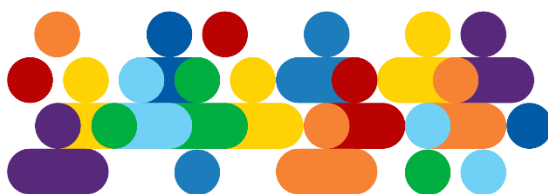


*Canadian Theological Society Annual Conference 2025
in association with Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences*

Reframing Togetherness

**George Brown College – Waterfront Campus
Toronto, Ontario
Monday, June 2 – Wednesday, June 4 2025**



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| <p>congress 2025</p> <p>OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES</p> <p>Reframing togetherness</p> | <p>congrès 2025</p> <p>DES SCIENCES HUMAINES</p> <p>Redessinons le vivre-ensemble</p> |
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FEDERATION FOR THE
HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

FÉDÉRATION
DES SCIENCES
HUMAINES

George Brown College Land Acknowledgment

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences is honoured to visit, and learn about, the Indigenous lands across Canada. We acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous peoples from coast to coast to coast, and we extend our respects to all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples for their valuable contributions, past and present. George Brown College is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous peoples who have lived here over time. We are grateful to share this land as treaty people who learn, work and live in the community with each other.

Accessibility Support and Guidance

The Federation and George Brown College are committed to providing an inclusive and barrier-free Congress experience for attendees with disabilities and accessibility needs. This page contains pertinent information for planning an accessible trip to Congress 2025. Additional information about onsite services can be found on the [Congress website](#). If you have accessibility requests or requirements not covered in this guide, please contact congress@federationhss.ca or the Congress 2025 general attendee helpline at (613) 699-4366 so we can work together to find accommodation.

All attendees are encouraged to contribute to an inclusive and barrier-free Congress. Please avoid wearing or using scented products such as fragrances, lotions, and sprays while on campus. If you are presenting at Congress, find information about creating accessible presentations on the [Information for presenters page](#).

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. 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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MONDAY, JUNE 2

All sessions will be held at George Brown College's Waterfront Campus in room WF-215

8:45-9:00 Opening Remarks: Nick Olkovich and Daniel Rempel

9:00-9:50 Individual Paper Presentations #1: Hospitality, Spirit, and Church

Moderator: Christina Conroy

- The Promise of Ludic Guesting: Decolonizing Hospitality by Anticipating the Spirit – Alexander S. Lee
- The Self-View as Sacred Mirror: A Theology of Online Meetings in an Embodied Digital Age – Katja Stoessel
- Rethinking Togetherness in Theological Inquiry: Hospitality as a Framework for Inclusion and Collaboration – Shih-Hsien Chen

9:50-10:05 Break

10:05-10:55 Individual Paper Presentations #2: Together in our Shared Humanity

Moderator: Christine Jamieson

- Usefulness of Imago Dei Theology in Prison Ministry – Donald Stoesz
- “We are the granddaughters of the witches you couldn’t burn”: Reimagining togetherness for women – Fiona Li
- How Could You?! On Moral Anthropology, Restorative Justice and Rebuilding Community – David Byrne

10:55-11:10 Break

11:10-12:00 Individual Paper Presentations #3: Limits, Skeptics, and Absences in Life Together

Moderator: Ryan Turnbull

- Responsible Limits and the Challenge of Living Well Together – Daniel Rempel
- Sceptically, Together. Rejecting certainty to enable religious tolerance – Parker Cotton
- Where is the Chinaman? A Reflection on Christian Historiography – Baiyu Song

12:00-1:30 Networking Lunch

All members of CTS are encouraged to remain at George Brown College for the networking lunch. Food is provided by CTS at no additional cost to members.

1:30-2:20 DEJ Session #1: Elaine Cagulada (Queen’s University) – “Our Breathing Speaks of God: Exploring a Moment’s Unfolding Through Interpretive Disability Studies”

Moderator: Fiona Li

CTS is grateful to the Federation for financially supporting this initiative through the EDID Initiatives Fund Fall cycle 2024.

2:20-2:35 Break

2:35-3:25 Individual Paper Presentations #4: The Bible, Liberation, and Reconciliation

Moderator: Michael Buttrey

- Fallen Watchers and Rising Masses: The Book of Enoch as a Blueprint for Liberation – Julian R. Munds
- Decolonizing territory: exploring Anglican theologies of place in Canada and South Africa – Stephen Martin
- Rabbit's Song: A Cherokee Call to Inclusivity in Leadership – Anna C. Gheen

3:25-3:40 Break

3:40-4:30 Individual Paper Presentations #5: Communion and Belonging

Moderator: Daniel Rempel

- “Love was His Meaning”: Julian of Norwich’s Christological Anthropology and the Call Toward the Common Good – Amanda Ross
- Togetherness in David Kelsey’s Theological Anthropology: A Reflection on Disability and the Church – Cynthia Tam
- Lonesome Us: A Theological Analysis of the Church in the ‘Loneliness Epidemic’ – Joshua Nightingale

TUESDAY, JUNE 3

Concurrent member designed panels will be held at George Brown College's Waterfront Campus in Rooms WF-215 and WF-005, indicated below. Newman Lecture and Annual General Meeting will be held in WF-215.

9:00-9:50 Member Designed Panels 1 and 2 (concurrent)

- Standing in Right Relationship with Land as Relative (WF-215)
 - Moderator: Melodie Bergquist-Turori
 - Panelists: Caleb Haurua; Terry LeBlanc; Dave Skene
- The Unpayable Debt: Applying the Principle of Reparations to the Work of (Re)conciliation (WF-005)
 - Moderator: Jodi Spargur
 - Panelists: Patricia Courtenay; Andrew Mitchell; Jodi Spargur

9:50-10:05 Break

10:05-10:55 Member Designed Panels 3 and 4 (concurrent)

- Eschatology and Wellness (WF-215)
 - Moderator: Daniel Rempel
 - Panelists: Jacob Benjamins; Miriam Spies; Allen Jorgensen
- Jacob Parappally's *Christ Without Borders: A Cross-Cultural Discussion* (WF-005)
 - Moderator: Ryan Turnbull
 - Panelists: Don Schweitzer; Jean-Pierre Fortin; Michelle Voss; Joshua Samuel

10:55-11:10 Break

11:10-12:00 Member Designed Panels 5 and 6 (concurrent)

- Moral Abdication and the Destruction of Gaza: Theological Reflections and Call to Action (WF-215)
 - Moderator: Michael Morelli
 - Panelists: Jane Barter; Michel Andraos
- *Sentipensando* (Thinking-Feeling) Decolonial Frameworks: Insights, Possibilities, Fissures (WF-005)
 - Moderator: Christina Conroy
 - Panelists: Ahmeda Mansaray-Richardson; Rubén David Bonilla-Ramos; David Montealegre Cuenca; Néstor Medina

12:00-1:15 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.

