surrounding the encampment on the McGill campus. We believe that the agenda for our meeting is aligned with the values of dignity, equity, and justice present in these faculty and student movements.

As an act of solidarity with faculty labour movements, the CTS executive initially moved the first day of the conference off the McGill campus to the Newman Centre. We selected the first day because it includes two flagship lectures, the Diversity, Equity, and Justice Lecture and the Newman Lecture. We also canceled our catering order with McGill for the duration of the meeting.

Following escalating tensions surrounding the encampment, the executive decided to move the entire conference to the Newman Centre to ensure members can participate in the conference with personal safety and integrity. A statement regarding violence in Gaza and direct action on university campuses will be presented for discussion at the CTS AGM.

As a small society that survives on a year-to-year budget, and with more than half of the 60 participants in attendance at the meeting being graduate students or people who are precariously employed, this is the extent to which we are financially capable of changing plans to show solidarity at this late date. As an organization in solidarity with the union, the AMPL-AMPD has assured the CTS executive that all members of CTS will receive "picket passes" and those holding a "picket pass" will not be considered by the union to be crossing the picket line. **A PDF picket pass is available here:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZoNnp8T1z2UbnTfiMJSMMK7OVDDuVHK6/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZoNnp8T1z2UbnTfiMJSMMK7OVDDuVHK6/view?usp=drive_link).

FAQ for Congress participants from the union is available here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZkPYrScyQjU4EOM6Qva60P1Ac-5hwFrI/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZkPYrScyQjU4EOM6Qva60P1Ac-5hwFrI/view?usp=drive_link)

The Director of the Newman Centre Liam Farrer has attested that the Newman Association of Montreal Inc., also known as the Newman Centre of McGill University, is a registered charitable foundation (CRA Registered Charity #11905624RR0001) established in accordance with the Roman Catholic Bishops Act R.S.Q., c. E-17 of the Government of Québec. The McGill Newman Catholic Centre, aka the Newman Centre, located at 3484 Rue Peel, Montréal Québec, is owned and operated by the Newman Association of Montréal Inc. By meeting at the McGill Newman Catholic Centre the members of the Canadian Theological Society will be not crossing the picket line.

CTS is very grateful to the Newman Centre for facilitating the relocation of the conference. We recognize that, as the Catholic Chaplaincy to McGill University, the Newman Centre is available to minister to all members of the McGill community during these difficult times. As such, we wish to make it clear that any opinions presented at the conference regarding the AMPL-AMPD labour dispute or the ongoing encampments taking place at McGill or any other universities by either individual members or the CTS as a whole are not the opinions of the Newman Association of Montreal Inc., its affiliates, the Archdiocese of Montréal, or any of the Catholic Ordinariates or Eparchies that include the Island of Montréal as part of their ecclesial circumscription.

### **Online Participation**

The Canadian Theological Society is meeting primarily in an in-person format. While we are happy to provide online options, unfortunately the quality of the technology will be limited. We encourage participants to attend in person if possible.

Through the Congress Virtual Platform, all CTS sessions will be available online to those who have registered for the conference. To attend online, sign into the Congress Virtual Platform using the same email address and password you used to register for Congress:

<https://www.federationhss.ca/en/congress/virtual-platform>

Detailed instructions for online access:

- Go to [federationhss.ca](https://www.federationhss.ca).
- From the banner across the top, click on "Congress," then in the drop-down menu choose "Congress Virtual Platform."
- Use the same log-in information that was used to register for Congress to log in to the platform.
- From the banner at the top, choose "Programming," and then on the drop-down menu choose "Association Conferences."
- The associations are listed numerically, and CTS is #65.
- Click on "View Agenda" underneath the CTS logo. There are four sessions listed. There is a separate link for each day of the event, and for the joint lecture on Wednesday.

## Visual Art at the Canadian Theological Society

As part of our commitment to dignity, equity, and justice, we recognize that theology finds many expressions and takes many different forms. We are grateful that SaeJin Lee has agreed to have works from her series, *For You Are Carbon, And to Carbon You Shall Return...*, projected as part of the meeting as another form of theological reflection on the theme of Sustaining Shared Futures.

### Artist Statement

Ever since I learned about the damaging effects many conventional painting materials have on planet earth, I could not wash away the feelings of guilt and sadness whenever making art. Humans have massive implications to destroy and/or restore, even in our art-making. And, whether we embrace it or not, we live “in relationship with” the world around us. My collection of artwork explores this theme of “relationship” within the natural world. Familiar patterns emerged from the microscopic organisms observed on a petri dish to the milky way expanding across the cosmic universe. We are all connected. I am committed to creating in ways that honors my interconnectedness with the rest of the created world. We all live and die and leave some kind of an imprint in this life. I want my imprint to be one that honors relationship, interconnectedness, and the fullness of life with all creation.

### SaeJin Lee

SaeJin Lee is a Korean-American Artist living in Chicago who spent part of her childhood in Winnipeg. She is a Mennonite Christian who cares deeply about how her belief informs and shapes her action, hopefully towards greater love and justice. Her work explores themes of identity, faith, and what it means to be human in relationship with others and the world, and play. Lee is a visual artist, an art therapist in training from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Children's Advocate for a social service organization supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Website: <https://www.saejinleeart.com/g-a-l-l-e-r-y>



## Further Information

Whether you are a long-time member or attending the CTS annual meeting for the first time, the executive recognizes the importance of clear communication, especially when we are meeting across multiple locations and formats. This detailed program is a living document that aims to provide complete and accurate information regarding all aspects of the conference. Abstracts for lectures, panels, and presentations are below.

Please feel free to reach out with questions:

