

Theological Education

Volume 47, Number 2
2013

ISSUE FOCUS

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in a Multifaith Society—Reports and Reflections***

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Full text may be accessed
only on the University of
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**Muslim Studies in a Christian Theological School:
The Muslim Studies Program at Emmanuel College in Toronto**
Mark G. Toulouse



The Association of Theological Schools
The Commission on Accrediting

ISSN 0040-5620

Theological Education
is published semiannually by
The Association of Theological Schools
IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
10 Summit Park Drive
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15275-1110

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This journal is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® and is available in electronic form in ATLASerials® (ATLAS®), both produced by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606; atla@atla.com; <http://www.atla.com>.

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Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites responses, of up to 1,500 words, to articles published in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be emailed to editors@ats.edu. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

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Editor's Introduction

Stephen R. Graham

The previous issue of *Theological Education* introduced the Association's project, Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith Society, whose goals were to support schools in their work to prepare graduates to serve faithfully and effectively in contexts involving people of differing faith traditions and to inform the process of revising the Commission Standards of Accreditation for degree programs. As the title suggests, the project's focus was on preparing graduates for contexts of pastoral practices—for example, weddings and funerals, pastoral care and counseling, preaching and teaching—within which persons of multiple faiths might be involved. The previous issue of *Theological Education* presented reflective essays from the three largest ecclesial families represented within the Association's membership, evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic, as well as reflection essays by scholars and other materials that speak to these issues. With this issue of *Theological Education*, we turn to the final stages of the project. We include reports on nine small-grant projects from a variety of schools that worked to implement some of the ideas generated in the project's initial stages. While all eighteen of the project reports merited publication, nine were chosen to represent the diversity of schools, ideas, and approaches.

Projects by Andover Newton Theological School and Luther Seminary take the work out of their schools and into communities of faith to explore implications and possibilities of interaction between scholars, students, and members of faith communities. For Andover Newton, the value of *havruta*, a Hebrew word for “partnership,” “friendship,” “companionship,” was affirmed, concluding that, particularly in interfaith education, “all learning must take place within the bonds of personal relationship.” Luther Seminary's project, similarly, emphasized *presence* and led to discoveries that presence is “fundamentally about openness,” that “learning takes place far more efficiently and effectively through engagement with, rather than teaching about,” and that “learning in the presence of other faiths can deepen one's own faith, while inviting deeper respect for other faiths.”

Two projects recorded here focus on faculty development. Saint John's School of Theology–Seminary designed a series of faculty conversations with key stakeholders, faculty development events, and resource development structured around the Benedictine value of hospitality. Many of the conversations were structured as “table talk,” engaging multifaith issues with a wide variety of guests and leading to a bibliography of both local and broader resources. United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities sought to strengthen its ability to equip a new generation of religious leaders by developing faculty through conversations with scholars and representatives of different faith traditions, visits to places of worship, and conversations within the faculty about curriculum. Through the process, faculty members identified fifteen competencies they believed to be important for ministry in a multifaith setting.

Three projects explored particular pastoral practices. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary developed a course, *Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations*, within the framework of the distinctive Mennonite tradition of hospitality and in consultation with representatives of seven faith traditions and spiritual care professionals. Brite Divinity School hosted five multifaith panels designed to address issues that arise in the ministerial practices of faith communities. The panels included presentations by representatives from Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faith traditions and lively conversations with the audience. Iliff School of Theology developed an advanced course on intercultural spiritual care informed by research with military veterans and their use of Buddhist beliefs and practices to help address the traumas of their combat experiences.

Finally, projects by Multnomah Biblical Seminary of Multnomah University and North Park Theological Seminary explored ways to move across cultural barriers and to measure students' capacities to cross those barriers. Multnomah sought to bridge the cultural barrier between its evangelical Christian identity and a local Zen Buddhist community. Its report describes the "messy business" of table fellowship that fruitfully exposed suspicions and stereotypes leading to courageous conversations, healing of old wounds, and lasting friendships. In an effort to expand student self-awareness and capacities, North Park Theological Seminary developed a Cultural Competency Module to be used by all graduating students as a measure of their growth in cultural competence during their seminary studies and as a basis for developing a "life syllabus" with goals for continued growth.

The rich variety and creativity of these projects represent only first steps, but important ones, taken by many schools to prepare their graduates for this rapidly approaching and, in many contexts, already present reality.

Two representatives of world faiths, Or Rose and Amir Hussain, were regular conversation partners throughout the project. Through essays in this issue, they present reflections on the project and identify necessary future work. From his perspective as a rabbi and educator, Rose brings wisdom and insight to his reflections in "Pedagogic Principles for Multifaith Education." Students, he insists, must be prepared to be ambassadors, witnesses, and bridge-builders: ambassadors of their traditions, witnesses to their own religious experiences, and builders of bridges across chasms of distrust and hostility. Hussain urges Christians and Muslims to accentuate what they hold in common and to find ways to live side-by-side with respect, tolerance, and perhaps even learning from one another—something that he shows has happened fruitfully in the past. It is in pastoral practices and the simple living of one's faith that this positive interaction is often found.

Finally, historian and principal of Emmanuel College, Mark Toulouse, gives an in-depth description of that school's development of a program in Muslim Studies. Given Toronto's religious and social cosmopolitan character, and the urgency in the North American context of seeking better understanding of Islam, the program is timely and provides good insights for others who might follow a similar path.

At the end of this project, it is fitting once again to offer sincere thanks to the Henry Luce Foundation, its president, Michael Gilligan, and its program director for theology, Lynn Szwaja, for their generous support of this project as well as their faithful support of theological education and the work of The Association of Theological Schools.

Taking Interfaith Off the Hill: Revelation in the Abrahamic Traditions

*Gregory Mobley
Andover Newton Theological School*

ABSTRACT: With its hospitality grant, Andover Newton sponsored an adult education class off campus in spring 2012. It brought together parishioners from congregations representing different faith traditions—Christian, Jewish, and Unitarian Universalist—for learning and group discussion about their respective faiths as well as Islam. The class format followed a model used in the CIRCLE interfaith program at Andover Newton and Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts, of “interfaith learning through relationship.”

Andover Newton’s Christian hospitality project offered a congregational-based interfaith learning adult education class titled, “Revelation in the Abrahamic Traditions.” It brought together cohorts of ten parishioners from three neighboring congregations in Brookline, Massachusetts:

- United Parish in Brookline, a Christian congregation triply aligned with the American Baptists, United Church of Christ, and United Methodists;
- Temple Beth Zion, an independent Jewish congregation; and
- First Parish in Brookline, a Unitarian Universalist congregation.

The class met at First Parish (the Unitarian Universalist partner) on five Monday nights for two hours where teachers with expertise in, respectively, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Unitarian Universalism distributed and introduced primary and secondary texts from their traditions that addressed the questions of religious authority and prophetic possibility. Led by seminarians and rabbinical students from Andover Newton and its partner school Hebrew College, breakout groups that mixed members from the various congregations discussed the texts. Then the larger group reconvened for general discussion and further remarks from the teacher of the session. At our final meeting, all teachers were present for a roundtable discussion of the issue.

The teachers and topics included the following:

- Rabbi Or N. Rose, Director of the Center for Global Judaism at Hebrew College and Codirector of CIRCLE (Center for Inter-Religious and Communal Leadership Education at Andover Newton and Hebrew College), on “Revelation in the Jewish Tradition”
- Rev. Dr. Gregory Mobley, Professor of Christian Bible at Andover Newton, on “Revelation in Christianity”
- Dr. Homayra Ziad, Assistant Professor of Religion, Trinity College, Hartford, on “Revelation in Islam”

- Rev. John Buehrens, Senior Minister of First Parish in Needham Unitarian Universalist and past President of the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations), on “Revelation in Unitarian Universalism”
- A general discussion of the idea of revelation by the above teachers, with Rev. Carl Scovel, Pastor Emeritus of King’s Chapel, Boston (UUA), substituting for Rev. Buehrens, who was unable to attend

By way of general description, our course offered participants the opportunity to explore a core subject in the Abrahamic traditions—namely, revelation—with expert instructors and with fellow students from other religious communities. Each class included a presentation by one of the scholars, small group study (in interreligious configurations), and larger group discussion. The instructors were assisted by theological students—future religious educators and community leaders—from Andover Newton and Hebrew College, where we have been conducting these kinds of classes for several years. Our primary objective was to take the kind of interfaith learning we have been experimenting with on our campus of Christians, Jews, and Unitarian Universalists and offer it to the community.

Among the central questions explored were, How is revelation described in the foundational texts of our traditions? What are some of the ways these narratives have been interpreted throughout history? How do interpreters understand the relationship between God and the human being in revelatory encounters? How do all of these teachings shape the lives we lead as spiritual seekers, as members of our respective religious communities, and as participants in the broader culture in which we live? We hoped that this learning experience would help participants deepen their understanding of their own traditions, gain greater insight into the sacred texts and traditions of their fellow students from other religious communities, and foster positive relations among members of the class, which specifically targeted neighboring congregations, that can be further developed in the future.

There is a context for our project—namely, the atmosphere of interfaith learning we are attempting to foster on our campus in Newton. In 2001, Hebrew College moved from Brookline, Massachusetts, to a new hilltop campus it would share with Andover Newton Theological School in Newton. Two years later, in 2003, Hebrew College, which for eighty-five years had offered advanced courses in Jewish history and culture, added a rabbinical school. Thus, for a decade now, the newest theological school in the country, the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, and the oldest—Andover Newton’s roots go back to the founding of Andover Seminary in 1807—have formed a partnership that has changed the way both schools do business and practice theological education.

Almost as soon as Hebrew College moved into its new buildings in 2001, a new feature appeared on the landscape, one that had not been sketched on the official blueprint. That new feature was the footpath shortcut between the campuses made one tread at a time by students who began meeting to talk about their common vocations and concerns as well as their respective traditions. Even before the faculties and administrations of the two schools offered

interfaith theological courses and shared practical economies, this Green Line had been breached by the students of Andover Newton and Hebrew College. They wanted to learn together and from each other as they prepared for vocations as religious leaders. Andover Newton and Hebrew College, located cheek-by-jowl, began to discover the power and complexity of Jews and Christians doing theology face-to-face, *panim al-panim*.

We now see that our previous work had always been done with our backs to each other. Each school did its work in parochial isolation and was content to say something a little better than, a little different from its coreligionists. It is a brand new ball game when you have to articulate your tradition in the presence of a member of a different faith. Before we had been engrossed in the perennial intramural debates within Judaism and Christianity. The interfaith educational setting demanded that we raise our respective explorations to a new level. This was now on the varsity level, and we had to elevate our respective games.

Spurred by this cohort of seminarians, the faculties and administration deepened their commitment to this burgeoning interfaith venture. We created joint academic courses cotaught by Jewish and Christian faculty and populated by students from both schools. We organized a series of Community Days where students from both schools participated in community service projects around Boston. The students formed Journeys on the Hill (JOTH), a group that spanned the student bodies and sponsored both seasonal events organized around our respective sacred calendars and student-led peer study groups that continue to serve as an important context for spiritual exploration, relationship building, and professional development. Thanks to grants from Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons and the Henry Luce Foundation, in 2007 we moved from our earlier experiments and ad-hoc programming to the creation of a comprehensive interfaith initiative called CIRCLE, the Center for Inter-Religious and Communal Leadership Education. Under its managing director, Jennifer Peace Howe, who holds a doctorate in Comparative Religion from Graduate Theological Union, CIRCLE is developing degree programs in interfaith leadership and expanding the interfaith course offerings (now a curricular requirement at both the Rabbinical School and in the Masters of Divinity program at Andover Newton), service learning opportunities, and liturgical programming. On the horizon, *inshe Allah*, is the expansion of our interfaith conversation so that it includes Muslims and members of other faith communities.

The primary feature that has emerged from our six years of intentional interfaith education is the value of *havruta*, a Hebrew word for "partnership," "friendship," or "companionship." In traditional Rabbinic education, havruta, the partnership of two rabbinic students over the course of years of study, is as integral as study at the feet of a teacher. Participants in a havruta study partnership become study mates, teammates, soul mates, and, at times, holy adversaries—iron sharpening iron—in the exploration of Torah.

We have made havruta study partnerships across faith lines a part of every interfaith course. The instructors from each school who jointly lead the class form their own dyad for mutual learning. Students paired across religious lines

are required to meet outside of class each week and given texts to read and debate together. Consistently, students point to the learning that takes place in havruta as the most valuable feature of the interfaith course experience.

The nurturing of personal relationships across religious lines is essential to interfaith education at Andover Newton and Hebrew College. For our schools, it is not enough to assemble students to learn from an expert, and certainly not from a learned observer of a faith that is not their own. All learning must take place within the bonds of personal relationship. For this same reason, course work is only one element of our comprehensive program of interreligious education; it must be supplemented by extracurricular encounters around the focal points of holidays, service, and features of religious vocation and professional development common to both aspiring ministers and aspiring rabbis.

Our class thus sought to create the kind of programming we do on campus among paired Jewish and Christian congregations in Greater Boston. We brought together synagogues and churches from the same community, building from and deepening social and civic bonds that already exist, for a series of joint textual studies.

What we learned

1. There is a hunger among congregations for interreligious learning. We limited participation to ten members of each congregation, but more were interested.
2. Just as it does among theological students, we found that interfaith learning enriches understanding both of the Religious Other and of one's own tradition.
3. There is a need for adult religious education across the religious spectrum, and it was our pleasure to offer that to congregations in our community. The type of learning that was taken for granted on campus was viewed as a privilege by the laity in our classes.
4. Our theological students benefited from these supervised leadership and teaching opportunities.

Interinstitutional impact

- The continued success of the havruta model, first employed in interfaith classes between Andover Newton and Hebrew College and confirmed in our work in this adult education project off campus, has led our two schools to explore this type of learning even further. We received a Wabash Grant for the 2012–2013 academic year specifically designed to find ways to apply the havruta model to joint faculty work between the schools.
- The Muslim teacher in our class, Professor Hodaya Ziad of Trinity College, was so effective that Andover Newton arranged for her to teach a class on Islam in January 2013 on our campus.

Challenges

Though our class featured a degree of confessional diversity, we did not have cultural diversity. The various Jewish, Christian, and Unitarian Universalist students shared roughly similar backgrounds socioeconomically, politically, and theologically. Our teaching team included a Muslim, and there was one class member who was Muslim, but we were unable to include a Muslim partner congregation this past year. In Boston there are tensions at the leadership level between the Jewish and Muslim communities. This makes the type of interfaith learning we offer all the more essential, though it makes it hard to arrange partnerships.

Recommendations

We will make the identification and securing of partners from Christian, Jewish, and, especially, Muslim communities our first task in planning.

Prospects

Our next class is planned for spring 2013, along the same lines, with many of the same teachers, hosted by the Old South (UCC) Church of Boston, and with a renewed commitment to find a Muslim partner congregation. It will be funded by charging a minimal fee to participants, and scholarships will be offered to those who find the fee a barrier to participation.

Gregory Mobley is professor of Christian Bible at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

RESOURCE

The Media Center at Andover Newton Theological School documented through video this four-week interfaith event “Revelation in the Abrahamic Traditions.” The video may be accessed at <http://youtu.be/KNcs5F3FEmw>.

The Pastoral Practice of Christian Hospitality as Presence in Muslim-Christian Engagement: Contextualizing the Classroom

Mary Hess
Luther Seminary

ABSTRACT: This project involved inviting graduate-level classes to contextualize their study in relationship with a specific Lutheran congregation in an urban and multifaith neighborhood. In doing so, the Christian practice of hospitality—especially understood in terms of presence—was particularly pertinent. Learning took place in context, far more efficiently and effectively, through engagement with rather than teaching about each other. Ultimately the project members experienced learning in the presence of other faiths as deepening one's own faith, while inviting genuine respect for other faiths.