1:15-2:05 Jay Newman Lecture: Ashwani Kumar Peetush (Wilfred Laurier University) – “Decolonizing Philosophy of Religion” (WF-215)

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).

2:05-2:20 *Break*

2:20-3:10 Member Designed Panels 7 and 8 (concurrent)

- Visual Approaches to Qualitative Research in Theology (WF-215)
 - Moderator: Sarah Kathleen Johnson
 - Panelists: Joshua Zentner-Barrett; Erik Sorensen; Mykayla Turner; Anneli Loepp Thiessen
- Sharing heart songs in Hearts Exchanged (WF-005)
 - Moderator: Adrian Jacobs
 - Panelists: Marlene Wolters; Cindy Stover; Kenneth Wallace; Mike Hogeterp

3:10-3:30 *Break*

3:30-4:30 Annual General Meeting (WF-215)

5:30-8:30 Reception at the Toronto School of Theology (47 Queen's Park Cres E)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

All sessions will be held at George Brown College's Waterfront Campus in room WF-215

9:00-9:50 Individual Paper Presentations #6: Rebuilding Fractured Ecclesiologies

Moderator: Sarah Kathleen Johnson

- Lamenting the Broken Body of Christ: Reframing Liturgical Togetherness Following Clergy Perpetuated Sexual Abuse – Alice Candy (student essay winner)
- Dissent and LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Catholic Schools: Shifting Away from “Us-Them” Thinking – Graham P McDonough
- Charismatic Authority, Power, and Abuse in Jean Vanier’s L’Arche – John Fraresso

9:50-10:00 Break

10:00-11:10 Individual Paper Presentations #7: Cultural, Philosophical, and Theological Roots

Moderator: Joshua Zentner-Barrett

- Canadian Anglicanism and Christian Zionism: The Challenge of Disentanglement – Jeff Nowers
- “Why Don’t They Come?” An Intercultural Lens on Interfaith Homogeneity – Michelle Voss
- Leibniz and Frege on Definition and Ontological Arguments – Bradley Charles Dart
- Anne Brontë’s Meteorological Grace – Krista Lysack

11:10-11:30 Break

10:30-11:30 DEJ Panel #2: Reframing Togetherness with the Land

Moderator: Noah McDonald

Panelists: Deanna Zantingh; Jasmine Wiens; Rosemary Boissonneau; Sam Stewart; Allison Moore; Matteo Carboni

12:30-1:30 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.

1:30-2:20 Presidential Address: Nick Olkovich – “Cosmopolis and Christian Mission After the Decolonial Turn: A Dialogue between Mignolo and Lonergan”

2:20-2:30 Closing Remarks

Conference Abstracts

Featured Sessions

Newman Lecture: Ashwani Kumar Peetush - Decolonizing Philosophy of Religion

Dr. Peetush's research area is in legal and political philosophy, and ethics. His current focus is human rights, democracy and global justice. He is interested in the conditions that make possible democratic deliberation: those that foster reflective, critical and engaged citizenship. His work explores approaches to creating meaningful grassroots intercultural dialogue between various communities and peoples, given the diversity of their beliefs and practices.

DEJ Lecture: Elaine Cagulada – Our Breathing Speaks of God: Exploring a Moment's Unfolding Through Interpretive Disability Studies

This lecture is organized by the Dignity, Equity, and Justice committee and features Elaine Cagulada, PhD. Dr. Cagulada researches and writes in the fields of critical disability studies, black studies, digital humanities, and sociology, and she also teaches in these areas. Animated by a will to notice the magic of interpretation, Elaine's work is concerned with stories as sites of containment and possibility. Indebted to the wisdom of Black, Indigenous, racialized, queer, disabled/Mad storytellers, she understands the urgency of rupturing and disturbing carceral logics and enclosures through the constitutive force of narrative. Heeding this call nourishes dreams of being together through, with, and in disability differently.

DEJ Panel: Reframing Togetherness with the Land

Noah McDonald, Deanna Zantingh, Jasmine Wines, Rosemary Boissonneau, Sam Stewart, Allison Moore, Matteo Carboni

In 2024, a conversation over coffee between two Indigenous doctoral students at the Toronto School of Theology sparked the “Theologizing with the Land” working group, which now comprises seven TST doctoral students from diverse theological fields who share interest in place-based theology that responds to our colonial history of land dispossession. Amidst increasing neo-colonial world events, like the genocide in Gaza and the rise of techno-fascism, this working group is a grounding space characterized by members as “half support group, half-brainstorming,” which “helps us feel more human again.”

For this panel, we plan to use a narrative-based circle method to share our group's relational approach for addressing felt knowledge hierarchies in theology that often exclude the voice of the land.

Following the conference theme we ask: What does reframing togetherness from and with the land mean for theology? How can diverse theological fields model togetherness that is addressing colonial displacement and disembodiment? How can the understanding that “You are the land” reframe different fields and pedagogies?

Drawing from our lived experience, we hope to contribute how we can begin to model the sort of togetherness that respects and celebrates diversity and fosters the flourishing of *all beings*. In short, we'd like to share about student-led attempts to gather amongst ourselves resources to imagine other ways of theologizing with and from the land.

Presidential Address: Nick Olkovich – Cosmopolis and Christian Mission After the Decolonial Turn: A Dialogue between Mignolo and Lonergan

Dr. Olkovich currently serves as President of the Canadian Theological Society, following a long tenure as Secretary. He teaches in the areas of foundational, systematic and pastoral theology. His ongoing research focuses primarily on the relationship between ethics, politics and religion in democratic contexts and on a variety of issues in theological anthropology, ecclesiology, and foundational theology. His teaching and research is strongly influenced by the work of Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan.

Individual Papers

1 - Hospitality, Spirit, and Church

Alexander S. Lee – “*The Promise of Ludic Guesting: Decolonizing Hospitality by Anticipating the Spirit*”

The conflation of power with Christian witness is a conundrum with a history reaching back through colonial missions to Christianity’s so-called Constantinian shift. One area in which this conflation remains problematic is in the practice of hospitality. While hospitality is often seen as a virtue, the host-guest relationship nevertheless perpetuates a power imbalance. This paper argues that a “ludic” or subjunctive form of ritual guesting disrupts this hierarchy, decolonizing hospitality by blurring the boundaries between host and guest. At the same time, by preserving both the practitioner’s confessional identity and her affective vulnerability, ludic guesting addresses some pressing methodological challenges in the discipline of comparative theology concerning the field’s recent “ritual turn.”