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President

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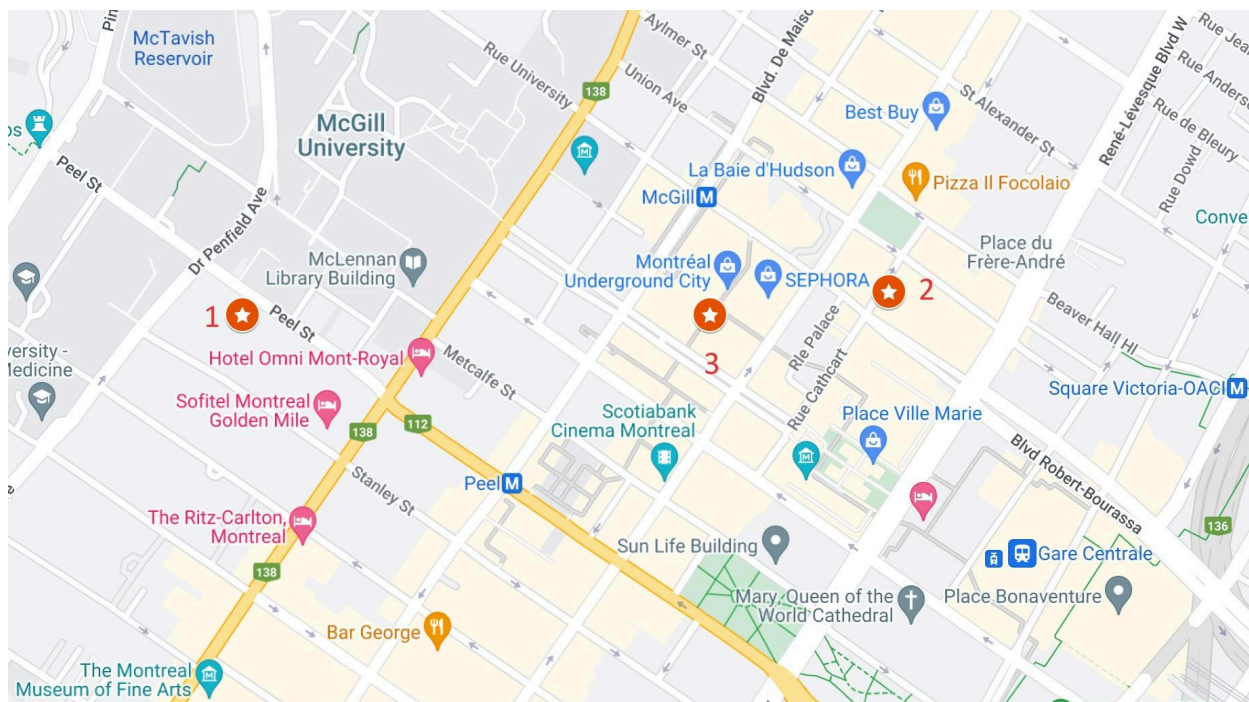
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Program Chair

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## Map



- 1) Newman Centre, 3484 Rue Peel
- 2) Old Dublin Pub, 636 Rue Cathcart (Monday evening reception)
- 3) Time Out Market Montreal, 705 Saint-Catherine St W (Tuesday evening banquet)

## MONDAY, JUNE 17

All Monday sessions take place at the Newman Centre (3484 Rue Peel).

### **8:30-9:00      Introductory Remarks**

*Welcome and orientation to the annual meeting with president Sarah Kathleen Johnson and program chair Meghan Bowen.*

### **9:00-10:00      Panel 1 – “Emerging Methods for Contemporary Issues”**

Moderator: Sarah Kathleen Johnson

- Merciful Dialogue as Theological Method (Meghan Bowen)
- Sin, Anxiety and Bowen Family Systems Theory (Fraser Elsdon)
- Social Reconciliation: The Generative Contention of Spiritual Gift and Social Task (Gordon Rixon)
- The United Church of Canada’s Theology of Inclusion (Don Schweitzer)

10:00-10:10    Transition (10 minutes)

### **10:10-11:00    Panel 2 – “Theologies of Treaty” (proposed panel)**

Moderator: Christina Conroy

Ray Aldred, Matthew Anderson

### **11:00-11:20    Break (20 minutes)**

### **1120-12:30    DEJ Panel 1 – Which Way Canada? An Afro-Migration Timeline**

Moderator: Fiona Li

Dr. Dorothy Williams

*This lecture is organized by the Dignity, Equity, and Justice committee and features Dorothy Williams, PhD, a historian who specializes in Black Canadian history. She has authored three books on Blacks in Montreal.*

### **12:30-13:30    Networking Lunch**

*All members of CTS are encouraged to remain at the Newman Centre for the networking lunch. Table groups will be hosted by members of the CTS executive. It will be focused on discussion topics with particular attention to themes of interest to graduate students. At least one table discussion will focus on labour movements in higher education. Food is provided by CTS.*

### **13:30-14:30    Panel 3 – “Resistance and Critique of Normative Narratives”**

Moderator: Darren Dias

- Refusing to “Sustain” the Future (Ryan Turnbull)
- Relinquishing Hope at the End (Kayko Driedger Hesslein)

- The Desire of Every Living Thing: Cosmotheandric Christology and Ecological Collapse (Brett Potter)
- The Naming of Eve in Genesis 3 and Anthropocentric Sin (Rosemary Boissoneau)