To understand the work of our Christian hospitality project, you need first to understand something of the context in which our project took shape.

Luther Seminary is an Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) seminary with a student body drawn from all over the world. It has a long-standing commitment to ecumenical and interfaith engagement. More than a quarter of our faculty are from traditions other than Lutheran, and we have a large biblical faculty who regularly teach in collaborative ways with Jewish scholars. Until recently we also had a master's degree in Islamic Studies.

In addition, the Twin Cities of Minnesota are incredibly diverse in terms of religious communities. While the 2008 Pew poll listed 81 percent of *all* Minnesotans as Christian, 13 percent unaffiliated, and thus only 6 percent of other faiths, we have in the Twin Cities the largest Hmong community outside of southeast Asia, the largest Somali community outside of Somalia, and the most diverse African immigrant community of any major metropolitan area.

Students, staff, and faculty at Luther live, work, and worship while they're at this institution in a context in which you have to work very hard to ignore religious diversity. That some of us do so anyway is one of the challenges we face, and we are working to find ways not only to help us to "see" diversity but also to engage it in productive and thoughtful ways.

The Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices (CHAPP) program emerged for us as a promising way to think about how to do such engagement, and to think about pastoral practice and pastoral imagination in ways that would draw upon our deepest commitments to understanding theology as arising in the midst of congregations.

We developed our project in collaboration with staff and members of Trinity Lutheran Congregation, which is the only Christian congregation in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis—a densely populated

neighborhood of between 7,500 and 10,000 people that has at least three mosques. As a congregation, Trinity is multiethnic, with members of European, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and African American descent; nearly 30 percent of its congregation is persons of color.¹

Our project began with a commitment on the part of Luther faculty and staff to use the funds entirely in the pursuit of demonstrating and exploring what Christian hospitality looks like when practiced as *presence* in a multifaith world. Thus neither of our codirectors drew a stipend from the grant, and we split the funds among the congregation we were working with, various hospitality events we developed in the neighborhood, and partially funding an intern to work in the congregation through our children, youth, and family degree program.

In focusing on *presence*, we built off of Jesus's role of guest. From his encounter with Zaccheus, to engaging the Samaritan woman at the well, he was a recipient of others' hospitality. For many in US culture, to be guest instead of host or teacher is very difficult. It is something we must learn to do. In approaching other cultures, in this case Muslim and (mostly) East African cultures, we knew that we must intentionally place ourselves in the position of listener and guest, not as teacher. By being consciously present as guest, we anticipated that we might learn in a much deeper way.

During the 2011–2012 academic year we practiced *presence* in a number of ways. Three of our faculty—Mary Hess, Chris Scharen, and Terri Elton—built elements into our courses² that required presence in this neighborhood as well as engagement and learning with its inhabitants and with Trinity Lutheran.

Mary Hess teaches a Christian education class, for example, called Learning in the Presence of Other Faiths, and one of the things that class did was to meet at Trinity to learn from Pr. Buckley-Farlee, and then to walk with her over to one of the local mosques to learn from some of its members about their faith and their presence and concerns in the neighborhood. The class also explored at some length the varieties of ways in which Christian theology has “made sense of” the vibrant reality of other faiths, and her students worked on projects that combined this new learning with efforts to create opportunities for sharing such learning in their own pastoral contexts.

Terri Elton teaches a class on children, youth, and family ministry in urban contexts, and her class studied contextual theology through reading, lecture, and classroom discussion, as well as engaging it firsthand through the ministry of Trinity Lutheran. One Saturday class members located themselves in Trinity's context by taking public transportation from seminary to the church, learning about the challenges and joys of ministry in the Riverside neighborhood from their leadership and having lunch at a neighborhood Ethiopian restaurant to taste and smell one of the many cultures present in this context. Traditional classroom learning coupled with this experiential learning added a depth to the class that was not present previously and highlighted the complexity and richness of ministry in a multicultural and multifaith setting.

Chris Scharen coteaches a class called Reading the Audiences, which is an entry-level course on congregational theology and sociological investigation. His class, cotaught with Dwight Zscheile, frames a missional theology for

congregational leadership. In the process, he and Zscheile draw upon a theology of multifaith engagement that understands God to already be present with all we meet. Thus the proper stance is not to “bring God” to others, but to adopt a posture of humility, as Christ would, and expect to listen and to learn how God is already at work in the lives of others. For this part of the course, Scharen and Zscheile invited Pr. Buckley-Farley to come speak to the class about the Trinity Congregation’s journey of listening to its Muslim neighbors. Second, they introduced their students to social research methods and asked them to choose a congregation and community to study in groups of six to eight. Trinity Lutheran was one of the congregations studied. Students interviewed members of the congregation and the surrounding community, attended services, walked the neighborhood, studied census data, and pulled all of this into a report on the ministry context and opportunities for the congregation.

In addition to the various ways in which the project brought specific classes into direct collaboration with Trinity’s presence in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, we also worked with our children, youth, and family degree program—which requires its students to have twenty-hour-a-week placements in local congregations—to place a student at Trinity who would spend part of her time working with the CHAPP project. This intern reflected, in particular, on the ways in which youth make sense of a multifaith reality, and she found herself needing to learn how to articulate Christian faith to people who are unfamiliar with it.

Along the way, members of our team participated in a number of local events—a community worship service in a local community center, which is hosted by Trinity and which invites their suburban congregations into participation; an Iftar dinner held in the neighborhood; a community open house that offered food and fellowship to the neighborhood on the afternoon and evening of September 11; “homework help” events (Trinity offers such support to the youth in the neighborhood); and an evening of refreshment and renewal for the council of Trinity.

Learnings

This project is in no way finished, and in some ways we are hesitant to offer any but the most tentative conclusions. Here are three provisional inferences, by way of sharing what we have learned so far.

First, a practice of Christian hospitality as presence is a practice that requires patience and a discipline of openness. Christine Pohl has written compellingly about the practice of hospitality as one of “making room.” As we have worked with our students and thought about what we are learning in the CHAPP project, this spiritual discipline of opening up—or of what some people might call “holding something lightly” or “with open hands”—has been crucially important.

There are numerous times in Scripture in which Jesus invited engagement with people with whom his immediate followers were not open to being in relationship. In several ways we have struggled with what it means to be “open” in Christian terms. How does one have a strong Christian identity, an

identity robust enough to be deeply centered and loyal to a specific community but still open to learning with and from others?

Here one of the books Hess used in class proved particularly interesting and useful. Paul Knitter's text, *Introducing Theologies of Religion*, practices what you might call an "eighth commandment" commitment. That is, in this book Knitter does his best to represent a range of Christian theologies of religious pluralism as respectfully as possible, and in such a way that their own adherents would recognize them. This stance gave our students a way to find themselves somewhere amongst the positions he outlined and to have the patience to ask genuine questions of each other.

Pr. Buckley-Farlee has also been an incredibly effective model of openness and patience. She did not hesitate to talk with us about the challenges involved in trying to lead a congregation that is as diverse as hers—including the challenges that occurred when the national ELCA made decisions regarding sexuality that raised deep conflicts within her congregation. She repeatedly emphasized that Trinity exists at the will of the Holy Spirit, because, as she says in the video interview referenced above, "our role is to listen, to listen to God, to listen to each other, to listen to the people in our neighborhood—and through that hard listening to determine as best we can to discern the course that we take, and that's always changing, that's always morphing, depending on where the Spirit is blowing."

The second big learning for us, at least so far, is that we need to get our students out of the classroom and into tangible relationships with people. This kind of learning cannot take place if it is simply "about" other faiths. We need to learn "through engagement with" other faiths. As noted earlier, our context is very rich in this way, so in addition to the various mosques we visited, Hess took her class to the Hindu Temple of Minnesota (a very large campus complex in Maple Grove that regularly holds tours), and Scharen's class spent a good part of the semester engaged with the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, discussing life with the Somali residents there as part of their study of Trinity Lutheran.

There is something very compelling about entering into someone else's sacred place and hearing from that individual about his or her practices and beliefs.

Finally, the third thing we would note at this point in our experience of the project is that "learning in the presence of other faiths" tends to deepen one's own faith. Some of our students entered this project with anxiety about how it might stretch or challenge their own beliefs or how it might draw them out of their commitments. We think the project has had the opposite effect. We believe that these students now hold their Christian identity even more strongly. The change, however, and it is a very important change, is that they now have *much more* and *much deeper* respect for the faith held by people in other traditions.

The three learnings thus far may be summarized as follows:

1. The Christian practice of *hospitality*—especially understood in terms of *presence*—is fundamentally about openness.
2. Learning takes place far more efficiently and effectively through *engagement with*, rather than *teaching about*.
3. Learning in the presence of other faiths can deepen one's own faith, while inviting deeper respect for other faiths.

Recommendations

In terms of advice for other schools who might pursue a similar project, we would note that it has been crucial for us to partner with a congregation that has a long-standing commitment to, and presence within, this very diverse and multifaith context. As noted earlier in this report, the Twin Cities are home to a truly varied group of faith communities, and thus it was possible to *practice presence* in very organic ways that grew out of the integrity of the relationships Trinity had already developed as well as the relationships our faculty, staff, and students began to develop through Trinity's mentoring.

Challenges and future work

We will continue to be involved with this neighborhood's faith communities, and our next challenge will be to find ways to broaden, organically, these relationships into connection with a broader cross section of Luther Seminary. Indeed, we need to share more of what we are learning *across* our curriculum, not simply in individual classes. The time is ripe for such engagement, as Luther's faculty have embarked upon a project of curriculum revision. We are not yet able to say how this project will impact that process, but it is clear that those of us who have been involved with the CHAPP project bring our relationships and perspectives to that table.

There are, as we have already intimated, many questions that remain. Perhaps some of the more profound have to do with how we understand Christian theology. Willie James Jennings addresses this in his recent book, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*:

A space built on Jesus of Nazareth and the claim that he is indeed Israel's Messiah, their Christ, is a space that cannot protect itself from any critique or ridicule. It is a space open to the nations and their desire. It announces a kinship network that cannot be verified but only enacted through discipleship and living together in communion with God. On the one side, this network of kinship exists as a painfully weak space that positions itself as a site of Israel and for Israel. It is a network that presents interlopers as family and strangers as kin who claim their connection only through the voice of a single one in Israel, Jesus. His life is the slender thread that holds Gentiles inside Israel as authentic not exclusive inheritors of its legacies.

On the other side, this network of kinship exists in abiding tension with other kinship networks that demand adherence. This new network must face the power of naming and claiming inherent in any world of kinship.³

What does it mean to speak of God in this radically relational way? If we can speak of Christian identity in this way—as “lurkers” or “interlopers,”

if you will, falling in love with another people's God (as Jennings describes the early communities of Gentiles following Jesus)—what might we learn by privileging such an ambiguous identity when we encounter other communities of faith? What practices does such a commitment invite us to take on? Specifically in this context, how might practices of humility, curiosity, and a deep desire for learning become part of our work in a multifaith environment? How might we grow such practices into significant desire for connection with people who love a different God?

This project suggests to us, at least, that simply being *present* is a crucial first step, and that doing so while “holding one's identity lightly” or “with open hands” is an essential spiritual discipline. How do we teach such a practice? What are the systematic theological implications of such? Here again we find Jennings' words apropos:

The new people formed in this space imagine the world differently, beyond the agonistic vision of nations and toward the possibility of love and kinship. Aesthetics preceding ethics, these disciples of Jesus love and desire one another, and that desire for each other is the basis of their ethical actions in the worlds of allegiances and kinships. . . .

What characterizes the communion of this new space is not the absence of strife, contention, or division but its complete capture. Just as Jesus drew into himself the energy of a violent world in order to heal that energy and turn it toward the good, so the communion envisioned by his body draws into itself the agon of peoples in order to turn strife into desire.⁴

It is our hope—a hope that has a clear basis in tangible relationship—that practicing presence, of the sort we explored in this project, contributes toward precisely this form of communion.

Mary Hess is associate professor of education leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. She codirected the project along with Christian Scharen, assistant professor of worship.

ENDNOTES

1. For a lovely introduction to this congregation, please see the interview with Pr. Buckley-Farlee available at Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com/29579166>), produced by Peter Weston Miller, an MDiv student at Luther.
2. Learning in the Presence of Other Faiths (EL3541), Reading the Audiences (IC1615), and CYF Ministry in Urban Contexts (CY4540). All three of these classes fulfill some kind of core requirement in the various master's level degree programs at Luther.
3. Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 272.
4. Ibid., 274.

Raising Awareness of Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices: Equipping Ourselves for a Multifaith World

Barbara Sutton

Saint John's School of Theology–Seminary

ABSTRACT: Sustained dialogue with key stakeholders about relevant inter-faith topics and practice, faculty development, and the development of resources provided the basis for our consciousness raising. As the conversations led to pastoral actions, the school sought ways to integrate the curriculum rather than add another course, became aware of the liturgical sensibilities of introducing multifaith worship into established patterns, deepened its Benedictine hospitality as it shared meals with strangers who became guests, and engaged a wealth of resources available on campus and in the community.

Overview of the grant proposal

This grant proposal built on existing activities and resources within the school of theology and wider university. The proposal committed Saint John's School of Theology to three specific actions: (1) a sustained dialogue with key stakeholders in the school of theology and with community leaders of other faith traditions; (2) faculty development events to focus on current best practices around this topic and possible new ways of deepening or expanding those practices; and (3) development of resources on multifaith issues. Programming and meetings related to this grant were structured around the Benedictine value of hospitality, sharing meals and conversation in dialogue about relevant interfaith topics and practices that our students will face in their professions.

Activities funded by the grant

First activity: Table Talk

The predominant activity funded by this grant was Table Talk. Over eight months, students, faculty, and religious leaders of different faiths gathered for a monthly Table Talk, which engaged a conversation around pastoral practices in a multifaith society. The first Table Talk was dedicated to community building among the dozen or so people who committed to gathering monthly for these discussions. Students shared pastoral experience in multifaith issues and interests in the topic, faculty shared their background around multifaith issues and their area of scholarship that could contribute to the conversation, and leaders of faith communities shared their perspectives and interest in the topic. Our second Table Talk involved three chaplains (hospital, jail, and police) from the St. Cloud area who shared multifaith practices and pastoral concerns that are present in the community.

Among the monthly Table Talk guests were Sharon Stiefl, rabbi and spiritual counselor of Shalom Hospice for the Shalom Community Alliance; Amir Hussain, professor in the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University; and Jamal Ahemd with members of the Islamic Center of St. Cloud. All of these guests began the Table Talk by sharing how ministry happens in their respective faith traditions, ways in which they as leaders of their faith communities participate in interfaith activities, how referrals are made for pastoral care, and so forth. This fifteen-minute introduction by each guest provided a platform for dialogue with students, faculty, and other faith leaders.

Second activity: Faculty conversation

A second, one-time activity involved a conversation with the faculty regarding how adequately the present curriculum equips students for ministry in a multifaith world. Two recent competencies approved by the United States Catholic Conference shaped this conversation and are listed with their corresponding indicators:

Core Competency 2.8: Display openness to ecumenical prayer, work, and practices that promote Christian unity, and acknowledge the gifts afforded the human community from the various world religions. (Spiritual)

Indicators:

- Promote and participate in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Support activities and projects with other Christian communities
- Participate in opportunities for interreligious dialogue and collaboration

Core Competency 3.9: Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Know and integrate into ministerial practice a respect for other Christian communities and other religious traditions. (Intellectual)

Indicators:

- Articulate our common heritage and our shared practices
- Identify key moments and figures in Church history which precipitated separation and/or supported efforts toward unity
- Promote opportunities for dialogue, prayer, and action on behalf of social justice with others in ecumenical and interreligious communities

Discussion around these competencies heightened faculty awareness. The faculty identified three courses in which multifaith issues were incorporated into the curriculum: (1) Liturgical Celebrations, (2) Ministry through the Lifecycle, and (3) Integration Seminar. Looking ahead, the faculty identified two courses that have been added to upcoming course offerings: (1) The Church in Dialogue and (2) Christianity and World Religions. The faculty affirmed that adding courses to current degree programs is not an option. Rather, they prefer to look at the existing curriculum to see where it might be strengthened in this area. Our assessment consultant suggested that we include this in our assessment efforts up front rather than as an afterthought.