By introducing the figure of the ludic guest, this paper explores the question: Can one theologize confessionally, vulnerably, and ethically as a guest at another religion’s ritual worship? If so, how might ritual guesting foster respectful Christian witness in a religiously plural Canadian public sphere? To begin addressing these questions, I outline some initial trinitarian contours for an authentically vulnerable yet cautiously discerning practice of ritual guesting, proposing a pneumatological starting point for encountering the religious Other as a guest. These themes also inform my doctoral dissertation, which explores ludic guesting in the context of Christian-Muslim comparative liturgical theology in the Greater Toronto Area.

Katja Stoessel – “*The Self-View as Sacred Mirror: A Theology of Online Meetings in an Embodied Digital Age*”

This paper proposes a theological exploration of online meetings as sites of embodied, sacred encounters, reflecting on how the digital gaze reorients our understanding of presence, community, and the image of God. With the rapid shift to virtual spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic, the persistent self-view in video conferencing has introduced a new kind of visibility—one in which participants continuously see themselves alongside others. This dual gaze invites theological reflection rooted in the doctrine of the *imago Dei* and the incarnational nature of the Christian community.

Drawing on Craig Detweiler’s theology of selfies, Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics, and Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology of seeing, this paper argues that the online meeting can be a theologically rich space. It raises questions about digital embodiment, authenticity, and spiritual discipline in environments shaped by screens. If God is present “where two or three are gathered” (Matt. 18:20), digital gathering can also bear sacramental meaning.

Rather than diminishing human connection, online meetings may extend and transform our relational and spiritual awareness. The screen, with its constant mirror, encourages self-reflection not as vanity but as a theological practice of attentiveness, humility, and mutual recognition. This

paper contends that online presence—when approached with integrity and care—can embody divine presence and reflect the sacred in new ways.

In light of the conference theme “Theology and Embodiment,” this paper contributes a perspective on how digital media reconfigures the practices and possibilities of Christian embodiment.

Shih-Hsien Chen – “Rethinking Togetherness in Theological Inquiry: Hospitality as a Framework for Inclusion and Collaboration”

Considering the interdisciplinary nature of practical theology, how can we uphold togetherness in a world that is both diverse and fragmented? Moreover, how can we invite people from different perspectives into the theological discourse and allow them to contribute their expertise and insights? This presentation challenges the traditional hierarchical model of theological academy and proposes the concept of hospitality as a model of togetherness, enabling individuals from various disciplines to contribute their expertise and thereby reshaping how the academy functions and how knowledge is constructed.

The presentation first examines the formation of several international academies of practical theology and discusses the tensions between the academy and the church in the context of establishing such societies in Asia, particularly Taiwan. Next, it introduces the concept of hospitality and engages with Jacques Derrida’s critique of the power asymmetry between the host and the guest. Regarding this concept, the biblical narrative account (Andrew Arterbury and Eric Barreto), the historical perspective (Christine Pohl), the methodological understanding (John Swinton), and the philosophical account (Jacques Derrida) of hospitality will all be considered. Third, based on the discussion, I argue that practical theology inherently prompts theologians to recognize that theological inquiry must be interdisciplinary and enriched by contributions from diverse backgrounds. To genuinely foster togetherness, rather than appealing to a host-guest interplay as a means to address the challenge of polarization, I contend that always remaining in a hospitable guest position is both theologically more accurate and practically more feasible.

2 - Together in our Shared Humanity

Donald Stoesz – “Usefulness of Imago Dei Theology in Prison Ministry”

This article outlines the usefulness of the Catholic Catechism in relationship to recovery programs offered to offenders. Celebrate Recovery uses a twelve step process that proceeds from denial to surrender to acceptance. The Catholic Catechism, by contrast, starts with the idea of being created in the image of God to establish a solid ground on the basis of which offenders can reclaim their original righteousness, and move on with their lives. This assertion of the goodness of Being modifies guilt ridden theologies that emphasize repentance and surrender to the exclusion of everything else.

The purpose of this article is to help Catholic chaplains use specific concepts in their Catechism to work with inmates. Chaplains can appeal to the fact that offenders have been *created in the image of God* so that they can reclaim the *original righteousness* in which they were born. An act of repentance along with *a beatific vision of divine intimacy* enable inmates to become honest

and trustworthy, capable of showing and experiencing real love, and living with faith and hope that they can become whole. A distinction between *original sin*, which is inevitable, and *concupiscence*, which represents a temptation to sin, relieves inmates of their belief that their offence defines them. An *act of conversion* along with the *rite of baptism* erases original sin, while the *assurance of salvation* replaces offenders' guilt and shame with a *faith* and *confidence* that they can overcome jealousy, addictions, acts of violence, and avarice, and thereby become a new person.

Fiona Li – “We are the granddaughters of the witches you couldn’t burn”: Reimagining togetherness for women

On Friday November 7, 2024, three days after the American Presidential election, many women on social media have reported that there is an uptick in the number of misogynist comments being made in light of Donald Trump’s win. The most terrifying comment was one that was originally tweeted by Trump-supporter, White Supremacist, misogynist, and anti-semitic Nick Fuentes, “Your body. My choice. Forever.” This comment was then adopted by many misogynists and repeated on social media and on College campuses.

While this comment alone needs to be addressed by theology, my proposed paper will take this as a starting point and a manifestation of the greater and more dangerous sin: a combination of colonialism and misogyny. In and of itself, colonialism and misogyny are nothing new. Looking through history, one can also find colonial misogyny active against indigenous women and women of colour. The benefit of mass media and the high-speed sharing of information is that we can no longer deny that colonial misogyny is growing and happening everywhere. In my paper, I will look at the issue of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and how Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected by colonialism and misogyny (while recognizing that all women and girls are vulnerable to such systems). In relation to CTS’s conference theme of Reimagining Togetherness, this paper will argue that theology has historically contributed to colonialism and misogyny and can challenge such systems through reimagining what it means to be together as humans.

David Byrne - How Could You?! On Moral Anthropology, Restorative Justice and Rebuilding Community

In an increasingly fragmented world, it has become all the more difficult to advocate for the inclusion of those convicted of serious offenses in our communities post-release from prison. After all, when we can barely accept our neighbour because of tension with cultural, social, political, gender-based, and religious identities, how can we make room for those who have caused harm? Yet, the historical project of restorative justice insists that victims’ needs cannot be met and communities cannot hope to be made whole until we make space for others, including those who we label as wrongdoers, in an ongoing process of reconciliation.