**14:30-14:50 Break (20 minutes)**

**14:50-16:00 Newman Lecture – “From Vertical to Horizontal: World Repairing Work for the Common Good”**

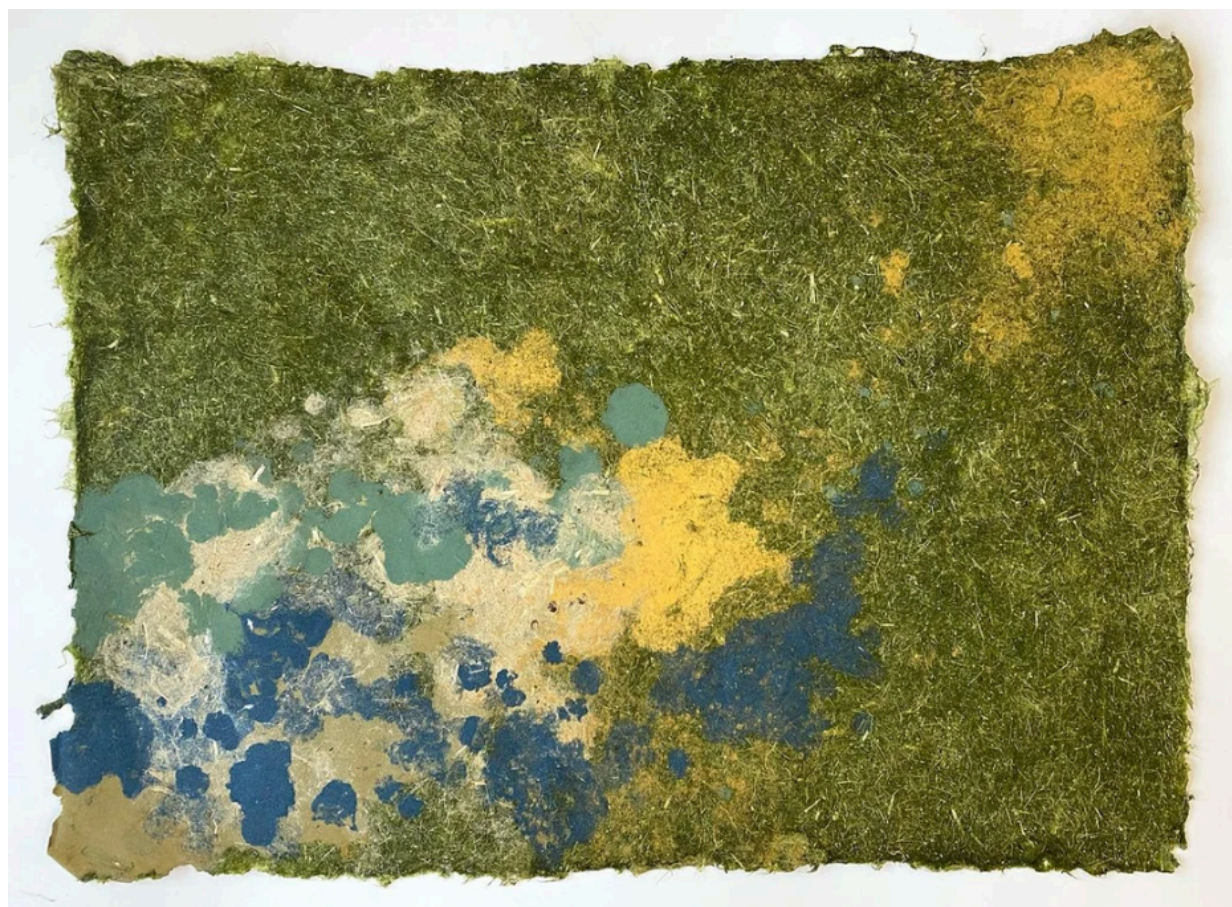
Moderator: Sarah Kathleen Johnson

Dr. Lori Beaman

*The Jay Newman Memorial Lecture in the Philosophy of Religion is offered annually thanks to support from a bequest received from former president of CTS Dr. Jay Newman (1948-2007).*

**16:00-18:00 Reception / President’s Cocktail Hour (event presented by FHSS)**

*As an alternative to participation in the President’s Cocktail Hour, all are invited to gather at a local pub, Le Vieux Dublin (636 Rue Cathcart). Participants are responsible for purchasing their own food and beverages.*



## TUESDAY, JUNE 18

All Tuesday sessions take place at the Newman Centre (3484 Rue Peel).

### 9:00-10:00 Panel 4 – “Problematizing and Expanding Boundaries”

Moderator: Nicholas Olkovich

- Healing as Journey toward Wholeness: Articulating the Complementary Roles of Psychology and Spiritual Theology in Human Development (Jean-Pierre Fortin)
- Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Understanding of the Beatific Vision and the Art Form of Drama (Li-Wei Liu)
- Christian Martyrdom, Violence, and the Catholicity of Interpretation (Jeremy M. Bergen)
- Our Common Home as Sacramental Communion: The Interdependent Sacramentality of Creation at the Heart of the Ecotheology and Cosmology of Laudato Si (Fr. Warren Schmidt)

10:00-10:10 Transition (10 minutes)

### 10:10-11:00 Panel 5 – “Healing Haunted Histories: Exploring Decolonization Identities in Graduate Studies” (proposed panel)

Moderator: Sheila Smith

Joshua Zentner-Barrett, Erik Sorensen, SJ, Nnaemeka Ali, OMI, Dr. Christine Jamieson

### 11:00-11:20 Break (20 minutes)

### 11:20-12:30 DEJ Panel 2 - “Interrogating the (Im)Possibility of Shared Futures”

Moderator: Reid Locklin

Ahmeda Mansaray-Richardson, Rubén David Bonilla Ramos, Deivit Montealegre Cuenca

*This panel is organized by the Dignity, Equity, and Justice committee.*

### 12:30-13:30 Lunch

*No formal lunch is organized or provided as part of the CTS meeting. You are encouraged to connect informally with other CTS members over lunch on your own.*

### 13:30-14:20 Panel 6 – “Lonergan and Settler Colonialism: A Critical Re-Appropriation” (proposed panel)

Moderator: Ryan Turnbull

Reid Locklin, Kyle Ferguson, Deanna Zantingh, Christine Jamieson

### 14:20-14:40 Break (20 minutes)

### 14:40-15:30 Panel 7 – “Decentring Epistemologies”



Moderator: Darren Dias

- Assessing the Development of Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa and its Effect on African Christianity and Society – A Case Study of the Ghanaian Context (Felix Percy Longdon)
- A Story of the Teepee in the St. Thomas More College Chapel, Postsecularism, and Inculturation: The Emic and Etic in Interdisciplinary Conversation (Christopher Hrynkow)
- “Renewing Rural Worship” through Receptive Ecumenism (Mykayla Turner)

15:30-15:40 Transition (10 minutes)

### **15:40-16:30 AGM**

*All participants attending the annual conference are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Canadian Theological Society. Topics we anticipate will be covered at the AGM include: reports from the executive, plans for the next annual conference, election of individuals nominated for office, the annual budget, and a motion regarding violence in Gaza and encampments on university campuses. The material for the AGM, including the agenda, is available here:*

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KVKY39VjWQ3fWi3Nmw6arItYhir0EZYQqXFfXQ8Opqc/edit?usp=sharing>

### **16:30-18:00 Break**

*Please take this time to connect with other members of CTS and make your way to the banquet location.*

### **18:00 – Banquet**

*CTS does not cover the cost of the banquet. Members must purchase their own food and drinks. A reservation has been made for forty people at the Time Out Market*

*(<https://www.timeoutmarket.com/montreal/en/>). CTS members who wish to participate in the banquet are asked to sign up on Monday so the reservation can be finalized. These spots will be given to the first forty people who sign up. Formal attire is not expected. Please feel free to dress as you would throughout the conference.*

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19

All Wednesday sessions take place at the Newman Centre (3484 Rue Peel).

**9:00-10:30 Joint Lecture with the Canadian Society of Church History, the Canadian Catholic Historical Association, and the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies – “A Truly African Christianity: The Leadership of John G. Gatu”**

Dr. Tim Larsen

*The Canadian Theological Society is grateful to the Canadian Society of Church History for inviting us to partner in this joint lecture. This session is made possible with the financial support of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.*

**10:30-11:00 Break**

**11:00-11:50 Panel 8 – “Experiments in Decolonization: On the Writing of Ethical Guidelines to Address Spiritual Violence Committed by Christian Among Indigenous Peoples in Canada”**  
(proposed panel)

Moderator: Lori Ransom

Christine Jamieson, Ven. Roselyn Kantlaht’ant Elm, Christina Conroy

**11:50-13:00 Lunch**

*No formal lunch is organized or provided as part of the CTS meeting. You are encouraged to connect informally with other CTS members over lunch on your own.*

**13:00-13:50 Panel 9 – “Future Vision of Liberation and Inclusion”**

Moderator: Meghan Bowen

- Theologizing Canadian Landscapes as Black Futures (Channelle Robinson)
- Harvey Milk and the Legacy of Hope: A Theological Virtue for Today (Tilly Flood)
- Pope Francis and the Politics of the New Evangelization (Nick Olkovich)

**13:50-14:00 Transition (10 minutes)**

**14:00-14:50 Panel 10 – “Women: Advocacy and Liberation”**

Moderator: Christina Conroy

- Eros and Mysticism as Liberating Theology (Emmanuelle Christie)
- The Lord has Heard the Desire of the Poor: How Thomas Aquinas’ *Commentary on Psalms* can Help the Church Understand and Address the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Liam Farrer)
- “Quieter, feminine, emotional”: Enacting and Disrupting Biblical Womanhood on the Contemporary Worship Stage (Anneli Loepp Thiessen)

**14:50-15:10 Break (20 minutes)**

**15:10-16:00 Presidential Address**

Moderator: Nicholas Olkovich

Dr. Sarah Kathleen Johnson

*The annual meeting of CTS concludes with an address from the president.*

**16:00-16:30 Closing Remarks**



# Abstracts and Presentation Descriptions

## Newman Lecture

Location: Newman Centre (3484 Rue Peel)

### **“From Vertical to Horizontal: World Repairing Work for the Common Good” – Dr. Lori Beaman**

Drawing on data from the Nonreligion in a Complex Future Project, this talk considers the challenges of living well together as religious and nonreligious people. It will focus on human relationships with other terrestrials, and consider an emerging horizontal social imaginary.