Third activity: Resource development

The third goal of the grant was the development of resources on multi-faith issues (see Appendix). While a bibliography of resources for ecclesial ministers was developed over the year and made available to our students, faculty, and alumni/ae, the wealth of scholarship and other resources located on campus became evident. In addition to our use of the Benedictine culture of hospitality, there were several resources already available to the school of theology from which we drew and which we incorporated into our various events that work with multifaith dialogues. The graduate student government, for instance, has a standing committee for ecumenical and interfaith affairs; Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict have sponsored the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning for more than twenty years; the Collegeville Institute has been a center for ecumenical and interfaith scholarship since 1968; and Fr. William Skudlarek, OSB, a monk of St. John's Abbey, is Secretary General of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue based in Rome.

Learnings, challenges, and opportunities

While Table Talk was a very affirming experience for many, some members of the group still have questions about how to interact in particular interfaith ministerial situations. These questions themselves are a positive outcome of our dialogue, because people were made more aware of issues of which they should be conscious when interacting with people of other faith traditions. It is our hope that this spirit of openness and faith-filled inquiry will continue to grow in the school of theology as we continue to explore various opportunities to include interfaith dialogue in our curriculum and overall school programming.

A challenge for the liturgy committee emerged when it was asked if our guest rabbi could lead an interfaith worship experience for our weekly school prayer. The liturgy committee was resistant to this idea since our practice was Christian prayer. Committee members felt they would need considerably more time to educate the worshipping community on this event and to prepare. In the end, there was not an interfaith prayer service.

Another learning opportunity emerged for the all-school (undergraduate) lecture when Amir Hussain spoke. Two people in the audience, who were visitors rather than students, put anti-Muslim propaganda on each chair in the lecture hall and challenged Hussain during the question-and-answer session. Our graduate students were able to witness the conflict as well as Hussain's gentle response and engagement of the topic. It also added a new dimension to our thinking beyond pastoral care in a multifaith world to fostering mutual understanding and dialogue.

Immediate outcomes

- consciousness raising for students, faculty, and administration—a pastoral topic to which we need to be attentive!

- informed key stakeholders equipped with resources for building competencies in multifaith pastoral issues
- practical ways to enhance and develop the curriculum
- an accurate map of the interfaith landscape in Minnesota and the resources available to advance relationships and mutual understanding
- new and deepened relationships with multifaith partners

Insights

St. John’s University is a university steeped in the Benedictine and Roman Catholic tradition. Ninety percent of the state’s population is Christian, predominantly Catholic or Lutheran. This chart from Association of Religion Data Archives describes the religious face of Minnesota.

Religious Body	Congregations	Adherents
Buddhism	36	7,755
Judaism	14	22,120
Hinduism	18	4,039
Islam	45	16,796
Other (Christian)	5,840	2,935,740

Anecdotally, ecclesial leaders would say that they need to do more with ecumenical relationships rather than interreligious dialogue. For some, they may not know the difference. When alumni/ae were surveyed regarding their involvement in interreligious pastoral care, most responded with their involvement in ecumenical activities. For many already-busy ecclesial leaders, interreligious dialogue is not a priority.

Minnesota has become home to approximately 32,000 Somalia refugees, according to the US Census. When consulting with Muslim faith leaders and chaplains regarding pastoral care to the Somalian population, they shared that Somalians take care of their own. They wouldn’t ask for help from others.

As a committee, members never explicitly talked about Christian hospitality in a multifaith world. This was a limitation of the work we did; however, it was implicitly practiced in our Table Talk through respectful dialogue and curiosity. We intentionally had our meals catered with sensitivity to dietary practices of different faiths. A Somalian restaurant catered one meal and provided background music from their homeland.

An additional insight at Table Talk was that, as pastoral scenarios emerged in the group, there was a realization that all faith traditions share common challenges in pastoral care and that their responses require similar ministerial competencies.

Recommendations for other schools

The intensity of studies and activities required of students has its ebb and flow, as do commitments for faculty. Despite this demand on time, the Table Talk group affirmed the monthly luncheon meeting as doable without cutting into other commitments.

Sustaining our efforts

Our connections on campus with the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning have been invaluable. I want to maintain that connection and introduce the Center during new student orientation, as well as keeping students abreast to its lecture series. This yearlong effort has energized the School of Theology standing committee for Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs. I look to them to sustain some of the activity begun this year. We did not use the full amount of the grant award this year as we were also able to share expenses with the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning. The remaining funds from the grant will be used for student-related activities in the next two years. One of the activities that was not possible this year, but hoped for in the coming year, is a visit to a synagogue in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and a pairing of students with Jewish families for meals in their homes.

The faculty conversation heightened awareness of the importance of equipping the students for ministering in a multifaith society. The addition of two new courses and a strengthening of present syllabus are in process.

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Appendix

Resources

The **Islamic Resource Group of Minnesota (IRG)** provides speakers to educational, health care, church, and other organizations to teach about the Islamic faith. At the Islamic Resource Group, they feel the key to understanding is education and dialogue. To this end, they have created a series of customizable presentations designed to educate the public about the religion of Islam and its 1.5 billion adherents (<http://www.irgmn.org/index.php>).

Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID) is an organization of Benedictine and Trappist monks and nuns committed to fostering interreligious and inter-monastic dialogue at the level of spiritual practice and experience between North American Catholic monastic women and men and contemplative practitioners of diverse religious traditions (<http://monasticdialog.org/index.php> and <http://www.dimmid.org/>).

The **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)** has several resources, including links to papal documents, on interfaith relationships. The Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Office of the USCCB is also a useful place to find links and resources (<http://www.usccb.org/about/ecumenical-and-interreligious-affairs/index.cfm> and <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/dialogue-with-others/>).

The **Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research** is a meeting place and residential center where a diverse mix of people from various faith communities—including scholars, writers, professionals, artists, and corporate leaders—gather to connect faith to the world and its pressing social issues. This group is on the campus of St. John's University (<http://www.collegevilleinstitute.org/default>).

The **Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning** is a collaborative enterprise of Saint John's University and the University of St. Thomas in Saint Paul and Minneapolis. After many years of fostering Jewish-Christian relations, the center has expanded its mission to promote interfaith learning and friendship among people of various religions (<http://www.csbsju.edu/Jay-Phillips-Center.htm>).

The **Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA)** collects quantitative data sets for the study of American religion. The ARDA was established to meet four goals: preservation of data, improved access to data, increased use of data, and comparison of data. It includes surveys of the general population, religious groups, and religious professionals. Files can be downloaded. This is useful for finding statistics on religion in America (<http://www.thearda.com/>).

The **Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life** is part of the Pew Research Center. The Pew Forum conducts surveys, demographic analyses, and other

social science research on important aspects of religion and public life in the United States and around the world. It also provides a neutral venue for discussions of timely issues through roundtables and briefings (<http://pewforum.org/>).

Interreligious Marriages is a contemporary topic prevalent in our country as cultures merge. The website **For Your Marriage** has an article on interfaith marriage with several links to outside sources. The USCCB also has resources for topics relating to interfaith marriages (<http://foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/church-teachings/interfaith-marriages/> and <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/wedding-ceremony/>).

Jewish Family and Children Services of Minneapolis, inspired by the wisdom and values of its tradition, supports people of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. It provides many links to resources that are useful for the health care and social services fields (<http://www.jfcsmpls.org/index.htm>).

Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources, a book by Rabbi Dayle Friedman, discusses many pastoral care techniques particular to the Jewish tradition, all in an effort to provide the best care for those who are suffering or experiencing dramatic changes in their lives (<http://www.amazon.com/Jewish-Pastoral-Care-Traditional-Contemporary/dp/1580232213>).

Islam and Islamic Studies Resources is a website with many useful links to learn more about different aspects of Islam and the various Muslim perspectives around the world (<http://islam.uga.edu/>).

Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a document promulgated by the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. Although this a very lengthy document, sections 14–54 (especially sections 42–46) pertain more to various approaches one can take when coming to interreligious dialogue (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html).

Minnesota Network of Hospice and Palliative Care works to promote quality of life in communities through advance care planning, palliative care, and hospice. This network helps people understand the value of and have access to these three vital components of the healthcare system. They have a resource list of various religions and cultures that are prevalent in the Twin Cities area (<http://mnhpc.org/public/programs-services/opening-doors/multicultural-resources>).

Islamic Organizations and Services is a list of Islamic service organizations around the Twin Cities that provide social services and other resources for

the Muslim community (<http://www.holylandbrand.com/images/Communityservices/Islamic%20Organization%20and%20Services.pdf>).

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota expresses the love of Christ for all people through service that inspires hope, changes lives, and builds community. The website enables users to search for services offered in a particular area by typing in the zip code (<http://www.lssmn.org/>).

Faith Trust Institute is a national, multifait, multicultural training and education organization with global reach working to end sexual and domestic violence (<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>).

Christian Hospitality in a World of Many Faiths: Equipping the New Generation of Religious Leaders in a Multifaith Context

Eleazar S. Fernandez

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

ABSTRACT: This project seeks to find ways how United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities can best prepare religious leaders to lead faith communities and engage in ministry in a multifaith context. To move in that direction, this project names and articulates a list of qualities and competencies of religious leaders that are critical for our pluralistic context. The profile that comes out of this project will be used to examine the curriculum. As a result, United will be in a better position to make informed decisions as to the kinds of initiatives that need to be pursued.

The project objectives

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities embarked on the Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices project with two clear objectives in mind: (1) to name and articulate the qualities and competencies of religious leaders who are capable of leading congregations and institutions in a multifaith context; and (2) to use the profile of qualities and competencies to examine the current curriculum (explicit, implicit, and null) of United Seminary to identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement. It is expected that from the outcome of the project United Seminary will be in a better position to make informed decisions as to the kinds of initiatives or projects that need to be pursued, which may involve faculty training, course development, and other institutional programs. In other words, this project is significant because it lays the foundation for future initiatives in the area of Christian hospitality in a multifaith context.

Implementation: Activities

To accomplish the objectives of the project, five activities were scheduled and carried out. Each activity had well-articulated expected outcomes against which to measure any accomplishment or progress (or lack thereof). Also, each activity was designed to build, expand, deepen, and connect with other activities and to contribute cumulatively to the overall objectives. The first activity (held during a faculty retreat) introduced the rationale and objectives of United Seminary's Christian Hospitality project. Because chaplains are among those most frequently exposed to a multifaith setting in their ministerial practice, we invited hospital chaplain Helen Wells O'Brien to give a presentation on ministry in a multifaith context. She presented situations/

cases and challenges that chaplains/ministers deal with in a multifaith setting and identified needed competencies and skills.

The second activity involved a visit to a mosque, followed by a lunch and dialogue with the imam, Hamdy El-Sawaf, and a presentation by Gail Anderson (Minnesota Council of Churches) on interfaith relations and practices. After the conversation, faculty members went to visit the Somali mall in Minneapolis, a central place where Somali Muslims gather for conversation, shopping, business, meals, prayer, and the opportunity to learn about the latest news from the homeland. This half-day staff event accomplished a few major goals: it gave United's faculty the opportunity to encounter and engage in conversation with persons of other faiths and to experience their hospitality; it deepened the faculty's awareness and understanding of some of the issues that Muslim communities are experiencing and grappling with in the United States, and particularly in Minnesota; it helped identify common concerns that United Seminary and Muslim communities may work on together; and it gave the opportunity for United Seminary's faculty to start building a relationship with El-Sawaf, a religious leader who could serve as a possible resource person for future interfaith projects. Moreover, Anderson's presentation introduced the faculty to various interfaith practices and to some competencies that are needed for ministry in a multifaith context.

The third and fourth faculty activities broadened, deepened, and reinforced the first two. For the third activity, the faculty visited a Tibetan Buddhist temple, had lunch with the monks, and engaged in conversation with them. It was an occasion of learning, receiving, and experiencing hospitality. In addition to learning about the history of Tibetan migration and their plight, the conversation with the monks led to matters about formation. It gave the faculty an opportunity to learn how monks get their religious training and about some of their religious practices.

The fourth scheduled activity involved a presentation by Samir Selmanovic of Faith Manhattan, New York, an interfaith community of Christians, Muslims, Jews, and atheists/humanists. Selmanovic shared his rich faith journey from being a Muslim to being an atheist and then to being a Christian (Seventh Day Adventist). His presentation was provocative and insightful. He challenged common assumptions and offered alternative ways of approaching interfaith relations. In ways that were reassuring, Selmanovic anchored interfaith relations from the depth of his Christian faith. Christians are open to people of other faiths *not in spite* of their being Christians *but because of* their Christian faith. Selmanovic contended that, with these deep and secure theological and traditional footings, Christians must build a bridge identity rather than an isolated identity; they must recognize their need of the Other as essential to the concept of perfection. Being part of the whole rather than being on top is what is crucial.

The fifth and final activity of the project was a faculty conversation for the purpose of examining areas in the curriculum and courses taught where interfaith education/formation is happening (or not), and of exploring ways to strengthen the curriculum with regard to interfaith formation. To prepare for this conversation, the project director gathered the significant learning

experiences and insights from the previous activities and organized a list of competencies that Christian leaders need to have to minister responsibly and effectively in a multifaith setting. What does a competent Christian leader in a multifaith context look like? What qualities and competencies must he or she possess? The list of competencies was distributed to the faculty so they could come prepared for the conversation. The items on the list served as benchmarks against which to measure areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

Some specific results of the project

List of competencies

One tangible result of the project is a list of fifteen competencies that were identified as important for ministry in a multifaith setting. *Awareness and recognition of our religiously plural setting* stands as number one. Religious leaders must have basic awareness of the growing religious pluralism in the United States, the importance of religious identity, and the role that religion plays in the interweaving of various social issues. Religious leaders in a religiously plural setting must strive as much as possible to learn the religious world of others. Recognizing the limits to what they can know, it is important that religious leaders develop an attitude, a sense of presence, and a set of skills that prepare them for ministry in a multifaith setting.

The list proceeds to articulate the rest of the competencies that embrace multiple dimensions involving attitude, sensibility, ways of framing, skills, and so forth. Competency two flows from competency one: *appreciative understanding of other religious traditions*. As much as Christian religious leaders want others to have an appreciative understanding of their own religious traditions, they also must learn to have an appreciative understanding of other religious traditions. Competency three dovetails well with the second: *relating to other religious traditions on their own terms*. Related to an appreciative understanding of other religious faiths, religious leaders in a multifaith world must recognize and understand that each religious tradition has its own inner structure and dynamics.

Competency four—*recognition of the religious stranger as a subject-companion in meaning-making and world-making*—goes further while building on competencies two and three. Recognizing integrity in other faiths means granting believers of other faiths the subjecthood that belongs to them. They are subjects, particularly subject-companions, in our meaning-making and world-making. If they are considered subject-companions in our meaning-making, then we must (competency five) *consider them as hermeneutic companions and engage with them in interfaith reading of texts and contexts*.

Competency six speaks of *being at home in one's house*. Only those who have found their religious/theological voice can understand the need of others to claim their theological voice. Religious leaders who can appreciate others are those who understand the depths of their own religious traditions. Competency seven—*reaching out and being open by going deep*—extends the previous point: It is in and through the depths of our religious tradition that we must see its openness.