Building on my research regarding the reintegration of individuals convicted of sexual offenses (ICSOs), in this session I will explore how socially constructed and broadly accepted moral anthropologies present barriers to community rebuilding, contributing to public support of punitive criminal justice policies while preventing communities from engaging with wrongdoers.

By moral anthropology, here, I mean the way people are perceived to be morally, including the capacity for moral discernment and growth.

From there I will suggest that the social construction of moral anthropologies problematizes community rebuilding of all kinds, naming the winter 2021 vaccine protests in Ottawa as example. Finally, I will make suggestions on how the restorative work of an ecumenical group of Christians with ICSOs in Canadian communities provides insight into how to move forward with broader reconciliatory efforts, describing their scriptural motivation for their reimagining of ICSOs as moral persons as central to this process.

3 - Limits, Skeptics, and Absences in Life Together

Daniel Rempel – Responsible Limits and the Challenge of Living Well Together

It's verging on passé to suggest that, in our contemporary moment, society is struggling to live together. Very quickly one can rattle off a host of social injustices that plague our societies today: racism; ableism; homophobia; gender-based violence; classism; etc. It seems, however, that one can locate the problem inherent to all these injustices within the challenge of living with people who present as other in various forms. And if so, perhaps we could diagnose the failure of our attempts at living together by our constant desires to transcend our creaturely limits. In this paper, drawing on the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, I chart another course, suggesting that life together ought to be rooted in responsibility to our neighbour, in which we recognize the limits of our creaturely existence, and in that are freed to serve the other. I trace the origins of responsibility to suggest that responsibility functions in political, cultural, and moral domains, and confronts modern notions of individualism and self-government. In particular, I draw Bonhoeffer into conversation with conversations about the economy to suggest that social groups ought to be organized through a mutual recognition of each other's humanity, and that this, in turn, provides us with a framework to confront society's injustices at the grassroots level.

Parker Cotton – Sceptically, Together. Rejecting certainty to enable religious tolerance

This paper presents Pierre Bayle's (1647-1706) framing of 'epistemic humility' as a Christian virtue. In the wake of the seventeenth century wars of religion the failure of Christians to live peaceably is apparent. Dogmatic claims of doctrinal certainty cleave Christian communities. Into this divided church Bayle's scepticism challenges the very possibility of doctrinal certitude. I put forward Bayle's scepticism as supported by scholarly humility. For Bayle, humility entails scepticism by accepting you may be mistaken about your claims, including religious beliefs. Bayle's various musings on how 'historians' should be critical and open to amending their claims support a connection between scholarly humility and scepticism. This 'humble scepticism', I argue, flows from practiced Christian virtue. Bayle's articles on Pascal and Melancthon are read as offering exemplars of Christian humility. The common thread of this virtue is Bayle's 'disrupting' of certainty. Contra Bayle's contemporary interpreters on both the religious and irreligious fronts, this abandonment of certainty and dogmatic claims is not an irreligious move made to destroy the church but rather a corrective critique grounded in the religiously virtuous behaviour of humility. Bayle wants to challenge and refocus Christians on virtuous behaviour, a commodity in short supply.

Baiyu Song – Where is the Chinaman? A Reflection on Christian Historiography

In recent years, despite the flourishing of World Christianity as an academic field, and the contribution of scholars such as Andrew F. Walls, Lamin Sanneh, Dana L. Roberts, and Renie Chow Choy, it is still a challenge for Christian scholars to bring world Christianity into their discipline and classrooms. This paper argues that besides recognising the marginalised in history, we also need to reconsider a metanarrative of the Christian church. By reviewing available scholarship, this paper calls Christian scholars to examine their ecclesial imagination to become pertinent to the confession that we believe in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

4 - The Bible, Liberation, and Reconciliation

Julian R. Munds – Fallen Watchers and Rising Masses: The Book of Enoch as a Blueprint for Liberation

This presentation examines the Book of Enoch as a critique of corrupt authority through a Marxist/Liberationist lens, exploring its relevance to contemporary struggles for justice and solidarity. An ancient Jewish apocalyptic text, the Book of Enoch reveals divine revelations, celestial journeys, and the fall of the Watchers—figures who symbolize ruling elites and the destructive effects of unchecked power. Enoch’s visions of divine judgment parallel revolutionary movements, portraying the oppressed rising against exploitative systems to establish justice. His journey reflects the awakening of class consciousness, reimagining power structures in ways that foster collective flourishing.

Engaging with the Congress 2025 theme, this paper considers how the Book of Enoch challenges traditional hierarchies and exclusivist frameworks. How does its vision of cosmic justice inform contemporary struggles against social, economic, and ecological oppression? What theological resources does it offer for rethinking power, community, and togetherness? In a world marked by polarization and technological change, this presentation explores how Enoch’s prophetic critique of power invites us to model justice-oriented solidarity.

By bridging biblical studies, political theology, and contemporary critical thought, this presentation contributes to broader conversations on reimagining togetherness. It aligns with calls to center marginalized perspectives, engaging liberation theology, anti-colonial critique, and movements for social transformation. Through a critical re-examination of the Book of Enoch, this paper highlights its enduring relevance in resisting domination and envisioning just communities.

Stephen Martin – Decolonizing territory: exploring Anglican theologies of place in Canada and South Africa

At the core of a theological account of togetherness is the problem of how an infinite creator can be present in and with a finite creature without overwhelming or displacing the creature. This is not an abstract problem of speculative metaphysics. The language by which theology struggles to articulate a faithful answer to this problem marks out what Rowan Williams calls “a credible

environment for action and imagination, a credible means of connecting narratives, practices, [and] codes of behaviour.” In short, it demarcates “a world to live in.” (Williams, xi) In *Christ the Heart of Creation*, Williams traces this “recurrent theological problem” from the earliest Christian reflection on divine agency in the story of Jesus in the New Testament to modern Christologies in the East and in the West. The emergent conceptual framework uniting “infinite act and finite embodiment” in the creator-creature relation opens fresh possibilities for togetherness embodied in the Eucharistic practice of the church as “a visible sign of God’s future.” (Williams, 213) At the same time, the church faces another problem as it confronts its competitive and territorial constructions of “place” during the colonial moment, and the imperative of decolonizing its actual practices of togetherness. This research this presentation will summarize takes up Williams’ model of “non-territorial territory” and “non-competitive relations” as a way of interrogating the legacies of Anglicanism in Canada and South Africa, and the way reconciliation is informed.