## Joint Lecture with the Canadian Society of Church History, the Canadian Catholic Historical Association, and the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies

Location: Newman Centre (3484 Rue Peel)

### **“A Truly African Christianity: The Leadership of John G. Gatũ” – Dr. Tim Larsen**

*This session is made possible with the financial support of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences*

John Gachango Gatũ was one of the most important Kenyan church leaders of his generation. As a young man, he was highly active in the Mau Mau movement to resist British colonialism. He then became a minister and rose to prominence. He was the first African to serve as general secretary of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and went on to be moderator. He held influential positions in numerous Christian organizations, including the All Africa Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches. He is best remembered for his call – first made in 1971 – for a moratorium on Western missionaries in the developing world. Gatũ published multiple books. It is now possible to assess his thought, life, and leadership on their own terms. He emphasized three distinctives of his churchmanship: he was a revivalist who was deeply committed to the East African Revival Movement; an ecumenist who worked tirelessly for Christian cooperation and unity; and, most of all, an Africanist, who sought to inhabit and commend a truly African Christianity.



## Presidential Address

Location: Newman Centre (3484 Rue Peel)

### **“Listening for Lived Theologies of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada” – Dr. Sarah Kathleen Johnson**

Christian complicity in colonialism and the need for truth telling and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples have been a central focus of academic theological research shared at the Canadian Theological Society in recent years. Many Canadian churches have offered official apologies and made formal commitments to right relations with Indigenous peoples. This presidential address considers the experience of “people in the pews.” Taking a diffuse visual art installation of white ceramic feathers as a starting point, it traces the contours of how local congregations in the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa are engaged with truth and reconciliation. It names the need to bridge the gap between academic theology and lived theology, and official church statements and everyday practices in congregations. It invites theologians to consider the questions: Whom are we listening to? Who is listening to us?



## Proposed Panels

*The following panels were proposed collaboratively by groups of scholars for presentation at CTS.*

### **Panel 2 – “Theologies of Treaty”**

Ray Aldred, Matthew Anderson, Christina Conroy

To sustain a shared future (the Congress theme) on Turtle Island, we can rely on the theological resources of Treaty, which if they had been honoured, would already have given us a shared past and an identity better fitted for a shared future on this land. The panel will draw on resources from Aldred and Anderson’s February 2024 publication of the expanded and revised edition of *Our Home and Treaty Land* (Friesen Publishing, 2024).

The problem our scholarship engages is the general lack of awareness in Canadian society of Treaty, the lack of the “theology of Treaty” among Canadians, and a corresponding ignorance of the ways in which Treaty-making (and the Ceremonies around it) were and always have been inescapably spiritual. Our ignorance of the spiritual resources offered by Treaty, and possible solutions to that ignorance, can be uniquely addressed by those working in Theological studies.

### **Panel 5 – “Healing Haunted Histories: Exploring Decolonization Identities in Graduate Studies”**

Joshua Zentner-Barrett, Erik Sorensen, SJ, Nnaemeka Ali, OMI, Dr. Christine Jamieson

New possibilities for a settler discipleship are opening that can assist in the decolonization of academia. *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers examines the places, peoples, and spirits that have formed—and deformed—settler identities while asking what “response-ability” looks like for settlers today. This panel consists of three graduate students from the Centre on the Churches, Truth, and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples (CCTR) at Saint Paul University’s Faculty of Theology. They discuss the impact of *Healing Haunted Histories* on their current research work and on their identities as settlers engaged in research related to reconciliation. Founded in 2021, CCTR works to engage questions of reconciliation in ecumenical church contexts across Canada through regular events, dialogues, and a book series. In 2023, the Centre added a Graduate Seminar to its activities, which meets bi-weekly to explore issues of reconciliation and the churches in the research of current students.

### **Panel 6 – “Lonergan and Settler Colonialism: A Critical Re-Appropriation”**

Reid Locklin, Kyle Ferguson, Deanna Zantingh, Christine Jamieson

This year’s conference theme, “Sustaining Shared Futures,” invites us to reflect on the complex interconnections that define our natural world, as well as our fields of study. This panel engages a specific point of human interconnection: the legacy of Bernard JF Lonergan, SJ

(1904-1984) and the legacy of the Indian Residential School System. Importantly, this includes two schools sponsored by Lonergan's own religious order, the Society of Jesus: in Canada, the Residential Schools at Spanish, Ontario, 1913-1965; in the United States, the boarding school at Holy Rosary Mission, c. 1909-1980. The histories of these schools—and the grimmest chapters of these histories—correspond nearly perfectly with Lonergan's own life and career.

### **Panel 8 – “Experiments in Decolonization: On the Ethical Guidelines to Address Spiritual Violence Committed by Christians Among Indigenous Peoples in Canada”**

Christine Jamieson, Ven. Roselyn Kantlaht'ant Elm, Christina Conroy Lori Ransom

To sustain a shared future in Canada, The Very Reverend Stan Mackay (Cree) asked Christian theologians to intentionally address the legacy of spiritual violence committed by Christians (as named in the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada's Final Report, Volume Six), and to create guidelines for the Canadian church for ethical engagement with Indigenous communities. This inaugurated a multi-year project undertaken by Lori Ransom (Algonquin). As this project is in the final stages before publication, panelists will discuss their attempt to decolonize the process of theologizing itself, addressing the challenges of thinking, convening, collaborating, consulting and writing.

## **Constructed Panels**

*The following panels were constructed thematically by the program chair based on individual paper submissions.*

### **Panel 1 – “Emerging Methods for Contemporary Issues”**

#### **Merciful Dialogue as Theological Method (Meghan Bowen)**

In his *motu proprio Ad Theologiam Provendam*, Pope Francis has called for a paradigm shift in Catholic theology, based in a contextual concern that can interpret the Gospel in the lived reality of all people. Features of the pope's vision include the development of theology within a culture of dialogue and encounter, and an inductive method where theologians allow themselves to be challenged by reality. My argument is that Pope Francis' vision of dialogue in the Church shares important characteristics with the methodology of some social sciences, and thus such methodology can guide a renewal of the task of theology. Disciplines such as folklore and ethnomusicology rely heavily on maintaining a distinction between the 'etic' (outsider) and 'emic' (insider) positions while conducting research. The statements of the informant are taken *as if* objectively true, allowing the researcher to bridge the difference between the etic and emic perspectives. Employing such a method, the researcher is able to understand better the experience of the informant from their own perspective, which can then be translated more effectively to an audience. The proposed paper will explore how a more explicit adoption of an

emic position within theological methodology can lead to an increased ability of the theologian to engage effectively with the wider world.