The eighth competency deals with Christian identity. In the spirit of Christian hospitality to people of other faiths, *religious identity must be understood in right relationship to the whole* rather than being defined as over-against or being on top. Supremacy is not really what we need but rather connection and right relationship. When a person does not put himself or herself above others, she or he is able to (competency nine) *practice the hospitality of receiving*. Moreover, she or he is able to (competency ten) *offer hospitable space and hospitable presence*. By no means does this hospitable relationship require sacrifice of one's deep religious convictions. On the contrary, hospitable relationship demands the (competency eleven) *expression of one's deep convictions with honesty, respect, and openness*.

The next three competencies involve (competency twelve) *the ability to build trust, solidarity, shared ministry, and interfaith actions*; (competency thirteen) *the ability to make normative/ethical decisions in the midst of competing moral and religious claims*; and (competency fourteen) *the ability to integrate multifaith traditions and normative claims in relation to sociopolitical institutional dynamics*. There is the wider and prevailing multifaith climate, government laws, and health care systems in which one's ministry must be interpreted. The minister must have the competencies to see his or her work/ministry within this larger setting. Finally, a Christian leader must (competency fifteen) *know how to live with unanswered questions*.

Examination of the curriculum in light of competencies

Building on the list of competencies, the second identifiable result of the project is that faculty members have been encouraged to examine the current curriculum in light of the list of competencies. Is United Seminary preparing its students for ministry in a multifaith context? Where and how is interfaith competency taking place (or not) in the curriculum? Which area of studies is it doing well, and which area needs improvement? Does United Seminary have the resources (faculty, finances, facilities, etc.) that it needs to train students for a multifaith context? What training or retooling does the faculty need to have to teach effectively for multifaith ministry? Are there resources in the Twin Cities area that United Seminary can tap? Are there other institutions in the area with which it can collaborate or work?

With its emphasis on an integrated curriculum (with three integration courses throughout the curriculum) in mind, the faculty started looking at areas where the integration of multifaith sensibilities and skills is taking place (or not) and where it should be taking place. Faculty members shared that the interfaith dimension is already happening in the courses they are teaching, though something more can be done. It happens in historical theology, according to the professor who is teaching in this area, when Christian historical theology is presented and critiqued in relation to or in light of the context and claims of other faiths, such as Judaism, Islam, and humanism or atheism. Integration of the interfaith dimension occurs in biblical studies when the Christian Scriptures are placed along with the Hebrew Scriptures or when a critical reading of text is rendered in relation to anti-Semitism. It is present in ethics studies, particularly comparative, when Scriptures or writings from

other faith traditions (Islam, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, etc.) are used to inform a reading of, for example, human rights, social justice, or ecology. It happens in systematic or constructive theology when sources and resources from other faiths are considered to inform one's theological views.

Another area in which a robust integration of interfaith dimension is happening is the arts. The director of community programming in the arts, religion, and spirituality has received funding for the integration of art from various faith traditions into the curriculum. Pastoral care is yet another area in which robust integration of interfaith concerns is happening; a faculty colleague teaches pastoral care in a multifaith setting. Other courses, such as Worship of the Church, Preaching, and Foundations of Christian Education, may need to be examined closely to determine how to incorporate interfaith perspective. These are areas that seem to need more careful study on how to expand their interfaith dimension.

It is in relation to the emphasis on integration that individual courses designed to teach about interfaith relation need to be examined and evaluated. United Seminary offers some of these courses. For example, to complete their degree program, students are required to take a course in which they study one major non-Christian religion. The director of this project—Christian Hospitality—teaches a course with the title Theologies of Religions. This course introduces students to the theologies of interfaith engagement and to some ways to engage in dialogue. This focus could be modified to emphasize not just the various theologies of religions but also practices of doing interfaith works. Then a more appropriate title for this course would be Theologies of Religions and Interfaith Practices.

Projects or initiatives to be explored

The conversation on the curriculum has led to some ideas to strengthen interfaith works. First, United Seminary is exploring the possibility of creating a new area concentration: interfaith relations and practices. Gail Anderson, director of unity and relationships at Minnesota Council of Churches, has been part of this conversation. Working collaboratively with Minnesota Council of Churches would be beneficial for United Seminary. Second, another idea that is being explored is the integration of interfaith relations and justice with the help of The Center for Public Ministry, which is based at United Seminary. Third, another part of the conversation is the idea of creating a certificate program that would serve not only Christians but members of other religious communities as well. This is still very much fluid, as no specific content and form have been identified yet. Fourth, on the table for discussion is the idea of designing a Global Justice course (students are required to take one Global Justice course) that integrates interfaith and justice. Fifth, an idea articulated by the director of this Christian Hospitality project is a pilot course that would integrate interfaith relations and various areas of the curriculum. Maybe, as a result of this pilot course, the faculty will be encouraged to take bolder steps in adapting interfaith relations for the wider curriculum. Sixth, another option would be to offer a course—Interfaith Engaged Congregations—in support of an initiative of the Interfaith Relations Commission (IRC) of the National

Council of Churches, U.S.A. This initiative of the IRC offers guidelines and presents examples of how to become interfaith-engaged congregations. Some congregations have received awards from the IRC as interfaith-engaged congregations.

The next steps

The Christian hospitality project provided an opportunity for the faculty to brainstorm ideas and think of possible options, but a more thorough conversation and study needs to be done to come to a decision on the next steps or initiatives to be taken. Ideas generated by the project have converged with an initiative taken by the former president of the seminary along lines of interfaith concern, but this initiative is on hold until the faculty comes to a decision on the place of interfaith relations in the curriculum and the educational projects to be pursued. The faculty is starting to see some exciting possibilities for interfaith initiatives, but there is a shared feeling within the faculty that, given its current size and expertise, it does not have the capability to explore and initiate some of the great ideas, as faculty members cannot add more to the workload they already have. It seems that a project needs to be explored to bring in another person if United Seminary is to do excellent work in incorporating an interfaith dimension into the educational formation of students. This idea can be pursued along with exploring cooperative ventures with institutions in the area that are similarly concerned with interfaith works.

Officially, the Christian hospitality project has ended, but United Seminary is committed to pursue the conversation to sort out, identify, and fine tune ideas so as to determine what future programs/projects it wishes to undertake.

Eleazar S. Fernandez is professor of constructive theology for United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in New Brighton, Minnesota.

Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations

Daniel S. Schipani

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ABSTRACT: This report describes the development of a new course designed primarily for MDiv students working in multifaith situations, lists the activities funded by the Christian Hospitality grant, and highlights five outcomes, further ramifications, and projections related to curriculum, teaching, and research. Collaboration with colleagues representing seven traditions and consultation on the intersecting fields of spiritual care and theology made it possible to complete research and meet the goals of the project.

The project in a nutshell

In response to the growing plurality of faith traditions in our midst, and connected with the church's stated need to enhance its missional self-understanding and nature,¹ I proposed to develop a new course tentatively titled, *Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations*. It will focus on foundations and guidelines for pastoral ministers and caregivers (e.g., chaplains) and will be offered primarily but not exclusively to students in our MDiv program in the Pastoral Ministry and in the Pastoral Care and Counseling concentrations. The course will aim at strengthening core competencies related to the following three areas of pastoral wisdom: (a) necessary qualities of character and presence (*being*, personal-spiritual formation); (b) understanding of faith traditions and dynamics of interfaith situations (*knowing*, academic formation); and (c) communication and caregiving skills (*doing*, professional formation). The course content will include written input provided by representatives of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, First Nation, and Humanist traditions. Case studies will significantly inform the methodology to be employed, which will include guest presentations by a rabbi and an imam who serve in our community.

Activities funded by the grant

The bulk of the funds made available by the grant was used to financially compensate nine colleagues who wrote valuable contributions representing seven traditions—First Nation, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Humanist—in the field of spiritual care.² They prepared essays presenting unique perspectives and visions in response to questions related to foundations for spiritual care, issues of caregiving practice including interfaith situations, and core competencies for caring well in multifaith settings. In addition to focusing specifically on the content of the essays, we were also able to maintain meaningful collaboration by phone and email correspondence.

Another activity funded by the grant was consultation with a spiritual care professional with broad experience in interfaith caregiving³ as well as a

theologian whose theological education portfolio includes work on Christian theology and religious pluralism.⁴ Those two colleagues played an important role throughout the duration of the project. They read most of the material generated collaboratively and provided timely counsel and feedback as well.

Finally, funds were also used to support secretarial and editorial assistance. This is an item that initially had not been included in the budget projections. Connected with two questions raised by the ATS grant selection committee—"Will the essays be published or otherwise made available to the broader public?" and "How can what is learned in the project be made more widely available?"⁵—I decided to start preparing the publication of a book.

Registered results

I am grateful for the opportunity to advance my research work with assistance from ATS, and I am glad to report that this project was very successful overall. In fact, the energy invested was fruitful far beyond the limited contours suggested by the category of "course development." Therefore, I wish to highlight the following observations and learnings.

First of all, while working on this project during the fall term, I was able to test substantive content in the settings of two public presentations I made in Cali, Colombia,⁶ and, a week later, at a forum presentation at the seminary. A revised theological anthropology and a model of caregiving as psycho-spiritual discipline were two of the key topics I addressed. I also designed a pastoral care workshop, Challenges and Opportunities in Interfaith Care, which I offered twice during the seminary's Pastors' Week event in January (see Appendix I).

Second, I had visualized incorporating material from this project into the content of my course, Pastoral Counseling and Theology, which would be offered during the spring term, while also seeking to design a new course, *Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations*. Due to issues of academic load and MDiv-Pastoral Care and Counseling concentration requirements, it was not possible to offer the new course during the spring term of the 2011–2012 academic year. In any event, I was able to include a six-session unit on interfaith spiritual care for which students read most of the essays on spiritual care alluded to above. My theology consultant participated in one of the sessions as we focused on what it means and implies to care "Christianly" well, that is, competently and faithfully, for people of other faith traditions.

Third, in the course of the teaching-learning process during the spring term, which included the case study method and role playing of interfaith care situations, not only were we able to further theoretical reflection on "caring hospitably" but we were also able to identify necessary attitudes, character strengths, skills, and approaches. In that setting I refined a model of wise caregiving defined in terms of core competencies under the categories of *being*, *knowing*, and *doing*. I also designed a simple tool to foster self-assessment and reflection (see Appendix II).

Fourth, material stemming from this project informed my recent presentation—Competence for Educating *Christianly* in Multicultural and

Multifaith Educational Settings—at the Mennonite Higher Education Faculty Conference.⁷

Fifth and finally, in light of the experience gained, I will be able to offer the new course during the next academic year (Summer 2013, see Appendix III).

Ramifications and projections

Our efforts in the framework of the Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith Society project reinforce and are in turn supported by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's commitment to dismantle racism and to embrace diversity comprehensively. They can thus contribute to strengthen our *explicit curriculum*, especially but not exclusively, in the areas of ministerial leadership and pastoral care and counseling. We expect that our graduates will be better equipped to serve faithfully and effectively in our multifaith society. We also expect that this initiative will contribute to support our *implicit curriculum*—communal ethos, values, and practices, including a declared commitment to embrace diversity and to foster collaboration beyond denominational and theological boundaries.

As far as my further academic work is concerned, in the next two years I plan to focus on the following two endeavors: (1) making the Caring Hospitality in Multifaith Situations workshops available for pastors and other church leaders; and (2) starting a new research and writing project—"Case Studies of Spiritual Care in Multifaith Settings"—with a colleague, hopefully leading to the publication of another text.

Daniel S. Schipani is professor of pastoral care and counseling for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.

Appendix I

PASTORAL CARE WORKSHOP: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INTERFAITH SPIRITUAL CARE

Workshop Objectives

- To recognize and affirm those virtues, attitudes, and other dispositions that define the competent and faithful spiritual caregiver in terms of identity and vocation (*being competencies—presence*)
- To foster pastoral theological reflection by exploring the dynamics of interfaith care situations (*knowing competencies—understanding*)
- To identify specific skills and approaches for effective pastoral care and counseling work in interfaith situations (*doing competencies—companioning*)

Morning Session

8:00–9:00 Registration and continental breakfast

9:00–9:15 Opening and invocation

9:15–11:00 Introduction

(a) A biblical case study on intercultural and interfaith care: Jesus's encounter with a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21–28)

(b) A review of new directions in interfaith spiritual care in multifaith settings

Case study

"A Baptist chaplain cares for a Jewish family," and presentation of the four-dimensional framework for analysis and reflection (observation, interpretation, evaluation, and application)

11:00–11:15 Break

11:15–12:30 Core competencies for caring well in interfaith situations: the emerging profile of wise interfaith spiritual caregivers: presentation, self-assessment, discussion

12:30–1:30 Lunch

Afternoon Session

1:30–2:30 Case studies contributed by the participants: small group discussion, role-playing

2:30–2:45 Break

2:45–3:45 Concluding reflections and evaluation of the workshop

Appendix II

CORE COMPETENCIES A TOOL FOR SELF-REFLECTION AND ASSESSMENT

Consider the following list of core competencies deemed necessary for caring well in interfaith situations.⁸ On a scale of 1 to 4, how do you view yourself regarding each of the competencies listed (1 = area for further growth, 4 = area of strength)?

BEING competencies (*presence*)

A clear sense of personal and professional identity and authority	1	2	3	4
Self-awareness (including realistic sense of strengths and vulnerabilities related to my social status and culture)	1	2	3	4
My own spirituality and experience of connection with a transcendent Source (Holy Spirit) of love and grace, truth, and wisdom	1	2	3	4
Overall sense of personal well-being, integrity, and worth	1	2	3	4
Character strengths (virtues) of hospitality, compassion, respect, courage, open-mindedness, empathy, passion for justice and peace, and others (specify)	1	2	3	4
Appropriate curiosity and sense of humor	1	2	3	4
Other	1	2	3	4

KNOWING competencies (*understanding*)

A philosophy of spiritual care, including view of human wholeness, quality of life, health, healing and dying, grounded in my own faith tradition (religious or not)	1	2	3	4
A comprehensive ethic of care	1	2	3	4
Integration of spirituality, human and medical sciences, theological (or philosophical), and socio-political perspectives	1	2	3	4

Linguistic-conceptual and “multilingual” competency (knowing a variety of languages, including languages from other cultures and faith traditions)	1	2	3	4
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Optimal knowledge of legal issues related to health care	1	2	3	4
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Clinical knowledge of responses to critical incidents, crisis, trauma, recovery, etc.	1	2	3	4
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Other	1	2	3	4
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DOING competencies (*companioning*)

Verbal and nonverbal rapport building	1	2	3	4
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Engaging care receivers’ spirituality and skill in spiritual assessment	1	2	3	4
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Active listening and discernment of appropriate responses	1	2	3	4
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Pertinent therapeutic action	1	2	3	4
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Internal monitoring of process and self	1	2	3	4
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Active spiritual care partnering with faith communities, government agencies, advocacy groups, and others, including accountability structure and process	1	2	3	4
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Ongoing critical and constructive reflection on experience and practice	1	2	3	4
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Discipline of self-care involving spirit, soul, and body	1	2	3	4
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Other	1	2	3	4
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Appendix III

ABBREVIATED COURSE DESCRIPTION (draft)

CHM639: Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations, 2 credit hours Summer 2013—Professor: Daniel S. Schipani

Description

This course considers biblical-theological and psychological-psychotherapeutic foundations and principles of interfaith spiritual care as a discipline of Christian hospitality. Dynamics of interfaith communication are studied together with theological and clinical⁹ dimensions of caregiving in congregational and hospital settings. Participants focus on the practical questions of goals, content, and process in diverse instances that call for pastoral care and counseling (including chaplaincy practice): discernment and guidance, nurture and support, and reconciliation and healing. Special attention is given to the task of integrating theological and psychological resources in spiritual care and pastoral theology.