Anna Gheen – Rabbit’s Song: A Cherokee Call to Inclusivity in Leadership

A traditional Cherokee (Tsalagi) tale, “Rabbit’s Song” tells of an animal so disruptive to orderly meetings that he is removed from the Leadership Council without warning. Prevented from even entering the Council House, Rabbit continues to disrupt from without, singing so loudly that those inside cannot conduct their business. Eagle (head of the Council) sends Bullfrog, Panther, Wolf, and Bear (each in turn) to put an end to Rabbit’s racket. Each fails, leading to the recognition that Rabbit’s disruptive behavior does not originate in his own pride but, is instead a gift that Creator is trying to bestow upon all animals.

In my presentation, I will take a more extensive look at this story and what it teaches us about inclusivity in leadership, particularly when placed against the backdrop of Paul’s words about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1-27. I will argue that it presents the Church with a challenge to rethink our standard models of leadership by reframing our relationship with those whose differences are often viewed as disruptive or otherwise problematic when placed within the context of our worshipping communities. I will conclude with several suggestions regarding ways in which the story challenges us to not only respect and celebrate diversity, but to open the doors for this diversity to enrich our understanding of what it means to live collectively as God’s people.

5 – Communion and Belonging

Amanda Ross – “Love was His Meaning”: Julian of Norwich’s Christological Anthropology and the Call Toward the Common Good

It may seem dubious to propose recovering a medieval recluse as a model for togetherness, let alone to claim her work as a rich resource for theological foundations of diversity within unity. Indeed, a surface reading of Julian of Norwich may leave the reader wondering if her view of the Christian life is primarily one of individual penance and suffering. Nevertheless, Julian’s innovative vision—once long forgotten and now only beginning to be explored in its full fecundity—offers abundant potential for reframing the universal reach of a Christological anthropology and advancing the call to all humanity to work together to build more equitable systems of common justice. Julian writes of both an eternal unification between the soul and the

Divine as well as the essential unity of all who belong together in Christ, even while maintaining, and valuing, each one's uniqueness. Such a view can empower reconnection of both self with self and self with others and extends personal responsibility beyond individual fulfilment toward addressing the broader social and institutional changes needed to cultivate greater flourishing for all. In a world like ours, bursting with discontented tension at its tenuous seams of unity, with Christians often notably at the center of such barefaced discord, Julian's ancient vision of togetherness may be just the pattern we need to re-envision new ways of living out our essential, and fundamentally indivisible, unity.

Cynthia Tam – Togetherness in David Kelsey's Theological Anthropology: A Reflection on Disability and the Church

Since the Accessible Canada Act of 2019 was enacted, many churches have started welcoming people with disabilities to Sunday services. However, these individuals are often treated as recipients of ministry rather than active participants. This paper draws on David Kelsey's theological anthropology to propose a vision of the Church as a communion of saints, where people with disabilities are fully integrated as members, respected, loved, and treasured as God's children.

Kelsey's theological concept establishes the commonality of all human beings as finite and vulnerable. He argues that human existence is grounded and defined by how God relates to humanity. Disabled or not, all humans depend on God's gracious and continual relating to us in creation, consummation, and reconciliation. As finite beings subject to progressive disintegration, what defines us is God's love and not our capacities or achievements. Kelsey also maintains that humanity is created as communal beings. Humans bear the image of God in so far as we image the image of God, Jesus Christ, in our shared life. Together as a communion of saints, Christian communities follow Jesus' example of love for the marginalized and express his justice, peace, love, and joy in our relationships with one another.

Taking Kelsey's ideas into the Church's life with members living with disability experiences, this paper illustrates the importance of inviting all members, regardless of their abilities or perceived limitations, to participate in the communal life and ministry of the Church, fostering a loving fellowship that reflects Christ's love to the world.

Joshua Nightingale – Lonesome Us: A Theological Analysis of the Church in the 'Loneliness Epidemic'

In the Covid-19 Pandemic many experienced an isolation that did not end with the lessening of restrictions. This has caused an influx of investigations and thinkpieces, even the US Surgeon General and the World Health Organization, describing a new "Loneliness Epidemic" and suggesting it could be caused by anything from gig-capitalism and internet factionalism to political polemics and gendered expectations. The church, after experiencing a sharp decrease in participation since the pandemic, has declared this a perfect problem for it to address; it can increase its numbers and cure the ailment at the same time. W. H. Vanstone demonstrates that this is a common pattern for the church: addressing societal needs as if they are ecological niches that make them relevant. By bringing in Martin Buber's description of two kinds of lonesomeness

this paper seeks to push beyond the dynamics of pathology and cure in order to wrestle with the meaning and action of our loneliness. This theological reflection leads the author to conclude that the church cannot address our society's loneliness because it is acting out of its own grasping loneliness. Vanstone suggests that instead of floundering in a lack of relevance, the church should instead understand its role as an "enclave of reality". If the church can embody this alien witness while shifting into Buber's second mode of healthier lonesomeness, perhaps then the church can begin to be a safe place for those experiencing not only loneliness, but the breadth of society's alienations.

6 – Rebuilding Fractured Ecclesiologies

Alice Candy – Lamenting the Broken Body of Christ: Reframing Liturgical Togetherness Following Clergy Perpetuated Sexual Abuse (student essay winner)

Appropriately addressing clergy perpetuated sexual abuse (CPSA) has become a major issue in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) over past decades. On the liturgical side, responses of ritual lament have become particularly important ways to respond to the need for individual, communal, and corporate healing in the RCC. While liturgies of lament can be helpful for victims-survivors of CPSA as well as for the broader community, they can convey problematic attitudes about victims-survivors and their relation to the Church. Namely, some liturgical responses to CPSA frame the Church as the one speaking to or for victims-survivors rather than with them. The former can express the collective acknowledgement of responsibility and repentance; however, by excluding victims-survivors from the 'we' that addresses God in these laments, it can also place them outside the Body of Christ.

To address this, I suggest that acknowledging Jesus as a victim-survivor of sexual violence, an idea developed in the work of David Tombs, can help us to notice who the broken Body of Christ includes or excludes in liturgies of lament following CPSA and to confront harmful assumptions about those who have experienced sexual abuse. The concept of 'ritual empowerment,' as defined by Elaine J. Ramshaw, helps us to see how the idea of Jesus the Survivor can contribute to addressing oppression in liturgical responses to CPSA. Although this paper seeks to speak to the sexual abuse crisis in the RCC, this insight has wide-ranging implications for all denominations struggling to heal from CPSA.