### **Sin, Anxiety and Bowen Family Systems Theory (Fraser Elsdon)**

According to Bowen Family Systems Theory, polarization emerges in a system because of the anxiety that comes from change and disequilibrium. Considering the level of uncertainty faced by congregations in an increasingly unreligious country like Canada, and by broader society in the face of global phenomena like climate change and artificial intelligence, understanding the role that anxiety plays in polarized conflict will be crucial. Societal and global problems require cooperation, not polarized grasping for false security. For Christians, the selfish, shortsighted play for security in the face of existential anxiety has a name: sin. In this paper I will compare the concept of sin, especially as described by twentieth century protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, with the notion of anxiety in Bowen Family Systems. The aims are to give Bowen a theological basis that will make it more meaningful to Christian communities experiencing change, and to help to revive the concept of sin for contemporary Christians. A robust analysis of the relationship between anxiety and sin, paired with the tools provided by Bowen, might contribute to the de-polarization needed in Christian communities as they as they seek to face contemporary crises.

### **Social Reconciliation: The Generative Contention of Spiritual Gift and Social Task (Gordon Rixon)**

In some recent Indigenous – Jesuit encounters, something gifted from beyond myself and my companions has emerged to hold the generative contention of truth-telling, vulnerability, mutual acknowledgment, the demand for justice, resilience, courage, and the promise of more profound solidarity. My reflections begin with two theological observations grounded in this gift. We do not save ourselves. God does not save us without us. Reconciliation, in sum, is a spiritual gift and a social task, an undomesticated, transcendent contention that eludes control and resolution as it charges the social field in which higher education and other contemporary social and cultural institutions draw their breath and speak their truths.

The contention of secularism, pluralism, and belonging in individual lives and the historical movements of communities provides the context for theological reflection on journeys toward reconciliation. Some aggrieved communities take exception to the notion of "reconciliation" observation that there was no original conciliation to be restored. This charge has been put forth by Indigenous communities who have suffered the denigration of their culture, language, and land-based economic activity through colonization. During Pope Francis's July 2022 penitential pilgrimage with Indigenous communities across Canada, he reflected on the meaning of conciliation as bringing issues to council to be addressed by an assembly of those concerned. This process of encounter and dialogue signals a pivotal practical shift in the approach of the highest level of leadership in the Roman Catholic Church, which is now finding further expression in the process adopted by the Synod on Synods.

In my presentation, I reflect on the practice of spiritual conversation that advises the synodal process and the contention between spiritual gift and social task on the journey to conciliation.



### **The United Church of Canada's Theology of Inclusion (Don Schweitzer)**

After the 1960s, as cultural, linguistic, racial and other differences increasingly defined peoples' identities, inclusivity became one of The United Church of Canada's (UCC) defining characteristics and goals. But in 2000 a critique arose within the UCC of inclusivity as presuming a power imbalance between those deciding who will be included and how, and those being included. This critique continued as the UCC embarked on becoming an intercultural church. In the UCC's 2022 strategic plan, inclusivity is scarcely mentioned. Yet the theme of inclusivity permeates the strategic plan and other UCC documents. Inclusivity has been sublated in the UCC; its enduring values have taken up and preserved in the UCC's theology of an intercultural church. The presentation will demonstrate this, then engage the UCC's concept of inclusion with ideas of Michael Walzer, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor and Miroslav Volf. Finally, the nature and grounding of inclusivity in the doctrine of God will be discussed using ideas of Gustavo Gutierrez.

### **Panel 3 – “Resistance and Critique of Normative Narratives”**

#### **Refusing to “Sustain” the Future (Ryan Turnbull)**

Despite much evidence to the contrary, Christianity is not in the “sustaining” business. The crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus is both God's sovereign “No” to the World and its economies of Death and alienation and God's “Yes” to Life and a future that radically disrupts this fallen World. With this in mind, we ought to approach with suspicion proposals to ‘sustain’ the future, whether that be the future of the World, or the Church. We are all too prone to idolatrous projects to sustain precisely the forces of Death and alienation of this World and refuse the grace that God never ceases to offer. To make this more concrete for Christians in the Canadian context, I seek to think theologically with Eve Tuck's critique of “settler futurity” as a lens that exposes the idolatrous ways the Church has concretely sought to “sustain” its future here and now. For Tuck, “settler futurity” names the unquestionable permanence of the settler colonial project of replacement. It is the assumed premise prior to any settler willingness to engage in projects of inclusion, and so, Indigenous presence is only permitted insofar as it does not perform any significant challenge to the hegemony of settler futures. I follow Tuck in arguing that the Church should embrace an Indigenous futurity - which is a futurity that does not foreclose on settler presence, but does on settler hegemony - as the only appropriate posture for a church whose future is only and always sustained through death and resurrection.

#### **Relinquishing Hope at the End (Kayko Driedger Hesslein)**

In 2018, professor of sustainability leadership, Jem Bendell, published, “Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy,” in which he proposed that societal collapse is not only inevitable, but has already begun, as witnessed in the exponentially accumulating effects of climate, biosphere, agricultural/food, economic, and governmental collapses. (Bendell, “Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy”)

One of Bendell's proposals for deep adaption includes moving towards relinquishment, which means “letting go of certain assets, behaviours and beliefs where retaining them could

make matters worse." (Bendell, "Deep Adaptation") For Christians theologians, the question is, what beliefs should be relinquished because they are making matters worse?

Timothy Beal, in *When Time is Short: Finding Our Way in the Anthropocene* (Beacon: 2023) proposes that the problem lies in Christian appropriation of the omnipotence of God and in seeking to replace God on earth. Beal does not, however, explore the possibility of a second destructive belief: a linear salvation history that is fulfilled in the eschaton. This proposal will explore how "kicking the can down the road" in terms of anticipated eschatological deliverance is harming our response to climate collapse and intensifying suffering. It will do this through the lens of Indigenous theologians and their emphases on non-linear time (Vine Deloria Jr, George Tinker, and Randy Woodley), as well as that of Miguel A. De la Torre in *Embracing Hopelessness*. Can relinquishing our attachment to salvation history prevent further suffering as collapse intensifies?