The overarching **threefold goal** of the course is to foster faithful and hospitable caregiving ministry. Students enrolled in the class are led to grow in pastoral wisdom in terms of core competencies related to three areas: (1) necessary qualities of character and presence (*being*, personal-spiritual formation); that is, nurturing pastoral identity and vocation as ministering persons in multi-faith contexts; (2) understanding of faith traditions and dynamics of interfaith situations (*knowing*, academic formation); that is, developing the competence of pastoral and theological reflection on care ministry as hospitality practice; (3) enhancing communication and caregiving skills (*doing*, professional formation); that is, being equipped with those skills and approaches necessary to care hospitably.

The **methodological approach** includes lectures, case study presentations by professor and students, analysis and reflection, and role-playing. Bibliographic and other resources¹⁰ are combined with those stemming from the participants' personal and professional experience. A special feature is the contribution of an imam and a rabbi who serve in our community and make class presentations.

Requirements and evaluation percentages

Students complete a minimum of required reading and experience-based assignments prior to the beginning of the summer session (20%). During the scheduled class sessions they are expected to attend and participate actively on the basis of having completed daily different assignments such as reading, doing exercises and engaging in caregiving practices, and journaling (60%). A final paper or project (1,500–2,000 words) provides an opportunity for students to articulate their vision of spiritual care in multi-faith situations (20%).

ENDNOTES

1. The stated rationale for the project included the following points:

Our social and cultural context is increasingly diverse, including people of many faith traditions (e.g., local hospitals now register other-than-Christian affiliation for close to half of their patients). Consequently, interactions, the possibility of collaboration, and opportunities for mutual service between Christians and people of other faiths and cultural backgrounds have increased dramatically in our region in recent years.

In recent years both Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA have done systematic reflection on what it means to be “missional” in our contexts. Issues of hospitality and welcoming strangers in church and society are a major focus of consideration calling for better understanding and greater appreciation of other traditions.

The Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) is accountable to and serves both national churches (Canadian and US). Our faculty has played a role in the reflection alluded to above; further, we have also considered ways to strengthen the missional dimension of our curriculum of theological education and ministerial formation.

My own research on pastoral and spiritual care has recently focused on inter-faith care, including the publication of two books coedited with Leah Dawn Bueckert, *Interfaith Spiritual Care: Understandings and Practices* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2009), and *You Welcomed Me: Interfaith Spiritual Care in the Hospital* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2010). Directly connected with this Luce-funded project through ATS, I’m currently involved in a research and writing project, “Multifaith Voices in Spiritual Care,” which includes the contributions from colleagues representing seven traditions (Hindu, Buddhist, First Nation, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Humanist).

2. The names of those colleagues are, respectively, as follows: Elder Melody McKellar and Elder Roger Armitte, Pandit Dinesh Sharma, Rev. Danny Fisher, Rabbi Mychal Springer, Prof. Kathleen Greider, and Profs. Christa Aanbek and Hans Halma.

3. Leah Dawn Bueckert serves as spiritual care coordinator with the North Eastman Health Association in Manitoba, Canada; as already indicated, Bueckert and I also coedited the book, *Interfaith Spiritual Care: Understandings and Practices*.

4. Gayle Gerber Koontz is professor of theology and ethics at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

5. The questions were communicated to me in a memo sent by Stephen R. Graham on July 20, 2011.

6. The presentations were made October 13–14, 2011, in a Conference on Psychology and Spirituality, sponsored by the Baptist University and the Colombian Psychological Association.

7. The conference was organized by the Mennonite Education Agency for college and seminary faculty and was held in Goshen, Indiana, August 1–3, 2012, under the general theme, “God’s Reconciling Mission in the World.”

8. This tool does not present a complete list of desirable competencies; it is rather an invitation to further our reflection, including the possibility of adding and/or reformulating competencies in light of personal and professional experience. It may also serve as an accountability device in collegial conversation and collaboration. A simplified version could be used in volunteer training.

9. *Clinical* here is broadly understood as therapeutic in the sense of aiming at support, guidance, reconciliation, and healing.

10. The essays originally written for the Multifaith Voices in Spiritual Care project, including two of my own, were edited and published as Daniel S. Schipani, ed., *Multifaith Views in Spiritual Care* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2013).

Interfaith Perspectives on Religious Practices

Timothy H. Robinson and Nancy Ramsay
Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University

ABSTRACT: Brite Divinity School held five public forums on religious practices in which faith communities regularly engage: blessing children, marriage, burial, initiation, and engagement with matters of public debate. Each forum featured presentations by three panelists, one from each of the Abrahamic traditions, and conversation with an audience. The goal was to contribute to student preparation for sensitive and skilled religious leadership in religiously plural contexts. The primary achievement, however, was to offer occasions for learning and dialogue among religiously diverse persons from the surrounding community.

Activities funded by the grant

Through this grant, Brite Divinity School offered five multifaith panels¹ related to ministerial practices that regularly arise in faith communities: blessing children, weddings and unions, burial practices, and responding to issues of public debate. Each two-hour panel was held during lunch time on Brite's campus and involved Jewish, Muslim, and Christian panelists presenting on the topic of the day, then engaging the audience in conversation. Grant money funded honoraria for the panelists, a stipend for the project director, lunch food for attendees, and publicity.

Learnings

We had two goals for the panels. First, we intended for the panels to "increase student readiness to engage in and reflect upon four selected ministerial practices . . . with heightened awareness of the meaning these practices have in Christian communities and informed by an appreciation for the meaning of parallel practices in Jewish and Muslim faith communities." Our second goal was to "assist Brite faculty in achieving a faculty development goal of increasing the number of courses that include learning outcomes and assignments that enhance student readiness for ministerial leadership in a religiously plural context."

We achieved only modest success with the first goal because of low student turnout. Brite recently implemented an MDiv curriculum that includes a course requirement in religious plurality and a curricular goal that includes students' informed readiness to engage other religious traditions generously and critically. These curricular emphases have been well received by students and prospective students. Increasingly, we find our students interested and engaged in interfaith dialogue and interreligious learning experiences. Why

so few students chose to attend the panels funded by this grant is puzzling to those of us who evaluated the experiences. The low student attendance may be due, in part, to the large number of cocurricular learning opportunities offered at Brite and the necessity to choose among them while attending to the whole of life as students. The students who did participate were very engaged with the panel conversations and reported positive impressions of the events.

Brite faculty members who were able to participate in one or more of the events reported that the panels assisted them in making progress toward a faculty-wide development goal of revising courses so that they enhance student readiness for ministerial leadership in a religiously plural context. One faculty member, who attended all the panels, commented about the increased awareness of “my continuing need to ‘de-center’ my own perspectives and experiences.” Others reported anecdotally that the panels widened their awareness of ways to incorporate assignments and learning outcomes to improve attention to religious plurality. Attendance was uneven given the heavy load of commitments in faculty schedules, but a number of faculty were able to benefit from the panels.

While we achieved mixed results on the goals named in the initial project proposal, several other positive outcomes were achieved by the panels. First, we provided a dialogue space for a topic of great public interest. Despite low faculty and student turnout, attendance at each panel was very strong and the audience was comprised primarily of interested persons in the Fort Worth and Dallas communities. A number of Christian clergy and laypersons of various faiths attended the events. The grant enabled Brite to provide public leadership in the community on an issue of critical current interest and importance. Participants encountered persons of religious traditions other than their own and learned new things about those traditions and their practices. A common thread running through all the panels had to do with the hospitality and sensitivity with which the panels dealt. Concrete examples include a Christian participant wanting to know whether to offer communion to a Jewish or Muslim person who might attend a Christian wedding and Muslim women explaining appropriate ways for men to greet them in public.

Another positive outcome was that, despite relatively low faculty and student attendance, the panels did, in fact, facilitate direct engagement between Brite Christian students, faculty and staff, and Jewish and Muslim persons. The primary significance here is that Christian divinity students and faculty engaged persons of other faiths seeking to learn *from* rather than to only talk *to*.

Another positive outcome was completely unintended. During the panel on weddings and unions, one of the panelists answered an audience member’s inquiry about same-sex unions within the tradition in an unintentionally hurtful manner. In recent years, Brite has placed significant emphasis on the study of sexuality, sexual difference, and sexual justice, and on creating a fully inclusive ethos. The exchange between the questioner (a Brite student) and the panelist created a stir among GLBTQ students and allies who assumed that the panelist’s comments were endorsed by Brite. Their inquiries led to an opportunity for a very fruitful conversation among GLBTQ students and faculty members involved in the planning of the event. We clarified Brite’s stance

on inclusion while also conducting a conversation on how we engage difference and diversity of all kinds (including theological diversity). The incident emerged in large part because of the format of the panels: asking panelists to represent an entire religious tradition in all its diversity on any particular issue is inherently limiting. This is an issue for further reflection that we intend to address in future events (see reflections on this below). On this topic, a faculty member who attended this panel commented, “One benefit that came out of our interfaith panels was that it asked our community, including students, faculty, and administration, to consider difficult questions about how we are to represent the Christian faith in a multifaith context. How do we respect and acknowledge the diversity of the Christian faith, for example by allowing a Christian minister speak against same-sex unions, while at the same time respecting and affirming the diversity of our community?” Finally, we were reminded of the need for clarity in communicating with panelists what the expectations are for such events and the context into which they speak (without trying to determine or censor what they have to say).

A final positive outcome for the panels was that we made new friends and solidified relationships with the Multi-Cultural Alliance (MCA)—an interfaith dialogue group in Fort Worth—and with Muslim and Jewish neighbors. A Master of Divinity student with keen interest in interreligious relationships and with experience and contacts in the MCA, served as part of the planning and coordinating team for the events and served as moderator for the panels. Our student’s extensive contacts among religious communities in the area were valuable in our planning and helped us identify and reach out to members of the Jewish and Muslim communities. A faculty member commented, “We not only learned new information, but we encountered persons who had integrated their faith traditions into their lives. The individuals were warm, humorous, and engaging. Experiencing another person opens our minds in ways that reading can’t capture.”

One challenge we faced after the panels ended was what might be termed the “So what?” factor. In other words, the panels were informative, if limited, introductions to religious practices in diverse religious communities. However, there is a lingering sense of wondering what to do with the information exchanged in the panel conversations. Is it simply up to individuals to assimilate the information and practice hospitality? Or are there some further steps that might be taken that could help ministerial leaders and religious communities to practice hospitality in the midst of plurality? This issue is addressed below in the discussion of planning a future event on the environment.

Remaining questions and implications

The primary remaining question we have is “what next?” This project will serve as a catalyst for further attention to preparing students to engage religious plurality generously and wisely in their ministerial practices and to further interreligious exchange on the Brite/TCU campus. It will have both curricular and cocurricular implications. As the Diversity and Social Justice Committee (the faculty governance committee that managed the events

funded by the grant) met at the close of the spring 2012 semester to evaluate the panels, there was obvious enthusiasm for continuing to attend to these issues and for holding more events like the panels. The committee thought it well to recommend seeking funds from other sources to continue sponsoring similar interreligious conversations. We have had conversations with representatives from the Dallas-based Institute of Interfaith Dialog about sponsoring a workshop on Islam. However, the first follow-up event will be an interfaith panel on the environment, cosponsored with Texas Interfaith Power and Light (an interfaith environmental advocacy organization).²

The next event will incorporate some changes resulting from reflection on how we organized and structured the previous panels. First, we are holding the event during the evening, believing that this will increase attendance, if not among students, certainly from interested members of the wider Fort Worth/Dallas community. Second, rather than have each panelist speak broadly for an entire religious tradition and about such broad topics (e.g., having a Christian representative speak for all of Christianity on the initiatory rite of baptism was very limiting because she came from a tradition that practices baptism primarily with infants, whereas many Christian traditions only baptize adolescents or adults), we are asking each panelist to address a narrower topic and from their particular theological or religious perspective within their tradition. Rather than ask panelists to speak about “the environment” in general, we are asking them to speak to the issue of water in Texas and how faith communities might draw upon religious resources within their traditions to address a concrete, particular, environmental, agricultural, and political issue that affects everyone’s lives. Third, rather than simply being an informational session, we hope for some concrete action steps to emerge from the panel discussions. This is one reason for partnering with Texas IP&L, whose interfaith environmental organizing includes experience in helping persons from diverse faith communities implement steps toward practice within their communities and advocacy in the public realm.

Finally, we recognize the limited scope of the panel format we developed. Only the Abrahamic faiths were represented. In the future, while it is important to continue dialogue among Muslims, Jews, and Christians, we intend to widen the scope of our conversations to include representatives from other faith traditions.

Timothy H. Robinson is Alberta H. and Harold L. Lunger associate professor of spiritual disciplines and resources at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. Serving at the same school, Nancy Ramsay is professor of pastoral theology and pastoral care.

ENDNOTES

1. The five panels were held on October 20, 2011; December 1, 2011; January 26, 2012; March 1, 2012; and October 15, 2012.
2. This event, “Water Matters: An Interfaith Conversation about the Environment in North Texas,” took place on October 15, 2012, with Jewish, Christian, and Hindu panelists. Approximately seventy-five people attended.

Putting into Practice an Intercultural Approach to Spiritual Care with Veterans

Carrie Doehring and Kelly Arora
Iliff School of Theology

ABSTRACT: Intercultural spiritual care begins with trust that the alterity of the Other's religious world will be respected. An intercultural approach was used in qualitative interviews with Vietnam veterans who rely on Buddhist worldviews and practices to cope with military trauma. Students analyzing these interviews learned about the need for trust and self-reflexivity in intercultural care. They also recognized the dangers of using Christian theologies of redemption to interpret how the veterans' distinctively Buddhist beliefs and meditation practices fostered the self-compassion needed to cope with moral distress and ambiguous suffering.

Interreligious learning is only possible on the basis of a fundamental respect for the irreducible and unique alterity of the other. Interreligious learning implies the idea that, from the very start, human beings are dialogical and relational in nature (Buber) and that in dialogical encounter the other is both vulnerable and my teacher (Levinas).¹

How can we teach spiritual caregivers to respect the distinctive ways that people's existential and religious beliefs and practices shape their responses to trauma? How can we teach caregivers to not impose their theologies of suffering on those seeking care? These educational concerns become urgent in multifaith contexts where spiritual care is provided to people of various faiths struggling to cope with and make sense of traumatic experiences. At Iliff School of Theology we grapple with these educational questions in courses on spiritual care and trauma in multifaith contexts, including the context of the military.

This Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices grant helped us develop, deliver, and evaluate an advanced course in intercultural spiritual care. This skills- and research-based course on spiritual care was experiential, using qualitative interviews with veterans who use Buddhist worldviews and practices to cope with military trauma. We received institutional review board (IRB) approval for our research project from the University of Denver in October 2011, and we advertised our research on various websites related to Buddhist and military posttraumatic stress. We conducted six face-to-face interviews ranging from one to two hours with five Vietnam War veterans and one veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces. These interviews were used as the basis for experiential learning about intercultural spiritual care in a ten-week course with twenty students. Students received IRB training, and they read and discussed qualitative research methods.² They worked in teams to

transcribe and analyze the interviews in order to appreciate how an intercultural approach helped them respect the unique trauma and religious worlds of these veterans. Students also read and discussed literature on military post-traumatic stress, moral distress, religious coping, and Christian and Buddhist theologies of suffering. In the last week we brought our consultant, Air Force Chaplain Dallas Little, to Iliff to consolidate and evaluate our learning, especially in terms of what it is like for civilian spiritual caregivers to work across religious differences with veterans. Larry Kent Graham, professor of pastoral theology at Iliff School of Theology, was part of these consultations because of his expertise on the impact of war on persons and families.

What did we learn through this project?

