



ECUT

THE ECUMENICAL CHAPLAINCY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

CALLING OUR FRIENDS

Fall 2023 Volume 17

From the Chaplains



Chaplain Jeanette Unger

One of my favourite Advent stories is the beautiful meeting between Elizabeth and Mary (Luke 1:39-56). In their greeting, there is joy. In their kinship, there is refuge. In their connection, the presence of God is recognized. Elizabeth offers a blessing that affirms Mary's belovedness in God. Mary offers a prayer and prophecy that speaks to God's dream for the world. They spend three months together and then Mary leaves.

At its most profound, campus chaplaincy is a place of greeting where the presence of God in our lives is affirmed. Every time we meet each other, God shows up. When we make space for conversation, support, and growth, God is there. When we listen and pray, grieve, laugh, and ask questions, God is there. When we eat together, God is there. We hope that the space we share with students before they graduate is space that has been touched by God's presence.

Community on Campus

What does it look like to create community on campus in the fall of 2023? A central theme to ECUT's vision is to build a vibrant community of faith on campus, where students can connect with one another and grow in their knowledge and love of God. We see a need for students to live life together, support one another, pray for one another, serve others, and grow in faith together. Here are some snapshots of what that looks like.



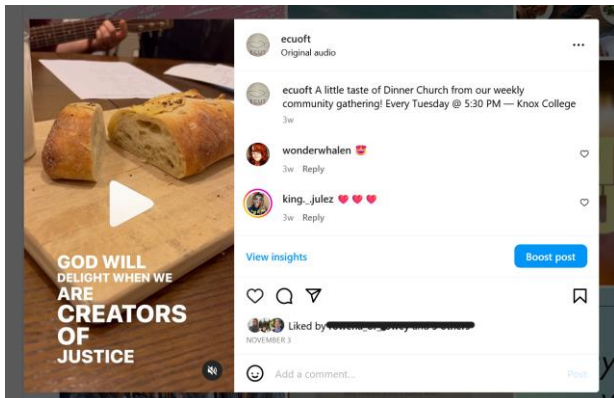
Students at St. Michael's Welcome Back BBQ, September 13, 2023

Welcome Back BBQ

ECUT, along with at least nine other Christian clubs and chaplaincies on campus (including Christian Reformed, St. Michael's, InterVarsity, Power to Change, Chinese Christian Fellowship, Orthodox), hosted a welcome back to U of T BBQ on September 13, 2023. While there have been conversations over the years about holding an ecumenical Christian event on campus, this BBQ was the first of its kind. The hope is that students meet each other, learn more about what each group/chaplaincy does on campus, praise and worship together, and experience the diversity of Christian presence on campus.

At the end of the evening, as the sun was setting, a small crowd of students remained, singing along with the St. Michael's worship band: *Holy, there is no one like You/ There is none beside You/ Open up my eyes in wonder/ Show me who You are/ And fill me with Your heart/ And lead me in Your love to those around me.* What a beautiful way to connect with God alongside many others.

Community on campus



ECUT's Instagram post, highlighting weekly gatherings

Weekly community gatherings: faith, food & friends

There are many ways to shape community, and meeting regularly is an important part of that. We are experimenting with what that looks like. This fall, in partnership with the Christian Reformed Chaplaincy, we hosted weekly Tuesday night gatherings in the chaplains' office at Knox College. We ate soup and bread, prayed, sang, and had facilitated conversations, on topics ranging from friendship to vocation to Scripture. It's been a small but mighty gathering! As we reflect on this experience, we realize that the reality of commuter students/evening classes means that scheduling is a challenge and that we need to put more energy into promotion and spreading the word!



Que(e)rying Religion

As part of U of T's queer orientation week, queer students from various faith and spiritual traditions, including a humanist perspective, gathered for an interfaith gathering at the Multi-Faith Centre. Organized by student Nic da Silva, the gathering included lighting a candle and meditation, words of contemplation and intention, the voluntary sharing of peoples' own intentions, challenges, and thanksgiving. The highlight was the reading of meaningful pieces of writing or scripture by three interfaith speakers followed by their own short talks on how their queerness intersects with their spiritual, philosophical, or faith background.