### **The Desire of Every Living Thing: Cosmotheandric Christology and Ecological Collapse (Brett Potter)**

Environmental philosopher and evolutionary biologist Andreas Weber has advocated for a "poetic ecology" which characterizes the emergence of life as a manifestation of desire. For Weber the "auto-poiesis" inherent to life is intricately bound up with intersubjectivity, or what Buddhist spiritual writer Thich Nhat Hanh called "interbeing" – a yearning for touch, connection, and relationship.

Christian theologians have sought to express similar ecospiritual insights. As *Laudato Si'* puts it, all living creatures "tend" towards God and each other, existing within a "web of relationships" with deep Trinitarian resonances. Ilia Delio, influenced by Pannikar and Bonaventure, goes a step further in describing the evolutionary process "by which Trinity becomes cosmos, and cosmos becomes christified." The unfolding love of the Trinity pulses throughout creation, drawing all things towards their desired "end" in Christ.

These rich, poetic accounts of desire and love at the heart of creation are deeply evocative. However, as *Laudato Si'* has pointed out our context is the anthropogenic climate crisis, a grim situation where the earth is "burdened and laid waste." If love and the desire for relationship are constitutive of biological life, then ecological collapse must be seen as a brutal and devastating crucifixion of this primal Desire.

In theological terms, then, a christology attuned to "the desire of every living thing" (Ps. 145:16) must also be a theology of the cross – a poetic account of cosmotheandric love crucified and resurrected. Through engagement with Delio, Pannikar, and Weber, this paper aims to articulate a poetic christology of eco-desire for an age of climate catastrophe.

### **The Naming of Eve in Genesis 3 and Anthropocentric Sin (Rosemary Boissoneau)**

To respond to the world's ever-growing socio-ecological crises, an eco-centric approach to biblical interpretation is urgently needed so that theologians and exegetes might (re)discover the bible as a valuable resource to recognize and redress the harms that humans are causing. My presentation uses an ecofeminist and decolonial lens to examine Genesis 3:20, the curious interlude between the divine curses and the expulsion from the garden when the first human renames the woman Eve. I argue that by naming the female human "the mother of all living," the humans reject the sacred maternal life force of the earth (*adamah* in Hebrew) from which

they were made and hence devalue all creation in an act of anthropocentric hubris. Humanity declares that the woman is the source of earthly life, ignoring how earlier in the narrative God works cooperatively with the *adamah* to create all plants and animals (Gen 2:9, 19). Interpreters explain that in the story the humans seek to be equal to God when they eat from the tree of knowledge, but these same scholars fail to recognize that in renaming the woman Eve, the humans deny *adamah's* role as creation's eternal life force and center themselves in that position. Thus, Genesis 3:20 depicts the original sin of anthropocentrism. Considering the Eden story from this earth-centric perspective offers a way to understand anthropocentrism as sin and inspires much needed discussions around ecological conversion and healing.

#### **Panel 4 – “Problematizing and Expanding Boundaries”**

##### **Healing as Journey toward Wholeness: Articulating the Complementary Roles of Psychology and Spiritual Theology in Human Development (Jean-Pierre Fortin)**

Drawing on the recent work of Gabor Maté, a renowned Canadian physician specializing in the treatment of addiction and trauma, this presentation will argue that the synergetic interaction of the disciplines of psychology and spiritual theology is prevented by inadequate (deterministic and materialistic) understandings of normality and health, prevailing in all branches of medical practice. Instead, Maté proposes to understand illness as a dynamic process, which allows psychologists to consider patients as active participants able to exercise agency within it. Healing can then be envisioned as a return to a state of wholeness and medicine as assistant to nature (instead of replacement for it). In this perspective, healing turns into a spiritual journey toward a fulsome self. Psychology assists individuals who have wandered away from the “mean” of normality to recover it; the aim being to turn abnormal/unhealthy/pathological behaviours/habits/relationships into normal/healthy/fulfilling ones. In complementary and opposite fashion, spiritual theology attempts to make, out of so-called “normal” (healthy) and “mature” (adult) individuals, abnormal ones attuned to the transcendent (beyond nature). Spiritual theology involves the reconfiguration of images and concepts of God in light of the lived (human) experience of God. This reshaping does not remain at the level of intellectual understanding, as it translates into a new way of life, and new modes of interaction with others and nature. Spiritual growth enables and finds expression in a unique personal vocation. Psychological healing and spiritual formation can thus be understood as complementary and necessary components of healthy human development and living.

##### **Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Understanding of the Beatific Vision and the Art Form of Drama (Li-Wei Liu)**

Hans Urs von Balthasar’s teaching on the beatific vision has been drawing scholarly attention. Considering how the beatific vision is upheld in traditional Catholic theology, Balthasar’s critics worry that his account of Christ’s vision of God in accordance with Christ’s immediate vision of God (*visio immediata Dei*) and his vision of death (*visio mortis*) have betrayed the teaching of the beatific vision, resulting in the sundering of union between the Father and the Son, especially during the descent.

Joshua Brotherton recently suggested that Balthasar’s soteriology does not necessarily sunder the ontological union between the Father and the incarnate Son. While I agree with

Brotherton that Balthasar does not reject the beatific vision, Brotherton's attempt to defend Balthasar's position is unable to resolve the seemingly contradictory statements Balthasar makes in the *Theodramatik*. Brotherton's shortcoming is that he does not seriously take into account the dramatic nature of Balthasar's soteriology.

By building upon the works of Aidan Nichols and Anne Carpenter, I advance the discussion by demonstrating that the dramatic and artistic-poetic grounding of Balthasar's theo-drama shapes the way he understands the beatific vision. Balthasar transposes the Catholic understanding of the beatific vision according to the art form of drama. This results in his allowing of *visio immediata* and *visio mortis* to do the work of transposing the meaning of the beatific vision, understood in a way of interpreting the seeing of the divine essence as a union of love in conversation with the Thomistic perspective of an immediate knowledge of God.

### **Christian Martyrdom, Violence, and the Catholicity of Interpretation (Jeremy M. Bergen)**

In light of the many forms of violence which disrupt and undermine a sustained and shared future for human beings, my presentation considers the moral implications of Christian martyrdom as a framework of interpretation. On the one hand violence or nonviolence may be advanced as commitments for which a martyr may die, as in Matthew Lundberg's proposal that Christians killed in a just war are potential martyrs, or Rubén Rosario Rodríguez's proposal that martyr narratives are resources for rejecting and resisting political violence. However, my focus is on how the very structure of martyrdom as interpretative practice may lend itself to violence. Scholars have argued that to the extent that martyrdom is premised on self-sacrifice, non-compromise, purity, and/or defining of enemies, it functionally promotes violence.

In this short presentation, which is part of larger project on martyrdom and the unity of the church, I examine how the legacies of two men who were ultimately executed by German Nazi authorities and are widely recognized as martyrs—Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Franz Jägerstätter—illuminate the interpretative challenges of martyrdom and violence. In both cases, the relationship of their stories to violence is implicated in a tension between the local and the global, a tension which the Christian traditions frames as catholicity.