Several important lessons emerged:

1. Intercultural spiritual care requires trust before collaborative coconstruction of meanings and practices.
2. Hospitality is granted by coresearchers, students, and care receivers when they experience trust; researchers, teachers, and caregivers become guests who enter into the alterity and mystery of their hosts' inner worlds.
3. The process of self-reflexivity is at the heart of intercultural care.

Lessons in trust, collaboration, and hospitality

We learned that practicing and teaching intercultural spiritual care involves a two-part parallel process of trust and collaborative coconstruction of meaning. The practices of research, teaching, and spiritual care need to begin with a relationship of trust that grows when those in researcher,³ teaching, and helping roles respect the unique particularities of their coresearchers, students, or care receivers. We used the language of Emmanuel Levinas in order to understand how trust grows when we respect the alterity or "strangeness of the Other, his [or her] irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and possessions."⁴ We also used the language of phenomenological comparative approaches to religion⁵ to appreciate the mystery of each person's religious, spiritual, or existential world.⁶

This understanding of spiritual care rethinks the notion of hospitality in that it is the coresearcher, student, and care receiver who become the host after they experience trust and then extend hospitality to the researcher, teacher, and caregiver. In the context of this course, we experienced this hospitality first as researchers when we were invited into the inner worlds of veterans. We also experienced hospitality when our students invited us into their inner worlds. As researchers, teachers, and caregivers, we tried to be respectful guests.

Once trust is established through respect for alterity, then a coconstructive and collaborative relationship becomes possible between researchers and coresearchers, teachers and students, and caregivers and receivers. Within a relational space created by trust, people are willing to share their sacred practices and beliefs and be changed by each other in a collaborative coconstructive

way. We experienced this process at moments toward the end of our research interviews and also with students as they explored how they understand and cope with suffering, in dialogue with us and, through the interviews, with the veterans. When students immersed themselves in the interviews through the laborious process of transcription, they were able to track how we used this two-part intercultural approach in our conversations with veterans, who took the lead in telling us their stories.⁷

This grant taught us about the importance of trust in the process of teaching. Halfway through the course there was a student revolt. Students had finished transcribing interviews, and the next step was to teach them how to begin coding. We used a fishbowl discussion, in which I (Carrie) was in an inner circle with a group of students attempting a thematic analysis of a transcribed interview with one of the Vietnam veterans. I didn't realize that several students in the outer circle were becoming upset and angry. They identified with this veteran's psychological difficulties and felt judged by students engaged in coding. As soon as we realized what was happening, we turned our attention to the group dynamics of the class. We knew how important it was to model intercultural spiritual care through our teaching by listening to each student carefully.⁸ The only way to reestablish trust in the learning process was to use this "pedagogy of performance"—teaching students how to do spiritual care through a parallel process in which we "teach the practice by doing it."⁹ This crisis highlighted the importance of paying attention to breaches in trust and how trust can be reestablished when an intercultural process is used in teaching.

The important role of self-reflexivity

We also learned how the process of self-reflexivity is at the heart of intercultural care.¹⁰ In the fishbowl coding crisis, students who identified with the veterans felt that other students were insensitively judging the veterans. Since social justice is a core value in the Iliff curriculum, students were attuned to the injustice of those with social privileges (such as the privilege of never having been in combat) imposing their values on these veterans. In responding to their concerns, we explicitly explored the ways an intercultural approach takes into account the larger familial, communal, and social systems that encompass the caregiver and care receiver's lives. These systems inevitably shape the power dynamics of helping relationships, as well as the social advantages and disadvantages experienced by caregivers and receivers. We decided to address this issue directly by having students identify the ways that their values and beliefs, as well as their social advantages and privileges, shaped their reactions to and interpretations of these interviews with Vietnam War veterans. We explored these social advantages and disadvantages by having students examine their childhood and adult values. They also detailed aspects of their social identity that shaped their interpretation of the interviews. They charted the possible ways their personal values were connected with aspects of their identity, and they compared their social identities with the veterans whose interviews they transcribed (see Appendix). Students worked on these charts

in teams. Their final assignment was to take a section of the interviews they had transcribed and note when and how their values or aspects of social identity shaped the way they coded this section of the interviews.

Many aspects of the course—doing transcriptions; discussing readings on trauma, moral distress, spiritual coping, and theologies of suffering; reflecting on personal values and life experiences—helped students collaborate and coconstruct their lived theologies of suffering—the values and beliefs embedded and enacted in their practices. They compared their lived theologies of suffering with the theologies expressed by veterans in the interviews. They brought these personal lived theologies into dialogue with the theologies they explored in the class readings.

Long-range benefits of our learning

This grant exploring how to teach intercultural spiritual care contributes to ongoing scholarly work by elaborating pastoral theologian Emmanuel Lartey's model of intercultural care, an emerging paradigm of spiritual care in multifaith contexts.¹¹ Our use of this paradigm draws upon comparative religious studies and psychological research on religious coping, combat trauma, and posttraumatic growth. This approach also becomes explicitly oriented to social justice in its focus on self-reflexivity, specifically in its exploration of how social advantages, disadvantages, and values influence our judgment of those seeking care and the power dynamics of helping relationships.

An added benefit of this grant is the continuation of the research project with veterans. In the coming year, we will be working with some of the students who took this course in order to finish coding and thematically analyzing the interviews. Our preliminary finding is this: using an intercultural approach helped veterans trust that we would respect the unique ways they constructed meaning out of morally distressing traumatic experiences. We sensed that our theological training helped us appreciate the moral and theological meanings of their suffering. The veterans we interviewed helped us appreciate the ways that Buddhist practices and worldviews seemed to be exquisitely helpful in developing life-giving spiritual orienting systems that transformed shame-based memories that could easily cause moral distress. Utilizing an intercultural and theologically sensitive approach in these interviews seemed to create what Shelly Rambo, following Serene Jones, refers to as "morphological spaces," which provide form and structure to experiences which, due to linguistic and conceptual impoverishment, would otherwise remain "unnarratable."¹²

Our preliminary analysis of the interviews also gives us insight into the ways that Rambo's and Jones's theologies of suffering are primarily oriented to Christian traditions, specifically theologies of lament and redemption. Such theologies often shape how healing is understood. The veterans in our study qualified the idea of healing from trauma by describing how Buddhist practices have enabled them to respond compassionately to posttraumatic stress and moral distress without the resurrectionist overtones of redemptive theologies of suffering. Such practices help them, first, recognize triggers and how

they automatically respond to them, and second, contemplate their reactions through the lenses of self-compassion and complex understandings of suffering. Each of the veterans came to Buddhist practices after searching for ways to reconnect with some sense of goodness, especially when they reexperienced the horrors of their Vietnam experiences and tried to avoid morally distressing memories. Buddhist practices dramatically changed their experience of post-traumatic suffering and, indeed, their lives.

In our future work with coding and thematically analyzing the interviews, we will explore how Buddhist approaches provide an alternative to commonly used redemptive theologies of suffering. They seem to offer (1) meaning-making frameworks for understanding morally distressing memories, (2) practices for emotionally and spiritually processing disturbing memories related to moral distress, and (3) value-based commitments to helping other veterans. The role of self-compassion was central in helping the veterans no longer avoid the moral distress of their traumatic experiences. Buddhist beliefs about suffering helped them develop more complex ways of understanding their experiences, such that they could begin to comprehend the ambiguous and interconnected relational and cultural webs in which they were caught as young soldiers. Understanding the tragic interrelated dimensions of their suffering and the suffering they may have caused helped them give voice to lament and also assume appropriate responsibility for their actions. Buddhist worldviews helped them accept their moral agency in complex ways and incorporate distressing memories into an integrated sense of who they are.

These veterans have taught us to monitor how embedded theologies of redemptive suffering are often used to understand trauma but are also often unable to hold the lament associated with moral distress within the ambiguity of such suffering. In analyzing these interviews and discussing them throughout the course we taught, we relied upon our theological expertise to appreciate the radical ways these veterans were living out ambiguous theologies of suffering at odds with commonly used redemptive theologies.¹³ In exploring the intricacies of these veterans' lived theologies of healing, we were very aware of the need for theological expertise, even within the context of intercultural care that values the uniqueness of these veterans' existential worlds.

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Appendix

Chart completed by students

Broad Cultural Category	Subcategory	My Identity	My Associated Values	My Guesses at this Veteran's Social Identity	My Emotional Reactions and Potential to Judge
Ethnographic	Nationality/citizenship				
	Ethnicity				
	Race				
Demographic	Age-identity				
	Gender-identity				
	Parental/marital status				
	Able-bodied?				
	Appearance/attractiveness				
	Regional location (urban, rural, urban)				
	Intercultural experiences				
	Sexual orientation				
	PTS (self or a close family member)				
	Victim of violence/aggressor				
	Addiction (self/family member)				
	Incarceration/probation (self/family member)				
	Other kinds of psychological distress/mental illness				
	Family of origin dysfunction/abuse				

Status	Economic (financial security)					
	Social class					
	Professional status					
	Clinical/pastoral training					
	Military (self/family member) or civilian					
	Branch/rank/status in military					
	Vietnam: Drafted/enlisted/CO (self/family member)					
	Law enforcement (self/family)					
	Killing in the line of duty (self/family member)					
	Religion/ Spiritual orientation					
Affiliation: formal	Political affiliation					
	Values regarding war					
	Values regarding killing in the line of duty					

ENDNOTES

1. Didier Pollefeyt, *Interreligious Learning* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 7.
2. Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London: Sage, 2006).
3. Qualitative research approaches like ethnography have been used in highly sensitive intercultural ways by pastoral theologians. See, for example, M. Jan Holden, *Building the Resilient Community: Lessons from the Lost Boys of Sudan* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011) and Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008).
4. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis, (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 43. Alterity refers to “the absolutely foreign [aspects of those seeking care that] can instruct us.” See Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis, Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Texts Series (The Hague, 1981), 207. Roger Burggraeve talks about the “insurmountable irreducibility of alterity” in Roger Burggraeve, “Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other: The Vision of Emmanuel Levinas on Moral Evil and Our Responsibility,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 30.
5. We understand religion, spirituality, and theology as performative knowledge rather than propositional knowledge, and praxis as the way in which communities and persons embody and enact their beliefs. The intercultural spiritual care process we describe resonates with Elaine Graham’s inductive method of critical phenomenology in Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York, NY: Mowbray Publishers, 1996).
6. William E. Paden, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); William E. Paden, “Comparative Religion” in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John Hinnells (New York: Routledge, 2005), 208–25; William E. Paden, “Theaters of Worldmaking Behaviors: Panhuman Contexts for Comparative Religion” in *Comparing Religions: Possibilities and Perils?* eds. T. Idinopulos, B. Wilson, and J. C. Hanges (Boston: Brill, 2006), 59–74.
7. For IRB purposes we developed an extensive interview guide focusing on military service, trauma, and spiritual coping. In the interview itself, we put the veterans in charge of how they wanted to tell us about their experiences. We opened each interview with a broad question (“Tell us about your childhood religious or spiritual background, your military experience, and how you came to Buddhist practices”).
8. Homer U. Ashby, Jr., “Teaching Pastoral Care and Counseling in the Cross-Cultural Classroom in *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education*, ed. David V. Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006): 157–69; Glenn H. Asquith, Carrie Doehring, Carolyn McCrary, and Ronald J. Nydam, “Teaching Pastoral Theology as Part of the MDiv Curriculum,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 10 (2000): 28–46; Carrie Doehring and Edouard Fontenot, “Strategies for Teaching about Pastoral Care: Implications for Theological Education in a New Millennium,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 11 (2001): 12–23. J. L. Marshall, “Differences, Dialogues, and Discourses: From Sexuality to Queer Theory in Learning and Teaching,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 19, no. 2 (2009): 29–47. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Practical Theology and Pedagogy: Embodying Theological Know-How” in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, eds. Dorothy C. Bass and Clark Dykstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 170–90. Francesca Nuzzolese, “The Risks of Caring and Teaching Pastoral Care ‘with’ People At-Risk: Reflections on Pedagogy and Pastoral Praxis,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 17, no. 2 (2007): 119–43. James N. Poling, “Where I Live Is How I Work,” *Pastoral Psychology* 43, no. 3 (1995): 177–84.

9. Kathleen A. Cahalan, Carol L. Hess, and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Teaching Practical Theology: Examining Six Sub-Disciplines," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 83.
10. Greider, Lee, and Ramsay detail the need for such reflexivity when it comes to awareness of one's social privileges and how these shape learning and caring relationships and communities. Kathleen J. Greider, "From Multiculturalism to Interculturality: Demilitarizing the Border between Personal and Social Dynamics through Spiritual Receptivity," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 22 (2002): 40–58; K. Samuel Lee, "The Teacher-Student in Multicultural Theological Education: Pedagogy of Collaborative Inquiry," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 22 (2002): 81–99; Nancy J. Ramsay, "Navigating Racial Difference as a White Pastoral Theologian," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 12, no. 2 (2002): 11–27.
11. Emmanuel Y. Lartey, "Globalization, Internationalization, and Indigenization of Pastoral Care and Counseling," in *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 87–108.
12. Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009). W. Kinghorn, "Religious Communities and the Moral Context of Combat-Related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among American Military Veterans" (paper presented at the AAR Annual Meeting, Montreal, QC, 2009): 11.
13. While Rambo and Jones offer a much more sophisticated theology of suffering that makes room for lament, embedded theologies of redemption often push people beyond lament to accept resurrection as the ultimate sign of healing. Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

Table Fellowship with Our Buddhist Neighbors for Beloved Community

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ABSTRACT: The Institute for the Theology of Culture: New Wine, New Wineskins of Multnomah Biblical Seminary partnered with Dharma Rain Zen Center in Portland, Oregon, to host a series of potlucks, where self-selected groups within their respective movements came together to eat, get to know one another, and discuss their traditions, including key points of tension, with the purpose of learning to serve more effectively in an increasingly multifaith society.

Potlucks and religious pluralism

What better way exists to build mutual trust and a sense of neighborliness than through potlucks and table fellowship? Everyone brings a favorite dish to share, sits down at the same table at eye level, and tastes from the respective foods and drinks. It can get quite messy with all the variety of finger foods and delicacies, and there is often a lot of cleaning up to do. But still, it is quite fun.

What isn't all that fun is seeking to address the messy business of right and left political and religious conflict. We all tend to portray ourselves and our camps in a more favorable light than we do others and are not able to see that our lives and movements are often messy and that we have our own messes to clean up.

I have been trying to clean up some religious messes over the years with my longtime friend and colleague, Zen Buddhist priest, Abbot Kyogen Carlson. We have addressed religious and civic issues on a variety of levels over the years. Among other things, we have sought to engage the messy business of the cultural and religious right and left in Portland, Oregon. Our respective communities—evangelical Christianity and Zen Buddhism—function by and large as a microcosm of this greater reality.

Members of our respective communities are sometimes, if not often, at the corners rather than at the center of our society, and we have been guilty at times of hurling food—or worse, at one another—from across the divide. Carlson and I have been trying for several years to get those in our respective camps to sit down together at the table and listen and engage one another eye to eye and heart to heart. Such efforts served as a fitting backdrop for our grant application to The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) for the Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices project, aiming to help seminary graduates become effective ministers in a multifaith society.

The grant project afforded us at The Institute for the Theology of Culture: New Wine, New Wineskins of Multnomah Biblical Seminary of Multnomah

University the opportunity to partner with Abbot Carlson and his temple community, Dharma Rain Zen Center. Through the grant, we were able to assist seminary students in addition to Abbot Carlson's Buddhist practitioners in serving more effectively in American society, which is increasingly a multifaceted and messy religious smorgasbord.