Graham P McDonough – Dissent and LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Catholic Schools: Shifting Away from "Us-Them" Thinking

A conventional approach to this topic might evaluate what counts as dissent and how it benefits LGBTQ2S+ students in Catholic schools. That approach is limited, however, because inclusion constructs both dissenters (generally) and LGBTQ2S+ students (specifically) as problematic outsiders relative to normative insiders, rather than as insiders all along.

This presentation therefore argues that using inclusion to frame the Catholic school experiences of dissenters and LGBTQ2S+ students exposes the institutional Church's anxieties about sovereignty, the authority and competence of theologians and lay persons, and identity. Both dissenters and sexual minority students thus encounter an ecclesiological us-them framework

that frames their presence in ways that preserves, rather than troubles, hierarchical relationships (Beaman 2017).

I argue that the Church has not learned how to appreciate and evaluate dissent well, nor how to regard the dissenter as one of “us”. If dissent is well received, it historically tends to be assimilated in ways that suggest nothing changed because of faithful disagreement. This re-positioning of sovereign power therefore enables an ongoing ecclesiological benevolence that, because of its concern with including LGBTQ2S+ students, overlooks that “they” have been “us” all along.

The conclusion proposes that sustaining the inclusion discourse will only perpetuate ongoing frustrations about power and control, and limit the ability of the whole Church to learn about itself from its own members. I will therefore argue that Catholic schools can and should have a responsibility to educate their students both about the realities of ecclesiastical power and their relationship with it.

John Fraresso – Charismatic Authority, Power, and Abuse in Jean Vanier’s L’Arche

Amongst several measures taken by L’Arche in response to the revelations of sex abuse by their founder Jean Vanier was the establishment of a commission to investigate. The 900-page report they produced goes through the entire timeline in significant detail, the beginnings of which predate L’Arche. The findings demonstrate that the relationship between Vanier and L’Arche is another example of what can happen when the power granted both formally and informally to a charismatic leader remains unchecked.

The presentation will provide a summary of an essay I wrote for a course titled *Theology and Power* at the Toronto School of Theology. It will first review key sections of findings from the Study Commission’s report and then demonstrate that Vanier’s writings provide clues about his understanding of authority (including his own) that point toward a personality dispositioned to abusing authority. A critical review of how L’Arche has handled the revelations thus far, as well as what it can and should do moving forward will follow. The presentation will conclude by discussing how the Vanier abuse case at L’Arche highlights the importance for such organizations not only to have safeguards in place, but also to maintaining a healthy and balanced view of their leaders, as well as of the relationships they entertain with them.

7 – Cultural, Philosophical, and Theological Roots

Jeff Nowers – Canadian Anglicanism and Christian Zionism: The Challenge of Disentanglement

On July 2, 2023, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, passed a pivotal motion on “Peace and Justice in Palestine and Israel.” This motion—adopted as Resolution A160—affirms the right of both the state of Israel and the state of Palestine to exist. It goes on to condemn Israel’s blockade of Gaza and the illegality of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank. But perhaps what stands out most saliently is the call to challenge and “decrease the presence and impact of Christian Zionism

within our denominations”—that is, within the institutions of Canadian Anglicanism and Lutheranism.

Resolution A160’s clarion call to resist Christian Zionism rests on a plausible assumption that Christian Zionism has taken root within Canadian Anglicanism. But heretofore very little, if any, research has uncovered the depth of that rootedness. This paper, therefore, is an investigation into the extent to which Christian Zionism has entered the Canadian Anglican experience. I proceed, first, by exploring what Christian Zionism is and its historic relation to the Zionist ideologies that have underpinned the establishment of the modern state of Israel. I then explore the thought of Archbishop Samuel Matheson (1852-1942), theologians W. H. Griffith Thomas (1861-1924) and Jacob Jocz (1906-1983), together with some lesser known parish priests who were active Christian Zionists. I conclude that Christian Zionism is indeed woven into the fabric of Canadian Anglicanism. Heeding the call of Resolution A160 is thus no mean task.

Michelle Voss – “Why Don’t They Come?” An Intercultural Lens on Interfaith Homogeneity

Mainline Christians are often motivated to seek out interfaith engagement through convictions that common truths and values bridge religious traditions. They are bewildered when few adherents of other traditions attend their interfaith fairs, panels, or vigils, which end up mainly populated by (white) mainline Protestants. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), proposed by Milton Bennett and operationalized with Mitch Hammer in the Intercultural Development Inventory® (a tool now used by many theological schools in North America), can illuminate reasons for this imbalance. It also suggests how interfaith organizations can cultivate more mutuality between traditions.

The theory offers five main “developmental orientations” toward intercultural relations: denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation. Studies by Mohammed Abu-Nimer (2001, 2004), Jonathan Morgan and Steven Sandage (2016), and Jenn Lindsay (2020) have pivoted the *intercultural* orientations toward *interfaith* competencies. However, these have not considered the interfaith movement as a cultural group with a distinctive orientation.

This Pecha Kucha presentation observes that many contemporary interfaith organizations were founded in response to religious polarization, especially after 9/11. Their implicit developmental orientation is minimization, emphasizing physical and transcendental universals believed to be shared among humans and religious communities. This approach can be successful when disagreements can be bridged through commonality, but it can mask deeper differences and demand assimilation to dominant (here, white mainline Christian) norms. To allow for greater mutuality and authentic participation by people of diverse faiths, projects focusing on appreciation of difference can help the interfaith enterprise to adapt and thrive.

Bradley Charles Dart – Leibniz and Frege on Definition and Ontological Arguments

This article explores the theory of definitions and their impact on ontological arguments. If ontological arguments are grounded on a definition of God – whatever it is – and the proof of His existence is said to follow from this premise, the rules of legitimacy surrounding definitions are crucial to consider. The history of theorizing on definition is expansive, so we focus on the

perspectives of Leibniz and Frege.

Leibniz emphasizes the distinction between nominal and real definitions, arguing that only real definitions, which require the possibility of the defined concept, can be used in secure demonstrations. As such, he contends that the concept of God must be shown to be possible before it can be used in an ontological argument. For Frege, a definition provides sense to a term but does not guarantee its reference or non-empty extension. He stresses the non-creativity of definitions and similarly argues that definitions alone cannot confer existence or properties on a concept.

Both philosophers' views present challenges to ontological arguments that begin with a definition of God and are motivated by philosophical questions surrounding the use of definition in mathematics. Both emphasize the need to show that a definition is not inconsistent by demonstrating that it is instantiated. Although Leibniz and Frege are supportive of metaphysically or semantically rich notions of definition, they seem to block the possibility of a purely definitional ontological argument for God's existence.