### **Our Common Home as Sacramental Communion: The Interdependent Sacramentality of Creation at the Heart of the Ecotheology and Cosmology of Laudato Si (Fr. Warren Schmidt)**

Catholic theology today has undervalued the sacramental nature of creation. It particularly tends to focus on what differentiates the seven liturgically celebrated events defined by the Church as sacraments from other rites such as sacramentals. It narrowly considers the nature and definition of the sacraments. Overall, western Christian theology has paid scant attention to the sacramentality of creation. A sacramental cosmology has become more developed in Eastern Christianity, especially in the last twenty years, than in Western Christian thought. Nonetheless, some theological studies have engaged phenomenological approaches to sacramental theology that focus on the full subjectivity of both God and the human participant, both on an individual and communal level, in the liturgical celebration of the sacraments. And the introduction to Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, defines the Church itself as "in the nature of a sacrament."

I will argue in this paper that a sacramental ecotheology forms the foundation of Pope



Francis' encyclical letter "On Care for Our Common Home," *Laudato Si'*. I will focus primarily on two points within his letter. First, Francis refers in *Laudato Si'*'s introduction to Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople's Closing Remarks to the 2012 Halki Summit on "Global Responsibility and Sustainability." Chapter IV of *Laudato Si'* develops Francis' argument that created beings exist as an interdependent "sacramental communion." Here Francis most clearly defines the sacramental nature of creation and argues that this is essential to an ethic of care for creation.

## **Panel 7 – "Decentring Epistemologies"**

### **Assessing the Development of Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa and its Effect on African Christianity and Society – A Case Study of the Ghanaian Context (Felix Percy Longdon)**

Biblical interpretation is an integral part of Christianity, especially in Africa, which is known to have a wide range of socio-religious beliefs and practices. Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2012) affirms that Biblical Studies is the study of the Judeo-Christian Bible and related texts, which seeks to determine the meaning of the biblical books of given passages, especially as intended by biblical writers for their addressees. He examines how over the past few centuries biblical studies have been categorized into three broad areas, namely:

- a. the world behind the text,
- b. the world within the text, and
- c. the world in front of the text (Tate, 2008).

For him, the third category is oriented towards the reader(s) or reading community and the part they play in the communication process. This allows readers to bring their own understanding and concerns to biblical texts. One can argue that it is important to read the bible from one's own origin for better understanding, because communities differ from one location to the other – in terms of the way of life, such as language, beliefs, values, customs, norms, experiences, ideologies, etc. Nyiawung (2013), notes that African Biblical Hermeneutics (ABH) is about how issues raised in the bible can be interpreted and addressed within the social, cultural, and religious context of Africa. David Adamo (2015:63-64) also suggests that the purpose of ABH is not only to understand the bible and God in the context of African experience and culture, but also to "break the hermeneutical hegemony and ideological stranglehold that Eurocentric biblical scholars have long enjoyed."

This paper seeks to assess the development of ABH and its effects on African Christianity and society, using the Ghanaian context as a framework for a common understanding of the Bible across various societies within Africa.

### **A Story of the Teepee in the St. Thomas More College Chapel, Postsecularism, and Inculturation: The Emic and Etic in Interdisciplinary Conversation (Christopher Hrynkow)**

A recent distinguished visitor to STM, the religiously literate sociologist Michelle Dillon, publicly named the teepee in the chapel as a postsecular phenomenon as part of her November 2023 Keenan lecture. In more theological terms, the teepee can also be considered as a sort of inculturated witness, building upon the theology of the in-between proposed by Carl Starkloff (1933-2008). Drawing upon a series of interviews conducted in late 2023 and early 2024 with members of the STM's Advisory Circle for Indigenous Spirituality and Reconciliation, the Action

Group for Authentic Indigenization (charged with incarnating an action area from STM's current strategic plan), and the chaplaincy team, this presentation will bring the emic and etic into interdisciplinary conversation. Specially, with aid of visuals presented via PowerPoint and referencing the aforementioned interview data, this presentation will tell a story of the tepee in the chapel and analyse the tensions and promises of naming the tepee as both (1) a postsecular phenomenon and (2) an inculturated witness placed within the Treaty Six context of responsibilities. It will conclude arguing that the framing of inculturated witness aligns better with the intensions named in the STM College plan, and, crucially, with insights articulated by Indigenous actors who animated the teepee's raising of the teepee under consideration, and also better accords with the sometimes turbulent reception of the teepee in the STM chapel by settlers and Indigenous people in Treaty Six, as STM works toward being a (re)conciling community.

### **“Renewing Rural Worship” through Receptive Ecumenism (Mykayla Turner)**

Canada's ecclesial landscape reflects rising disinterest in group religious activities (Cornelissen 2021). Given this statistic, it is essential for rural congregations with limited resources to navigate issues of selfhood, sustainability, and resourcefulness in a spirit of kinship rather than competition. For instance, The Church at Nairn, a Mennonite congregation in southwestern Ontario, is hosting an ecumenical workshop series with a focus on “renewing rural worship” in April 2024. With the financial support of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, more than 200 congregations are receiving invitations to participate in the project. This paper will evaluate the success of The Church at Nairn's efforts on the basis of receptive ecumenism, which holds “learn[ing] with integrity from other traditions” in higher esteem than clinging to one's own ecclesial “distinctives” (Murray 2007; Bergen 2020).

Rural congregations maintain a multidimensional commitment to community, hospitality, and belonging (Beck and Kleeberger 2022). While some scholars warn that this “rural idyll” might foster homogeneous communities resistant to change, I contend that a congregation implicitly subjects their liturgical assumptions and practices to the influence of “the Other” by participating in The Church at Nairn's initiative (Woods 2005; Higgins 2006; Klassen 2019). Proceeding from this claim, I will apply a qualitative research lens to the third workshop in the series, which encourages participants to “explore and exchange” worship resources, to consider whether their rural values militate against receptive ecumenism or enable them to “dare” and “share” for the sake of a sustainable future (Beardsall, Budde, and McDonald, 2018).

## **Panel 9 – “Future Vision of Liberation and Inclusion”**

### **Theologizing Canadian Landscapes as Black Futures (Chanelle Robinson)**

Harriet Tubman, named the “Black Moses,” led hundreds of enslaved Black people into freedom from chattel bondage in the American South. Visions and dreams were central to Tubman's navigation of pathways to freedom. Major uprisings, such as the liberation at the Combahee River, were attributed to Tubman's dreams. While womanist theology has articulated the lived experiences of African American women, the Canadian landscape remains an underexplored aspect of the discipline. As a person who navigated the dynamics of Black life in

the United States and Canada, Tubman's mystical biography presents the possibilities of expanding a diasporic approach to womanist theology. In this presentation, I recover Harriet Tubman as an integral figure for womanist theology and Afrofuturism. Building on Alice Walker's description of womanism and Delores Williams's systematic theology, I argue that Tubman's border-crossing actions underpin a praxis of survival. Everyday mysticism, discerned from the life of Harriet Tubman, emerges as a grammar for rethinking the survival possibilities and geographies of womanist theology.