The planning team, staffed by members of New Wine, New Wineskins and Dharma Rain Zen Center,¹ decided to host a series of potlucks, where self-selected groups within our respective movements came together to eat, get to know one another, and discuss our traditions (involving preassigned readings), including key points of tension. The evangelical participants were made up primarily of seminary students who were chaplains, pastors, missionaries, and theologians in training. The Buddhist dialogue partners included priests from the Zen and Tibetan Buddhist traditions along with monks in training and parishioners of various walks of life. All who joined were those within our respective camps at Multnomah Biblical Seminary, Dharma Rain Zen Center, and their affiliates. The various evening potluck events would prepare the way for a weekend retreat that would serve as the culmination of the year-long gatherings. There we would deal with a wide range of issues, including hot topic issues that separate our movements: religious pluralism, evangelism, heaven and hell, abortion, and gay marriage.

Religion and politics over dinner

As a rule, it is not wise to discuss these hot religious and political topics over or even after dinner. Still, those of us who planned these gatherings maintained that, with the appropriate instruction and support, we could have such courageous conversations if situated in the context of table fellowship. Sitting down together with people of different walks of life and looking them in the eye over meals where everyone brings a favorite dish to share is somewhat disarming and can ease tension. Such practices help us move beyond posturing on our favorite moral platforms so that we can share life while sharing meals and personal stories.

At the very first potluck gathering we saw how important these occasions would be for building trust and understanding. The level of anxiety in the room among some members of the Buddhist community was very apparent. I don't think they expected to feel such strong emotions, but several of them had come from Christian backgrounds and/or had Christian and even evangelical Christian family members. These Buddhists had experienced rejection from these Christians due to their religious sojourns away from Christianity and lifestyle choices. They spoke openly about their anxiety the first night. Throughout the year, they would recount the visceral reactions some of them had in preparation for and during that first gathering. Some of them had forgotten or had stored away deep down inside memories of encounters that had hurt them and that resurfaced through our self-identification as evangelicals.

These Buddhists' level of anxiety and reawakened memories were no doubt matched by our own amnesia and perhaps evangelical fears of possible doctrinal and ethical compromise. Sometimes it is those fears that cause us as

evangelicals to speak louder and more often so that people know we have not budged on our important stands. We often talk about taking a stand for our convictions, but we fail to see and forget how hurtful it is when we push and shove and knock others down as we stand up for our truth claims and ethical stances. Moreover, we forget that those we objectify are often very much like us—they're humans, too. Surely, we evangelicals are not alone. We have been the objects of other people's and other movements' ridicule and scorn. We need to learn how to move past objectification together with those of these other movements. The only way to do that is to sit down with those we would either objectify or be objectified by and seek reconciliation. In order to do so, we need to develop the appropriate table manners and social etiquette. Otherwise, we will only make the mess worse. Hopefully, what we evangelicals learned this past year with our Buddhist neighbors about how to dialogue and work together can be of benefit to our respective movements at large.

Table manners and social etiquette at the interfaith table

Here are a few of the values and practices that we came to esteem and embody and hope to share with other seminarians, Buddhist practitioners, and those of other faiths in the coming years in service to our ministries in a multifaith society. Anyone seeking to coordinate a similar project should account for these dynamics and principles.

Be hospitable, not hostile.

Hospitality is the foundational value and practice that grant participants sought to exemplify and embody. I would not say that America is generally known for its hospitality, at least not to the same extent as Middle Eastern and Pacific Rim cultures. If we want to build trust and clean up the messes of interreligious conflict in our multifaith society known for its culture wars, it is very important that we come to cherish the art of hospitality. It is very hard to be hostile at the family table. Sure, it happens. But as was stated above, it is a lot more difficult when you have to look someone in the face and share food at the potluck with them. So, we recommend that ministers of the gospel become known in their communities as artisans and connoisseurs of hospitality.

Be long-suffering toward anxiety and reduce amnesia.

In the West, we who are Christians have a lot longer record of missteps and bad deeds toward those who do not share our views than they do toward us. Of course, Christianity has also done incredible good. And no doubt, if we were in another culture where Christians are in the religious minority, the opposite would be the case and the negative list would be longer for those of the religious majority in that land. Qualifications aside, we Christians in the West need to be long-suffering and sensitive. So often, we enter into the room to sit down at a table without realizing that our family name with all its associations based on other family members' actions enters and sits down with us. There will be anxiety. We will have to weather messy emotions and awkward silence and conversations. We need to be prepared to handle these

room dynamics and reduce our amnesia about the messiness of our traditions. With this point in mind, it is worth noting that it took us evangelicals a whole year to feel comfortable enough to share some of our honest and pressing questions with our Buddhist friends. Before we could share about those concerns, we needed to make sure that they were able to share their concerns as those whose numbers were smaller and history shorter here in the States.

Be inquisitive, not inquisitional.

Listening is a form of love. Why should Buddhists and those of other religious movements listen to us evangelical Christians, if we are not willing to listen first to them? We need to learn about them, learn from them, and learn about what they love because we love them. And so, we asked the Buddhists to share their traditions' stories, perspectives, and customs rather than try to speak for them. We read what they recommended, just as they read what we recommended. After all, we were all truly invested in our respective beliefs and practices. We were approaching one another from the outside looking in, and we wanted to try and understand one another from the inside out as much as possible. We learned how great our need was to develop further a spirit of charity. Charity involves a desire to listen, to learn, and to understand the other. Charity is inquisitive. Charity goes a long way toward building trust and cultivating healthy forms of communication in Christian witness. Case in point, one of the Buddhists had shared during the year's gatherings of how she had been rejected by her evangelical father because of her beliefs and way of life. When we asked her if she felt that we treated her the same way (given that we likely held similar convictions to him), she said that we were not like her father: "No, you (plural) are inquisitive." Hospitality mixed with charity has a way of making us inquisitive rather than inquisitional.

Lead, don't shove.

Some of the Buddhists confessed at the end of the year that they had feared that the entire enterprise was a bait and switch set up, where hospitality would simply serve as a cover for evangelism. They were pleasantly surprised in the end to find out that we were true to our expressed aims and purposes. Certainly, as evangelicals, we are committed to evangelism. It is in our DNA. Still, we need to be sensitive and not force our views on others in overt or subtle terms. As one of the Buddhist practitioners said at one of the meetings, evangelicals should gently lead people to Christ rather than push or force them toward him. How right he is. In fact, it is bound up with the previous point above about love. The Great Commission flows out of the great commandment and the ensuing commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. As evangelicals who take to heart the Apostle Peter's exhortation, we are always to be ready to share the hope within us and, when given the opportunity, to do so in gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). Respect entails that we are straightforward and honest with those who do not express faith in Christ and guard against forms of manipulation. In a culture often cynical toward evangelical Christianity, the only way to be in a position for our views to be

heard is to create space with honest and open and relational lives. For all our talk as evangelicals about personal relationships with Jesus, it is very important that we are committed to personal relationships with Buddhists and those of other faith traditions regardless of whether they ever express interest in Jesus. Only then is our witness truly relational and communal (rather than contractual).

Go through our convictions in search of common ground.

So often in conversations on religious pluralism, people are encouraged to leave their respective convictions at the door and go in search of common ground. Our approach as Christian and Buddhist organizers for our gatherings was to go through our respective convictions rather than around them. Of course, we weren't willing to stop short and refuse to engage until those on the other side came to see things our way. Even so, we realized that we shared much in common anyway, given our Christian and Buddhist traditions' emphases on hospitality, long-suffering, and compassion. We started and will continue to move forward from common ground in search of common ground as we sit down together to eat at the table.

Be prepared to get messy and possibly messed up.

Not only did we get into the messiness of our religious, ethical, and cultural convictions, but also it got messy as we had to come to terms with our misconceptions, repent of our faulty judgments and prejudices, and deal with our growing affection for one another as we continued eating together and sharing personal stories of pain and joy. We realized how ideological we can all get at times. We so easily objectify others. In keeping with the point above about moving through our convictions in search of common ground, Carlson in particular has helped me to learn Jesus's teaching about taking out the plank from my own eye before taking out the speck from someone else's eye (Matt. 7:5) through recourse to his own tradition's wisdom on nonobjectification. The greater the number of people involved, the further apart we are with little to no opportunity to engage person to person; as a result, the more ideological we become. Ideology leads us to turn Buddhists and Christians and Muslims and Hindus and other spiritual people (whoever is not us) into "isms" and "ists." This is one of the reasons why we need to cultivate practices of hospitality; otherwise, objectification and even hostility increases. The smaller the number of people and the more intimate the setting, the messier in a beautiful way the encounters can become. As a result of our potlucks and retreat this past year, lasting friendships have been forged, and we are longing for more. It could get even messier though, as we seek to involve others within our communities who are far more cynical and object to what we self-selected Buddhists and Christians are about. Our lines are even blurring as to who "our" communities really are and who we are in relation to one another. That's what table fellowship can do to you.

Nibbles and snacks between interfaith meals

During the closing conversation of our evangelical-Buddhist retreat on hospitality and neighborliness, one of the Buddhist abbots, Gyokuko Carlson (Kyogen's wife), advanced the discussion and led us forward beyond the retreat. She was not content with allowing the weekend to come to an end. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. Life itself never really ends for Buddhists—the cycle continues!

Even more surprising was the charge she gave to all of us to be “lead goats” in our respective movements. I am not sure how this struck the Buddhists' ears, but to my evangelical ears, it was surprising in that Matthew 25 teaches us that we are to aspire to be sheep, not goats. For an evangelical Christian, being a goat is not a good thing!

Of course, the abbot did not have Matthew 25 in mind. She was challenging us to be willing to risk and welcome others in our respective communities to participate in our courageous conversations. The abbot shared with us how herds of goats will not venture to nibble at a bush until the lead goat risks and takes the first bite. We were lead goats, who had risked to nibble at the bush of being neighborly to one another. We had to make sure we would not now retreat, but advance to the next bush. In other words, she was encouraging us to nibble on snacks until the next time we sit down for another shared meal.

The abbot had listened attentively during the weekend to Buddhists and Christians share of their mutual appreciation for the courageous conversations we had participated in over the past several months. The weekend gathering served as the culmination of all those get-togethers. Many of us were amazed and relieved that we could converse with one another civilly, compassionately, and inquisitively, even on hot topic issues that had charged our respective communities and pained our personal lives over the years. Healing had occurred, and lasting friendships across the religious and cultural divide were being built. However, we were afraid that others in our communities would not be so sympathetic and neighborly. We wanted to protect one another from those who would be hostile and indifferent. After all, we were now friends, and our friendships were fresh and fragile like new blossoms on a bush. We wouldn't want wolves in sheep's clothing to come and devour them!

Still others in our communities, though hesitant, would not be resistant. They would nibble at the bush without devouring the blossoms, if we would be willing to risk and continue nibbling before them. It may cost us to risk in this way. But it would be worth it. After all, for us evangelicals, Jesus's exhortation in Matthew 25 calls us to inconvenience ourselves and care for him by caring for others. One of the chief differences between sheep and goats, according to that passage, is that the sheep care for “the other” whereas the goats, who are self-conscious and self-concerned, do not.

The fruit of Jesus's Spirit will lead us to risk pain and suffering to care for our neighbors—whether they are evangelicals or Buddhists or others we invite to the table—even nibbling at the bush of hospitality over and over again. Based on the Buddhist abbot's call, this is what we plan to do: to continue nibbling at the bush of hospitality over messy potluck dinners and desserts with

microbrews (non-alcoholic, of course) and green tea over the coming months and years.²

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ENDNOTES

1. The team included Beyth Hogue Greenetz (New Wine, New Wineskins' administrative coordinator), Genko Rainwater (Zen Buddhist monk at Dharma Rain Zen Center), Daicho Ohgushi (Ethics Council member at Dharma Rain Zen Center), Carlson, and me.
2. While the grant funding was designated for one year, the partnership between these two communities has continued. Since the conclusion of the retreat, our engagement has taken several forms including a follow-up forum for the Multnomah University community where members of the respective groups shared what they learned and took away from the project for future work and ministry; a public discussion of the dialogues by Carlson and myself as part of a book event at Powell's City of Books related to our engagement in *Connecting Christ: How to Discuss Jesus in a World of Diverse Paths* (Thomas Nelson, 2012); and the presentation of our findings in Multnomah Biblical Seminary's world religions course and in my Cultural Engagement Doctor of Ministry cohort at the seminary. We have since completed an additional year of ongoing dialogue potlucks involving our faith communities (including new members) and also plan on holding gatherings this coming school year. Carlson and I continue to work together in various spheres, such as in writing projects and at the Foundation for Religious Diplomacy.

To read about this Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices project from the Buddhist partner's perspective, please visit <http://northwestdharma.org/nw-dharma-news-wp/2013/06/polbridge/>.

Developing a Cultural Competency Module to Facilitate Christian Hospitality and Promote Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith Society

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ABSTRACT: As society increasingly becomes more multifaith, finding ways to practice hospitality has moved beyond traditional methods. Many methods practiced before were not inclusive of self-awareness as being an important focus in intercultural development. One cannot authentically engage cultural otherness without self-awareness in her or his own cultural environment and a culture unlike one's own. North Park Seminary has chosen to apply the Intercultural Development Inventory in a Cross-Cultural Module to increase self-awareness and cultural competency for authentic Christian hospitality.

Overview

North Park Theological Seminary is committed to educating our students to lead biblically, spiritually, and culturally. As a denomination, the Evangelical Covenant Church is in the midst of a major cultural transition wherein we are recognizing that minimizing differences in the Other is not an act of Christian hospitality. In order to engage with the multifaith society in which we live and are called to serve today there is an urgent need for ongoing development of our pastoral leadership in the area of intercultural competency beginning at the seminary level. This starts with self-awareness. Toward this end, NPTS's Field Education Department and the Center for World Christian Studies (CWCS) proposed the development of a Cultural Competency Module (CCM) for all graduating NPTS students as a capstone to their studies as they transition into ministry. This was based on the model of the Theological Reflection Module (TRM) required of students returning from internships. We held a test run CCM in the spring of 2011 but officially started the CCM in the fall of 2011 after receiving the Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices (CHAPP) grant.

A key component to the CCM is to continue to build self-awareness of one's personal development toward cultures other than one's own. In order to assess this, NPTS has begun using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).¹ The IDI is required for all incoming students, and we plan to have them retake the IDI during their final semester as part of the CCM when they will again debrief the results and then write a life syllabus with goals for continued growth. The CHAPP grant helped NPTS kickstart the use of the IDI for incoming students by funding the training of two individuals who are now part of

a multiethnic team of four qualified assessors available for personal debriefings of the IDI and the new accompanying Individual Development Plans that outline steps to take for further development. In addition to training new assessors, funds from the CHAPP grant also covered the cost of assessment for the initial group, who made up our first trial run of the Cultural Competency Module. Other funding was also used to complete the costs of these events.

What we learned

Retooling the tool

NPTS, in conjunction with the denomination's Department of World Mission (DWM), has been using the IDI to assess levels of cultural competency for intercultural ministry for four years. It is not a faith-based tool, but it is one that NPTS and DWM have been able to apply toward ministry settings better than other tools we have tested. There are many positive aspects of the IDI; however, after listening to feedback over the last four years, we have found that the categorical language used in the IDI is, for the most part, viewed as negative. This naturally heightens the recipient's resistance to identify with the results of the tool and stifles the process and desire for further growth. With input from members of the initial group, NPTS has translated the categories of the IDI into more user-friendly language, which we are now promoting.

Cultural Competency Modules

The CCM comes at the end of studies. As of this writing NPTS has now run three CCMs of various sizes and groupings. We have learned several things from these experiences.

CCMs best serve their purpose when they take place at the end of the students' programs. At this point, it is part of our curriculum, and students will process through CCMs sometime during their last semesters. They will also retake the IDI and debrief their results with an assessor.