Krista Lysack – Anne Brontë's Meteorological Grace

Taking Anne Brontë's writing as its point of departure, this paper will consider how theologies of grace might intersect with contemporary ecological thinking, including theories of new materialism, re-enchantment, and the more-than-human. The daughters of a Yorkshire Low-Church clergyman, Victorian writers Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë are remembered today for poetry and novels which depict the forces of nature. Whereas spectacular storm is a feature of the elder two sisters' works, there are comparatively calmer skies in Anne Brontë's novels, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *Agnes Grey*, and in her hymn-like poetry. The less ferocious weather of Anne Brontë's writing might at first seem as a kind of calm in the midst of storm: a "Peace, be still."

And yet Anne's novels and poems imagine grace in a peculiar way: not only as a theology but also as a strangely meteorological occurrence. Like grace, weather falls from the sky, "falling on the wicked and unwicked alike." And like precipitation, grace's application is even. Grace, when understood as a non-human agent, is visited upon everyone and everything, that is to say, not just upon that which might seem to deserve it most. Drawing on Emma Mason's eco-theological notion of 'green grace,' how might we expand some of our theological thinking about grace by considering weather as agential? For Anne Brontë, meteorological grace goes beyond the production of an exclusively human outcome; this might at first seem to be the case, for instance, when in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* there appears a clear winter sky above Gilbert Markham as he reconciles with Helen Huntingdon or when in *Agnes Grey* the sea air softens around Agnes at the end of her trials. But elsewhere—and especially in Anne's poetry—we encounter expressions of weather as atmosphere that is simply there and regardless of human beneficiary. Meteorological grace thus provides a gentle and unexpected reframing of grace as a more-than-human phenomenon.

Member Designed Panels

1 – Standing in Right Relationship with Land as Relative

Melodie Bergquist-Turori, Caleb Haurua, Terry LeBlanc, Dave Skene

Fueled by extractive western environmental practices that are supported by theologies of dominion, climate crises are now a common occurrence globally. Indigenous theologies rooted in relationality provide a model of togetherness that imagines new ways of healing our collective relationship with creation.

When it comes to understanding creation as kin, western theologies tip-toe to the edge of the leap required to rethink what it means to be in relationship with creation, but fail to take the plunge. This panel is a conversation between Indigenous scholars from Canada and Oceania centering relationship with and relatedness to the rest of the creation through Indigenous conceptions of care, stewardship, and abundance, taking only what you need. We will discuss ways western theologies continue to enable exploitation of creation by treating land as commodity. New technologies meant to reduce environmental harm perpetuate the cycle of exploitation. Demand for electric vehicles is poised to expand harmful drilling practices through dry land and deep sea mining.

Our discussion of relationality and Indigenous theologies invites dialogue from all on how reframing our collective relationship with creation might lead to imagining new policies and practices of relatedness. For example, Māori communities have successfully fought for recognition of the legal environmental personhood of Te Awa Tupua river and more recently, Mount Taranaki in Aotearoa New Zealand. Indigenous models of creation as relative lead us toward a world where all can flourish together.

2 – The Unpayable Debt: Applying the Principle of Reparations to the Work of (Re)conciliation

Jodi Spargur, Patricia Courtenay, Andrew Mitchell

The theme of Congress 2025, "Reframing Togetherness," calls us to explore our roles and responsibilities in fostering coexistence with humans, the environment, and technology. This panel, presented by two non-Indigenous scholars—one from Canada and one from Australia—along with an Indigenous scholar and elder from Australia, delves into the theme of "The Unpayable Debt" and its application to the work of (re)conciliation within non-Indigenous churches in Canada and Australia.

Without question, the impacts of colonization have been devastating for Indigenous Peoples around the globe. Yet the language and actions around truth and reconciliation over the last decade in Canada and Australia have been met with mixed reviews by those most impacted on the ground. This panel will explore that critique and how the principles of shalom and land-based reparations help us face this unpayable debt in ways that contribute to the mutual flourishing of

humans, the land and other than human ones who all feel the impacts of colonization. What is the contribution Christian theological communities should make?

Theological reflection and Christian ethics will be coupled with an Indigenous worldview to provide space for a dynamic conversation about how churches can model togetherness by questioning traditional knowledge hierarchies and collaborating with marginalized communities. This will be done with eight-minute introductions by each of the panelists and then open dialogue between panelists and audience. Ultimately, this panel seeks to inspire a commitment to relational and ethically rooted justice and reconciliation within theological discourse and practice.

3 - Eschatology and Wellness

Jacob Benjamins, Miriam Spies, Allen Jorgensen

The motif of togetherness presumes wellness as the horizon against which togetherness is to be framed. In this panel we will leverage the doctrine of eschatology to explore wellness in three bodies: the body politic, the body of Christ, and concrete bodies living in symbiosis with other bodies, including the cosmos.

In *The Burnout Society*, Byung Chul-Han identifies the development of a disciplinary society of achievement motivated by internal expectations for self-improvement and productivity. Experiences of hyperattention, constant activity, and multitasking are defining features of the achievement society—producing negative impacts on mental health. The enactment of *eschatological anticipation* can be seen as a spiritual exercise that responds to problematic dimensions of the achievement society. Eschatological anticipation orients one to the sense in which productivity, status, place, and achievement are not the defining features of one's life.

Liturgical theology challenges capitalist frameworks of time and space, opening instead into grace where diverse bodies are claimed, nourished and invited to serve in creative interdependence in the community. Key liturgical concepts of time point towards reflecting eschatologically which in turn shape how bodies live in the present. Crip time is an added dimension which challenges the church's ableism, contributes to liturgical theology by shaping how we practice/embody hope for crip futures.

Christian theology points to two *eschatoi* of human life: death and resurrection. The former is the necessary condition for the later and imminent to bodies in ageing. Ageing, then, will be explored as realized eschatology leveraged for care of self and cosmos.

4 – Jacob Parappally's *Christ Without Borders*: A Cross-Cultural Discussion

Don Schweitzer, Jean-Pierre Fortin, Michelle Voss, Joshua Samuel

In keeping with this meeting's call to collaborate and learn from others, this panel will discuss a recent contribution to Christology by Jacob Parappally, a leading Indian Roman Catholic theologian. His book *Christ without Borders* (Orbis Books, 2024) critiques Western Christian

preoccupations with doctrines about Jesus and argues that Indian and South Asian Christians have a contribution to make to global Christological discussion on the basis of their own experiences of Jesus Christ.