### **Harvey Milk and the Legacy of Hope: A Theological Virtue for Today (Tilly Flood)**

Harvey Milk was a Jewish American politician and gay activist who was assassinated in San Francisco in 1978. Throughout his life Milk fought fiercely for the rights of the gay community and other marginalised groups in society. Shortly before his death he gave his most famous speech The Hope Speech in which he underlines the importance of people being open and transparent about their sexuality in order to provide positive role models and a sense of hope to the next generation.

The theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love are often referred to in the New Testament, and date back to Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). These are thought to be foundational to the Christian life.

My paper will be an examination of the irony that a gay man uses a Christian theological virtue (Hope) to reach out to the people, the Christian church have largely rejected.

Despite the best efforts of Harvey Milk and others who followed him, queer people still suffer discrimination and prejudice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and this is inextricably linked to organised religion. The most recent example of this being the Anglican Archbishop of Uganda supporting laws which would see the death penalty being brought against gays and lesbians.

My paper will examine whether people of homosexual orientation within the church, have any reason to hope their situation will improve, so that we can all be part of a shared future going forward.

### **Pope Francis and the Politics of the New Evangelization (Nick Olkovich)**

Benjamin Bennett-Carpenter contends that the phrase <New Evangelization> may be understood as an 'ideograph' a symbolic reference point that galvanizes Catholics with different ideological sensibilities. This paper explores the 'political' struggle to fix the meaning of this ideograph after the Second Vatican Council by distinguishing between two broad trends. The roots of the new evangelization as a nodal point in the post-conciliar era lie in the Latin American Church's appropriation of Vatican II beginning with CELAM II at Medellin in 1968. This first strand of interpretation views justice as a 'constitutive' dimension of the church's mission and tends to view evangelization in light of <liberation>. Articulated by John Paul II, a second more mainstream or official strand views evangelization in principally 'spiritual' terms and focuses on developing 'new methods' for communicating doctrine and on fostering personal conversion to Christ within the secularized west. This approach tends to overemphasize humankind's vertical relationship to God – as well as the uniqueness of Christ – and to view the poor as recipients of charitable work rather than as agents of transformation. Combining elements of neoliberalism with various forms of exclusivism, less nuanced articulations of this approach by self-styled 'evangelical Catholics' have become increasingly popular. By contrast,

Pope Francis' program of ecclesial reform – his vision of a church that is poor and for the poor – retrieves elements of the first strand. Proponents of the <New Evangelization> have responded by rejecting Francis outright or by sanitizing his vision for their own purposes.

## **Panel 10 – “Women: Advocacy and Liberation”**

### **Eros and Mysticism as Liberating Theology (Emmanuelle Christie)**

Marcella Althaus-Reid has proposed a problem of theology's impulse to co-opt the experiences of poor women within discourses of sexuality. Theological co-opting by patriarchal epistemology remains a primary concern in theological study. Co-option is coupled with extraordinary repressive forces that primarily affect marginalized individuals: this repression frequently originates from church doctrine and dogma. Institutional dogmas regard sexuality with mistrust. This mistrust overwhelmingly affects the marginalized— especially women and queer people— who do not fall easily within dominant androcentric worldviews and patriarchal epistemologies, and seriously impinges perception and reception of Christianity.

My research questions the meaning of eros in the theological sense. What is the place of Eros in theology? How does patriarchal epistemology respond to Eros? What implications does the absence of Eros have on the contemporary church? How are crises within the church linked to a rejection of Eros? How can Christian women mystics act as a means of retrieving this idea of eros for contemporary practice and method? To respond to this problem, I argue that theology requires a retrieval of the concept of Eros. I argue for a threefold conception of Eros derived from Christian mysticism, psychoanalysis and critical theory: as life-instinct, communion, and political fight. Creating open, affirming dialogues about sexuality, by drawing on deep-rooted traditions of erotic relationships with God, allows marginalized viewpoints to carve out a place within contemporary theology. In particular, Christian women's mysticism is ideally suited to formally situate the marginalized body as central to theological rather than reducible as a methodology.

### **The Lord has Heard the Desire of the Poor: How Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary on Psalms* can Help the Church Understand and Address the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Liam Farrer)**

While the Catholic Church has tried to address various aspects of the legacy of damage and brokenness in Indigenous cultures that it, as an institution, contributed to, there has been one topic notably absent from the discussion: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Using Thomas Aquinas, I will argue that the Catholic Church in Canada has a responsibility to bring the issue of MMIWG to the forefront due to its understanding of the doctrine of theosis.

After establishing how intersectional injustices have pushed MMIWG to the peripheries causing them to fit the definition of the poor prevalent in Aquinas' *Commentary on Psalms*, I will establish Aquinas' definition of membership in the Mystical Body of Christ showing as containing an understanding of the process of theosis as being intricately tied the love of neighbour which flows from love of and friendship with God. Building on this, I will argue that Aquinas' most common symbol for theosis in this life with the *Commentary*, the Israelites



following Moses' tabernacle, suggest that while theosis is ultimately individual, the process of our friendship with God cannot be divorced from love of neighbour, particularly as he shows in the commentaries, the poor. Based on this, I will conclude that for Aquinas, a key part of the grace we gain from cooperation with Christ is in how we minister the same grace to those around us, especially the poor, and how in the current church in Canada this needs to manifest as advocacy for MMIW.

**“Quieter, feminine, emotional”: Enacting and Disrupting Biblical Womanhood on the Contemporary Worship Stage (Anneli Loepp Thiessen)**

Since its meteoric rise in the 1960s, contemporary worship music has shaped the sounds of Evangelical worship gatherings (Ingalls 2018) and has developed into an industry producing music that reaches millions of people around the world (Mall 2020). Women have filled various roles in the contemporary worship ecosystem, including recording artists, worship leaders, songwriters, and industry professionals. Their involvement, however, is often limited to roles that align with Evangelical theological convictions about biblical gender roles: while biblical manhood may be characterized by leadership, authority, direction, and initiative, biblical womanhood is defined by being responsive, feeling, nurturing, and submissive (Murray 2021). This presentation examines how women in the industry enact and disrupt an Evangelical vision of biblical womanhood, particularly through their on-stage performances. I draw on fieldwork at a recent Canadian contemporary worship concert that featured one male and one female worship leader and consider how the artists embodied distinct gender roles through the use of movement, instruments, spoken words, and vocalization. I complement this with material from interviews I have conducted with women in the industry, noting how interviewees understand their worship leadership styles as natural versus prescribed, conforming versus disruptive. Recognizing that women in conservative religious structures find their own expressions of agency (Avishai 2007) and distinct forms of authority (Mendez et al. 2023), I ultimately examine how Evangelical women worship leaders find empowerment on gendered liturgical stages.