

Presenters' Bios

Dr. Jennifer Bright

Topic: Making the connection between Moral distress/ injury and Spiritual Health

Dr. Jenny Bright is a registered psychotherapist (qualifying) with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO) and an Associate Member of the Canadian Association of Spiritual Care (CASC/ACSS). She has a PhD in the Study of Religion (Tibetan Buddhism and medicine) with a Collaborative Specialization in Women's Health through the Dalla Lana School of Public Health from the University of Toronto. Dr. Bright works as a spiritual care clinician in the Intensive Care Unit at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto and teaches courses on Buddhism and psychotherapy at Emmanuel College in the Master of Pastoral Studies program and in the Buddhism, Psychology, and Mental Health minor at the University of Toronto. Dr. Bright's research interests include spiritually integrated psychotherapy, spiritual health and moral distress, and Buddhist spiritual care. Jenny's spiritual community is the Toronto Buddhist Church where she serves as a member of the executive board of directors. In her spare time, Jenny likes to take long hikes and play outside with her family.

Mr. Louis Cormier

Topic: Health and Buddhadharma: An Ordinary Life Perspective

Mr. Louis Cormier was born in Collette, New Brunswick, on February 29, 1948, to Acadian parents. He has a B.A. in English Literature from the University of New Brunswick (UNB), Fredericton, 1970. He moved to Montreal in 1970. He obtained an M.A. in Religious Studies from l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM) in 2000. A lay practitioner of Buddhadharma, he was also a founding member of the Montreal Interfaith Group in the early 1980's. Originally trained in the zazen method taught by Philip Kapleau in the Fall of 1970, he took Refuge in the Three Jewels with the Kagyu Lama Kalu Rinpoche in the summer of 1971 in Magog, Québec. He subsequently spent 17 years studying with Geshe Khenrab Gajam, a Tibetan Gelugpa Lama, from 1976 until his passing in 1993. He has also more recently become familiar with Chinese Tripitaka and Theravada teachings from various traditions.

Mr. Suren Fernando

Topic: Four Nutriments of Life preached by the Enlightened One

Mr. Suren Fernando is a former banker with over 25 years of experience and has held Senior Management positions in Canada and Sri Lanka. He hailed a strong Buddhist heritage from Sri Lanka and was involved in Buddhist activities such as meditation and counseling of dharma to prisoners. Suren is a promoter of mindfulness. He serves as a member of the Advisory Committee of Spiritual & Religious Care attached to the Toronto Hospital and a volunteer to the Victorian Order of Nurses. He is a social worker. In addition, he acts as a Dhamma school teacher affiliated with a Buddhist temple. He currently manages a family-owned floral business.

He is a student of Buddhism and practicing to realise the Dhamma, particularly to eradicate the mental defilements to see the world without labels and boundaries.

Bhikshuṇī Dr. Karma Lekshe Tsomo

Topic: Wellness in a Broken World

Bhikshuṇī Dr. Karma Lekshe Tsomo began meditating in the Zen tradition in Japan in 1965, then studied with S.N. Goenka, H.H. Dalai Lama, and other teachers in India from 1972-1989. She received novice ordination in France in 1977 and full ordination in Korea in 1982. In 2000, she earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Philosophy at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa, where she is currently the 2023 Numata Professor of Buddhist Studies. She is a founder of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women, the director of Jamyang Foundation, and the director of La'i Peace Center, a project of Sakyadhita Hawai'i. Her publications include *Women in Buddhist Traditions*; *Buddhist Feminisms and Femininities*; and *Into the Jaws of Yama: Buddhism, Bioethics, and Death*.

Dr. Elsa Lau

Topic: Exploring the Pioneer Buddhist chaplaincy services at public hospitals in Hong Kong

Dr. Elsa Ngar-sze Lau is a Senior Lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and affiliated Assistant Professor (part-time) of the Department of Buddhist Studies, Fo Guang University. She completed her MPhil degree in Social Anthropology at Oxford and PhD degree in Religious Studies at Lancaster. Her research interests include contemplative education, lay Buddhist meditation, and transnational meditation movement in contemporary Chinese societies. She has published academic papers in *Religions*, *Asian Medicine* and *Routledge International Handbook of Religion in Global Society*, etc.

Dr. Michael Lum

Topic: Buddhist Experiential Learning for Student Well-Being at the University of Toronto

Dr. Michael Lum is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the University of Toronto's Department for the Study of Religion and The Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Centre for Buddhist Studies. A historian of religion, his research focuses on the religions of Tibet and South Asia, and in particular, the early history of the Geluk tradition in Tibet.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Dr. Lynette Monteiro

Topic: The Dharma of Hope in Times of Uncertainty

Dr. Lynette Monteiro is a psychologist providing psychotherapy in the framework of mindfulness and cognitive therapy. Drawing from Buddhist teachings, she developed Mindfulness Based Symptom Management that includes value clarification as an important focus

of mindfulness practice in clinical interventions. She hopes to retire when the world is liberated from suffering. <https://ottawamindfulnessclinic.com/resources-2/>

Ph.D. Candidate Amber Moore

Topic: Towards Suffering: Embodied understandings of karma and past lives in the Newar Buddhist *Manisailamahavadana*

Ph.D. Candidate Amber Moore is in the Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto. She was the recipient of the 2022-23 Senior Doctoral Fellowship at New College, University of Toronto. Here is a link to her publication in the European Bulletin of Himalayan Research, Vol. 55, "Abodes of the Vajra Yoginīs: Mount Manicūḍa and *Paśupatikṣetra* as envisaged in the *Tridalakamala* and *Manisailamahāvadāna*." <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/ebhr/index.php?selection=55>