Inviting us to constructively engage the multifaceted manifestations of the redeeming presence and action of Christ in and to different human communities, Parappally proposes to build theological frameworks and notions truly reflective of and responding to the challenges confronting cultures other than (and likely to have been colonized by the) Jewish, Greco-Roman, Mediterranean, and European, because this is a necessary precondition for building up the one body of Christ that is the church—fount and paradigmatic instantiation of authentic togetherness—not despite, but in, with and through embracing the gift of difference. This panel will carry forward this global dialogue about Christology and raise issues for the audience to discuss by examining how Parappally challenges Canadian Christians to re-think our togetherness in Christ with Indian Christians, and by responding to the challenges he raises.

5 – Moral Abdication and the Destruction of Gaza: Theological Reflections and Call to Action

Jane Barter, Michel Andraos

In this panel, the presenters engage social scientist Didier Fassin's recent book, *Moral Abdication: How the World Failed to Stop the Destruction of Gaza*, through a theological lens. Specifically, this panel explores how the churches' failure to name and condemn the genocide was representative of their alignment with Christian Zionism that influenced both liberal and conservative theologies. Further, we argue, following Fassin, that the double standards and racism that permitted the West to justify the unprecedented slaughter of Palestinian civilians requires a theological and moral reckoning for the churches—one which challenges Christian theologies and practices, including theological education and interfaith dialogue, and argues that the churches should take responsibility by actively supporting the global movement of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS).

Problem engaged:

This panel seeks to understand the churches' and theology's silence during the genocide of the Palestinian people since October 2023, while it also offers concrete calls to action about how to move forward after this moral failure.

Scholarly contribution:

This panel continues the work begun last year at the Annual Meeting in Montreal, which called for an end to the violence in Gaza and which committed the Society to attending to the Palestinian churches' Call for Repentance. It also offers a uniquely Canadian theological response to the genocide, which considers the shared history of settler colonialism in both Canada and Palestine.

Engagement and dialogue:

This panel will invite conversations among three or four scholars actively engaged in the work of theological critique and reconstruction in the aftermath of this genocide. The dialogue among

panelists will be thirty minutes in total. For the remaining twenty minutes, it will encourage members of the Society to consider how they may engage in such conversations surrounding Christian Zionism, Palestinian liberation, and BDS within their own contexts.

6 – *Sentipensando* (Thinking-Feeling) Decolonial Frameworks: Insights, Possibilities, Fissures

Ahmeda Mansaray-Richardson, Rubén David Bonilla-Ramos, David Montealegre Cuenca, Néstor Medina

Much like liberation theologies and postcolonial studies in previous decades, decolonial thinking has surged in popularity, becoming a widely used methodology. Its adoption among many scholars often takes place without a deeper reflection of its contextual development, diverse intellectual genealogies, and key actors. In this panel, the presenters will engage decolonial perspectives from their own current investigations. In line with the theme of *reframing togetherness*, the participants will seek to reframe some current understandings of decolonial frameworks, noting historical antecedents, valuable features and contributions. A major advantage of Decolonial thinking is its lenses on limitations, which compels the reframing of these gaps as possibilities. This conversation will demonstrate how each of the panelists are able to deploy this unique dimension of the framework as a steppingstone to see beyond the colonial matrix and deepen awareness and engagement of ways of being that exists in alternate orbits of knowledge. From their ongoing research, the panelists will also explore some of the gaps that they believe are becoming evident in the academic study of decolonial perspectives.

Panelists will respond to these two questions: What are some of the major contributions you find in decolonial frameworks for your work? And what are some of the aspects in decolonial frameworks that may require further reflection and elaboration.

7 – Visual Approaches to Qualitative Research in Theology

Erik Sorensen, Joshua Zentner-Barrett, Anneli Loepp Thiessen, Sarah Kathleen Johnson, Mykayla Turner

A focus of visual theological methods challenges traditional knowledge hierarchies in theology that have prioritized the written and spoken word. Drawing inspiration from Sarah Dunlop's *Doing Theology with Photographs* (2024), this panel explores qualitative research in theological studies that centres visual ways of knowing, including taking and using photographs, analyzing videos, and creating drawings. Panelists will demonstrate the methods they use in research and teaching settings, explaining their significance and the ways they contribute to theological knowledges:

- Erik Sorensen shares a visual ethnographic approach to studying confessionals and how their design impacts liturgical participation.
- Josh Zentner-Barrett describes the use of drawing in semi-structured interviews for unpacking the affective, operant and unconscious dimensions of theological reflection;

- Anneli Loepp Thiessen presents analysis of YouTube videos as a living archive of ritual experiences, focusing on how embodied movement reflects power and authority in liturgical leadership.
- Sarah Kathleen Johnson explores the use of photographs in the classroom, including teaching liturgical history using 360° photos of ritual spaces, and students submitting photos to share their experiences experimenting with different spiritual practices.
- Mykayla Turner discusses the use of photos as a means of deepening theological reflection on liturgical space in a congregational setting.

This panel emerges from a workshop focused on qualitative research in liturgical studies initiated by professor Sarah Kathleen Johnson at Saint Paul University in the fall of 2024. Visual methods emerged as one theme that is significant for research and teaching in this area that bridges different ways of producing knowledge.

8 – Sharing heart songs in Hearts Exchanged

Adrian Jacobs, Marlene Wolters, Cindy Stover, Kenneth Wallace, Mike Hogeterp

Reconciliation is a living story in which the church is transformed by Creator's truth and beauty in the voices of kin who have been silenced through colonialism. Hearts Exchanged (H.E.) is a cohort based, eight-month learning journey focussed on unsettling colonial defaults and building right relationship. H.E. is informed, in part, by five decades of contextualized Indigenous ministry and justice solidarity efforts in the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CRC). Earnest CRC reconciliation and justice work continually encountered obstacles of indifference, syncretic anxiety, and inertia. However, in H.E. Indigenous kin challenge the church to turn from colonial patterns of performative reconciliation and ecclesial and theological arrogance, toward ongoing responsibility for living in right relationship. Intense learning in community draws H.E. participants into a disruption of colonial patterns and the hearing of new stories of Indigenous resilience and beauty. In turn, these stories draw the community into transformative experiences of worship and justice seeking where hearts are exchanged. The stories and heart songs of H.E. are the Spirit's presence in a fraught time of polarization and fragmentation and are a hopeful call to integrity for the church in this Kairos time of Truth and Reconciliation (as often stated by Elder Adrian Jacobs). This panel will explore the origin story of H.E., share stories and 'heart songs,' and discuss some research findings on the learning journey.