Chaplaincy at UTSC



Rev. Janet Smith-Zenwirt, UTSC students, Tim

As part of ECUT's strategic plan to forge meaningful connections between students and local churches, the Ecumenical Chaplaincy, in collaboration with the Office of Student Life at the University of Toronto in Scarborough, and in partnership with St. Mark's United Church, offered university students the opportunity to join members of a local congregation for a warm meal and supportive relationships. This collaborative effort is a first attempt since the launch of our new strategic plan to live more fully into ECUT's vision of integrating ministry on campus with local churches.

On November 4, 2023, students were invited to participate in the annual Turkey Dinner at St. Mark's, enjoying turkey, all the trimmings, and a plethora of homemade desserts. Student Irene Guerrero said of the event, *"I walked forty-five minutes to get here, but it was well worth the walk! It was great to share a homemade meal and meet so many loving people. I'm from Spain, and being so far from home is hard, but this made me feel a little less alone."* Together, we're not just building bridges between students and churches; we're creating enduring connections that enrich both the university experience and the ministry of local communities of faith.

Thanks to St. Mark's for opening your doors to UTSC students and partnering with ECUT!

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Many thanks to the following donors and sponsors who contributed to ECUT from **January 1- December 1, 2023**. ECUT is a CRA registered charity (884133315RR001). We do our best to acknowledge all donations received, let us know if your name is missing. (* Monthly donations through PAR or Canada Helps)

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ECUT Student Leaders: Julian and Nic



Hello ECUT Community!

My name is **Julian**, or King Julez, and my pronouns are they/them. I am a Masters of Divinity and Masters of Pastoral Studies student at Emmanuel College and a ministry candidate in The United Church of Canada. This year I am doing a placement with the chaplaincy to develop my skills for psychotherapy and community ministry in a context such as ECUT's.

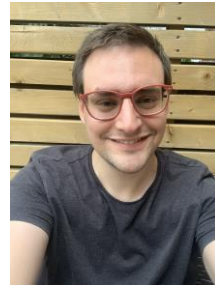
I have high hopes for my time here at ECUT- with a team such as ours I think that's reasonable. We have been developing our online presence more with two series of prayers on YouTube and Instagram. These prayers are for all to engage with to be able to honour and experience their life, wherever they are. We are going to continue posting prayers all year!

For our YouTube channel, you can click here: <https://www.youtube.com/@EcumenicalChaplaincyUofT>

My other plans for next semester include a Queer Grief group as well as some individual spiritual care sessions with folks who reach out. My grief group will incorporate skills from Dialectical Behavioural Therapy as well as spiritual practices and meditations. My hope with this group is to provide queer folks on campus with a way to connect to a spiritual community and process grief in an affirming and brave space. Within the queer community, there is a lot of religious trauma and disconnect from spiritual communities- my hope is that this group and my individual sessions will provide opportunities for healing and connection.

Thank you so much for journeying with ECUT. I hope to see you at some of our programming this year!

King Julez | they/them | <https://linktr.ee/kingjulez>



Through the Student Christian Movement (SCM) I have been given the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Ecumenical Chaplaincy. As a psychotherapy student at Emmanuel College, ECUT has been an important and spiritually open support for me in my ongoing journey to find newer ways of relating to God. School life can be very demanding, and not everyone is able to be a safe presence to be fully open with. Tim and Jeanette were two people on campus who I could feel truly safe with and it was out of the grace and hope that I received in being at their drop in that I felt a call to continue working with them as the SCM coordinator.

The work and vision that I share with ECUT is one of pluralistic faith community. We are people who have been positively shaped by our experiences of worship, reflection, and engagement with the world around us. It is out of that shared experience, which is one of joy and creativity, that we have pursued works that we feel have a particular impact and character for the broader campus community. This includes a queer-led interfaith event we held during September where we brought emerging queer leaders from Christian, Daoist, and Humanist communities to share their perspectives on the deepening power of spirituality. We are also developing a spirituality and hip-hop event which will bring together artists, musicians, people of faith, and local culture leaders to celebrate the great role faith and spirituality has played in the music many of us love.

I count myself very lucky for being able to share in the living, sustaining work of the Ecumenical Chaplaincy.