Dr. Ernest Ng

Topic: Developing Buddhist Spiritual Care in Greater Vancouver

Ernest C.H. Ng, BA, MA (UChicago), MBuddhStud, PhD (HKU), Mindfulness (MBCT, MPIM, TSM, MiSP), ANFT, CFRE, MFA-P

Dr. Ernest NGO is the CEO of Tung Lin Kok Yuen, Canada Society (TLKYCS). TLKYCS is a Buddhist charity based in Vancouver. It has been dedicated to Buddhist teachings, education, and community services for nearly 30 years. Ernest is a Buddhist Chaplain with the UMCA at UBC and Multifaith Centre at SFU. He focuses on the well-being of communities by volunteering at universities and charities. He engages in religious and spiritual care, teaches mindfulness, and guides forest therapy. Ernest specializes in applying wisdom tradition and spirituality into contemporary decision-making. His research publications include *Leveraging Happiness* and *Self-sufficiency* in Chinese, and *Introduction to Buddhist Economics* in English.

Dr. Eleanor Pontoriero

Topic: Socially Engaged Community Mindfulness: Buddhist and Secular (presentation & guided practice)

Dr. Eleanor Pontoriero (a.k.a. Upāsikā Mittā) has been a practicing Buddhist since 1985 in the Mahayana then Theravada traditions. Since 2002, she has taught comparative religious ethics, human rights, peacebuilding, gender, socially engaged Buddhism and mindfulness in the Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto. She mentors women and youth in grassroots projects for peace, equity, and development locally and globally. Upāsikā Mittā is a member of the Society of Buddhist-Christian Studies, Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women, Sakyadhita Canada, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, North American Buddhist Alliance, and Contemplative Mind in Higher Education. She is currently serving as the president of the Buddhist Council of Canada. She is a longtime member, and

leader in local Buddhist communities. As a not-for-profit endeavor, she teaches and guides devotional, meditative and contemplative practices in Buddhist and interfaith contexts. For her recent publications, see: <https://www.religion.utoronto.ca/people/directories/all-faculty/eleanor-pontoriero>

Bhante Saranapala

Topic: Buddha on Health and Wellness”.

Born in Chittagong, Bangladesh, Bhante Saranapala, after receiving both his monastic and secular education in Sri Lanka, made his way to Canada to further his studies, completed his undergrad and graduate studies at the University of Toronto and McMaster University and soon addressed his mind to the noble task of spreading in the West his own tested approach to Mindfulness and Insight Meditation. Settling down in the City of Mississauga-Toronto West, he has been a monk in residence at the monastic fraternity of the West End Buddhist Temple and (Monastery) Meditation Centre for the past 23 years.

Dr. Henry Shiu

Topic: “A Buddhist advocacy for a spiritually inclusive approach to environmental awareness and preservation”

Dr. Henry Shiu is the Shi Wu De Professor in Chinese Buddhist Studies at Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. His area of research specialization lies in the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha nature, and he has also focused his studies on Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, China, and Tibet, particularly in the historical and doctrinal development of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra traditions. His other research interests include contemporary engaged Buddhist movements, Buddhist chaplaincy, the Buddhist approach to dementia care, Buddhism in Canada, and Western classical music.

Dr. Judith Simmer Brown

Topic: “When is Compassion Skillful? Dialogues Between Buddhism & Science”.

Dr. Judith Simmer-Brown is Distinguished Professor of Contemplative and Religious Studies Emeritus at Naropa University. She has been active in interreligious dialogue internationally since the 1980's, and until recently served as a co-chair of the Contemplative Studies Unit of the AAR. Since retiring from full-time teaching in 2020, she continues at Naropa with the Compassion Initiative and Master of Divinity Courses. She is a Mind and Life Fellow. A student of Chogyam Trungpa since 1974, she teaches beginning and advanced retreats for Shambhala International. Her books are *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism* (Shambhala) and *Meditation and the Classroom* (SUNY).

Dr. Monica Sanford

Topic: Helping Buddhist communities and sanghas better support their chaplains

Dr. Monica Sanford is one of the first full-trained Buddhist practical theologians in the United States, having earned her PhD in practical theology from Claremont School of Theology. Sanford also holds an undergraduate degree in design from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Master of Divinity degree from University of the West. Sanford is an ordained Buddhist lay minister in a Chan lineage and trained as a Buddhist chaplain. Her recent book, *Kalyāṇamitra: A Buddhist Model for Spiritual Care* (January 2021), is the first textbook for Buddhist chaplains.

Dr. Eleanor Weisbaum

Topic: Applied Mindfulness on physician wellbeing in collaboration with Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village community.

Dr. Elli Weisbaum has worked internationally facilitating mindfulness workshops and retreats within the sectors of education, healthcare, and business. She is currently the Acting Program Director for the Buddhism, Psychology and Mental Health Program (BPMH), at New College, and is jointly appointed to the Department of Psychiatry, at the Temerity Faculty of Medicine, with a cross-appointment to the Dalla Lana School of Public Health in their Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation (IHPME). At the heart of her teaching and research is an interest in cultivating learning and occupational environments where all members of the community can flourish and thrive. Her work draws upon research from the fields of neuroscience, education, healthcare, and the workplace to explore how the scientific evidence base for mindfulness is being integrated and operationalized across key sectors of society. Past and ongoing collaborations include working with the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Faculty of Engineering, Rotman School of Management, Physical Therapy Department, the Ontario Hospital Association, The Hospital for Sick Children, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to integrate mindfulness into programming for faculty, staff, clinicians, patients, and students. She attended her first retreat with Zen Master and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Thich Nhat Hanh at the age of ten and has continued to train and collaborate with his international Plum Village community. Elli's novel background in both academic research and traditional mindfulness practice provides a distinct approach to her ongoing work exploring approaches for cultivating a healthy and compassionate society.