At the beginning of their programs, incoming students will take the Vocational Excellence class and take their initial IDI as part of it. One thing that we learned is that having the Vocational Excellence class midway through the student's first semester was too early. Students at that point have not yet gained their equilibrium as they navigate the steep learning curve of entry into seminary. We have moved the timing of the Vocational Excellence course to the break between the first and second semesters.

It is difficult to avoid, but often the fact of fast-paced seminary education means that too much material is presented too quickly to allow for it to be internalized or even understood. Personal IDI debriefs given early on in the students' programs were appreciated since it gave students a better ability to pace themselves and their activities in their pursuit of intercultural learning.

Set and follow ground rules

Again, using the model of the Theological Reflection Models that follow internships, the CCM works best when its purpose is mutually understood and a safe place is provided for discussion of sometimes difficult subjects. A

willingness to respectfully listen to one another is modeling, and hopefully instilling, a pattern of dialog that will transfer into ministry in the multifaith world in which we live. For some the CCM requires saying less, for others more. The best CCMs come from trained leaders who have experienced CCMs before and are able to keep them on track. Not every faculty or staff member is able to lead a CCM. Training to understand the outcome is crucial.

Insights

1. Students who have participated in them have appreciated the CCMs. The CCM is an important opportunity to voice concerns and face the future better prepared to engage with difference in hospitable ways, rather than through defensiveness, romanticizing, or minimizing. Students are able to describe, evaluate, and plan in meaningful ways and address controversial interfaith and intercultural issues not normally addressed in Christian ministry.
2. Younger students do better at the CCM. Older students feel that they have been through these things before and tend to be more resistant to change in the future. For older students it feels like simply going through another hoop to get the degree. Again, setting and following some common ground rules is important here so that a genuine dialog can take place.

Recommendations

1. As far as it is possible, try to integrate the group of students participating in each CCM, even if it means waiting until the next semester. This will provide the opportunity for a more enriching and inclusive perspective of age, race, gender, class, and Christian tradition.
2. Continue to draw from the strengths of the denomination's Departments of World Mission and Ordered Ministry. The denomination's Department of Christian Formation should also be invited to be part of this experience. Continue to integrate the seminary's own department of Field Education and Center for World Christian Studies. There are other faculty and staff who could be included at various points to make the CCM interdisciplinary and more holistic in focus.
3. Integrate the use of the IDI with other subjects being taught at the Vocational Excellence course, which is required at the beginning of each student's academic career. This will help avoid unnecessary repetition or cross-speaking of topics.
4. Keep the groups small. Try to limit to no more than six or seven participants in each group so that the experience is both meaningful and efficient. Listening to six other people is hard work! More facilitators will be required in the future when more CCMs are required at the end of each semester.
5. We will need to provide at least one CCM every semester—and often several—once the program is regularly integrated into the process. If we

need to train additional IDI assessors, NPTS will need to find new funding to do so.

Sustaining the progress

North Park Seminary's department of Field Education will continue to organize CCMs on an ongoing basis. At present this is in addition to regular faculty and staff workloads. As the need for more CCMs expands, it will be important to consider how they should or should not be incorporated into the calculation of faculty loads. The Field Education department will evaluate the progress and continue to fine tune CCMs.

Another part of sustaining the progress comes through Sankofa reunions, which take place at Covenant Pastors' Midwinter Conferences. *Sankofa* is an Akan word from Ghana that means to "reach back and get it" or "look back in order to move forward." This has developed into an experiential journey designed by the Evangelical Covenant Church's department of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice that partners blacks with non-blacks on a bus ride from Chicago to Memphis, tracing many of the major locations and histories of the civil rights movement. Partners are asked to share personally and interact openly. For many, this is a first step toward Christian hospitality—intentionally engaging outside of one's own cultural comfort zone. It is hoped that this experience will bring lasting change into the lives and practices of our denomination's leaders and impact the Covenant as a whole. Using the IDI as a pretrip assessment helps give Sankofa participants language to describe their own developmental process.

In addition to the CCM, North Park Theological Seminary continues to offer courses in the spiritual formation field, such as *From Hostility to Hospitality*, and in the ministry field, such as *Religions and Cultures*, that integrate issues of intentional engagement through Christian hospitality with those of other faiths or of no faith. These are offered regularly and will continue to be part of NPTS course offerings. For those in the MDiv program, the requirement of CPE still stands. During CPE students are forced to practice hospitality to others outside of their own faith tradition. Using the IDI gives language and perspective on the process. The addition of the CCM augments the development of students' abilities to verbalize and internalize motivation for Christian hospitality even further as expressed through a variety of pastoral practices both individually and corporately. We believe this will eventually impact both individual churches and the corporate culture of the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination in our effort to become more reflective of kingdom values that welcome all.

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ENDNOTE

1. <http://www.idiinventory.com/>

Continuing the Conversation: Pedagogic Principles for Multifaith Education

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ABSTRACT: Offering a perspective from the Jewish tradition, the author recommends not only interreligious training for seminarians but also sustained engagement in dialogical learning with those of other faith traditions, enabling students to become bridge builders for the religious communities they serve. These encounters, the author explains, can help students create networks of interreligious peers whom they can call on in the future for support and advice as well as provide teachings and practices that can be adapted into their lives and ministry settings.

I feel honored that I was invited to participate as a Jewish respondent in this momentous educational process that informed the new multifaith¹ language in the Degree Program Standards adopted by the Commission on Accrediting in 2012. In the spirit of the Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices meetings, I want to continue the conversation by offering several brief pedagogic recommendations for interreligious education in the North American seminary context. I do so with some hesitation, knowing that I speak as a Jewish educator whose knowledge of Christianity and experience in Christian settings is limited. However, I offer these remarks believing that there are some common educational principles that we share, drawing on my work with Jewish, Christian, and Unitarian Universalist students and colleagues over the last decade at Hebrew College and Andover Newton Theological School.

The social context

American Jewish and Christian leaders today are working in one of the most religiously diverse societies in the history of humankind.² In hospitals, chat rooms, soccer fields, and family gatherings across the country, people from different religious traditions are encountering one another with greater frequency and with far fewer obstacles than in earlier times or in other contemporary locations. For our students to work successfully in this dynamic social milieu, they need training to deal with a complex set of interreligious issues.

As Diana Eck and others have written, the sheer fact of demographic diversity does not mean that people will interact with one another across religious lines in thoughtful and productive ways. To develop such an ethos—what Eck refers to as *religious pluralism*³—a society must invest in educating its populace for healthy interreligious engagement. To accomplish this goal, leaders in different sectors of society need to serve as role models, guides, and facilitators. Like other elements of leadership development, there are key skills, virtues, and knowledge⁴ that clergy and educators need to cultivate to be effective actors in multifaith contexts.

There is a need to train future religious leaders in this field not only because of pressing communal and societal needs relating to religious diversity but also because interreligious education can help students grow as Jews and Christians and as leaders within their communities. It is my conviction that when this work is carried out effectively, seminarians have the opportunity to clarify their own beliefs and values as they learn about other religious traditions and with people from other faith communities. By comparing and contrasting various religious ideas and practices, and by hearing about the life experiences of practitioners on different spiritual paths, students can identify similarities and differences, and engage in further discernment. The goal of this work, as I see it, is to help our students deepen their Jewish and Christian identities and to help them develop the capacity to learn and work with people from other walks of religious life.

Relational learning

Building on the previous point, I wish to state that learning *about* the Religious Other is necessary but insufficient. It must be complemented with, as Mary Boys and Sara Lee call it, “learning in the presence of the other.” As these two pioneering interreligious educators write about their work, “Our goal is to transcend learning about the other in the abstract, as important as that may be, in order to have participants encounter Judaism or Christianity as it is lived by informed and committed Jews and Christians.”⁵ If our students are going to be effective actors in the interreligious sphere, they need to understand the ways in which people embody their religious traditions. As educators, we need to help our students gain insight into the animating questions, fears, hopes, and dreams of actual religious people searching for meaning and purpose in today’s world. It also includes honest reflection on the history of cooperation and antagonism between our communities and a critical assessment of current challenges and opportunities. This kind of dialogical learning can only take place in the presence of the Other. Meaningful multifaith learning also requires a commitment to sustained engagement with one’s learning partners, as it takes time to develop the trust and empathy necessary for deep encounter.

Whenever possible, I think it is important for seminarians to learn with peers from other religious traditions who are also preparing for leadership roles in their respective communities. This provides them with the opportunity to explore a range of personal and professional matters, participating in what my colleague Jennifer Peace describes as experiences of “coformation.” These encounters can also help students begin to create networks of interreligious peers whom they can call on in the future for support and advice, and with whom they can engage in cooperative ventures. Seminary faculty can serve as important role models and guides in these contexts by planning or facilitating various programs for (and with) their students and with colleagues (and students) from other religious institutions. Discussion of the pedagogic aims of these meetings and reflection on the encounters are critical to the learning process. I do think that there are important elements of interreligious

education that can and should take place through traditional book learning and within the exclusive company of Jews or Christians. However, as I said above, these forms of learning are necessary, but insufficient.

Theologies of interreligious engagement

The great Jewish theologian and social activist Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said that “faith” must proceed “interfaith.” While the faith journey has no final destination (as Rabbi Heschel also taught), and we cannot wait to engage in multifaith activities until we resolve all of our theological quandaries, leaders-in-training need to develop working theological narratives that help undergird their interreligious work and move others to join them in their efforts. How do they understand the relationship between God, their religious community, and peoples of other religious traditions? What are the key texts—ancient and modern—that they draw on to help articulate their beliefs? How do they understand such foundational theological categories as revelation, chosenness, or resurrection in light of their experiences with friends, neighbors, and coworkers from other religious and secular communities? What about negative accounts of the Religious Other in various canonical textual sources or in one’s own contemporary community? Eboo Patel, founder and executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core, offers a helpful description of a theology of “interreligious cooperation”: “By *theology*, I mean a coherent narrative that references key Scripture, stories, history, poetry, and so on, from the cumulative historical tradition of the faith community.” As Patel goes on to say, “Our challenge is to make those pieces salient, interpret and apply them to the contemporary dynamic of religious diversity”⁶

Ambassadors, witnesses, and bridge builders

If our students are going to serve as effective leaders in interreligious contexts, they need to be able to articulate their values, beliefs, and commitments in a language that is accessible to outsiders. Further, it is crucial that as representatives of Judaism or Christianity they can contextualize their particular choices within larger historical and contemporary currents (religious, political, etc.). Not only is this important in terms of providing their dialogue partners with basic knowledge, but it also serves to demonstrate the fact that our traditions are rich and that internally diverse systems continue to grow and change across space and time. While none of us should attempt to speak on behalf of Judaism or Christianity as a whole, we must be able to provide others with insight into various dimensions of our sacred traditions, helping them with resources for further learning and explaining to them why we each practice as we do. In so doing, our students can serve both as ambassadors of their traditions and as witnesses to their own religious experiences.

As I said at the beginning of this essay, some of the skills I am outlining here are ones students are already working on in their existing programs. Jewish and Christian seminarians are regularly thinking about how to engage constituents who possess limited knowledge of or experience with religious

life and practice. While these situations are not the same, some pedagogic strategies can be used in Jewish or Christian settings and in interreligious contexts. It is also important that in their work as religious bridge builders, our students help their communities learn *about* other religions and *with* people from other religious traditions. This, of course, mirrors the learning experiences of seminarians outlined above.

Further, as our students learn more about other religious traditions, some will consider adapting various teachings and practices from other traditions into their lives and the lives of their communities. Therefore, it is important for us to explore with them how to do so responsibly, including what the limits might be of different forms of religious adaptation. Here it can be helpful to examine past instances of such efforts—intellectual, liturgical, social, and so forth. For example, how did Maimonides seek to integrate elements of Greek and Muslim thought into his philosophical system? How did Renaissance Christian mystics approach the teachings of Kabbalah? Closer to home, how have American Christian and Jewish feminists engaged one another and secular feminist ideas and initiatives?

Programming goals and partnerships

Among the skills religious leaders need to function as effective leaders in the multifaith realm, they must be adept at planning and facilitating meaningful programs for people from different religious traditions and with varying degrees of experience in such settings. What kinds of programs or projects might be most meaningful for various groups of children, teens, or adults? Whether one is organizing a text study, a volunteer program, or a holiday gathering, clergy and educators need to think carefully about the goals of their interreligious work. Are we bringing people together for theological discussion, for relationship building, or to attend to a social or political issue of common concern? Of course, it is possible to achieve more than one of these aims through a given initiative, but a leader must be deliberate in setting out his or her goals and developing programs that reflect these priorities. Here Boys and Lee offer us candid and helpful insight into this issue:

Both of us have been to sessions advertised as “dialogues” when those who attend have virtually no opportunity to interact with each other, or even the opportunity to learn the names of those around them. Merely listening to the same speaker or panel of speakers and having opportunity to ask questions after the presentation might at best constitute a prelude to dialogue. What happens *after* the speaker or film is the moment of interreligious learning.⁷

As this testimonial indicates, we must be thoughtful and honest about the goals of our initiatives and work diligently to design classes, service-learning programs, or film screenings that bring these to fruition.

In order to accomplish the aims discussed immediately above, religious leaders must develop networks of colleagues from other religious traditions who are similarly committed to interreligious work. This requires an investment in developing relationships with clergy and lay leaders and making a shared commitment to help cultivate an ethos of cooperation across religious lines. This work requires time and patience as well as a willingness to persevere through challenging interpersonal or group experiences. The more religious leaders can learn about the needs and wants of the other communities they are working with, the more effective their interreligious work will be. It goes without saying that the deeper one's relationship is with leaders and key stakeholders from other communities, the less likely it is that an issue will arise without warning. It is also more likely that the leaders will be able to work together productively to solve problems based on existing knowledge, past experience, and trust in and commitment to their partners.⁸

Conclusion

Given the fact that American religious leaders are working within a societal context of great religious diversity, seminary educators need to provide students with meaningful opportunities for growth as interreligious leaders. Because our curricula are already full and the field of multifaith studies is relatively new, we need to be skillful in implementing new courses and related activities and lifting up important interreligious issues in existing academic frameworks. Additionally, teachers and administrators in seminaries need to make creative use of cocurricular opportunities for such learning. Finally (though I did not discuss it here), we should also consider what role ongoing clergy education programs might play in providing newer and more veteran religious leaders with opportunities for interreligious training (especially those who did not have this opportunity while in school). The goal is to help cultivate moral and spiritual leaders who are at once deeply committed to and immersed in their own religious traditions, and possessed of the skills, virtues, and knowledge to serve effectively in interreligious settings.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank Stephen Graham and the entire ATS staff for this generous invitation and for the genuine hospitality they extended to me, both material and spiritual. I also wish to thank my Christian colleagues for welcoming me into the discussion circle, for trusting me enough to share both their certainties and their uncertainties in my presence, and for inviting me to do the same. I also benefited greatly from engaging in conversation with and hearing the responses of outstanding scholars and professionals from other non-Christian traditions involved in the project.

ENDNOTES

1. Throughout this essay I use the terms *multifaith* and *interreligious* interchangeably, as both are commonly used in popular and academic contexts (as is the term *interfaith*). Discussion of the history and rationale of each term is beyond the scope of this essay.
2. See Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001).
3. See fuller articulations of religious pluralism by Eck on the website of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, www.pluralism.org. Various thinkers in the fields of theology and interreligious studies use the term *pluralism* differently. For example, compare Eck's description with that of Paul F. Knitter's in his *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).
4. My articulation of these categories is influenced by the work of my colleagues Eboo Patel and Catherine Cornille. See Patel's *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Cambridge, MA: Beacon Press, 2012) and Cornille's *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008).
5. Mary C. Boys and Sara S. Lee, *Christians & Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2006), 17.
6. Patel, *Sacred Ground*, 142.
7. Boys and Lee, *Christians & Jews in Dialogue*, 96.
8. On the subject of interreligious and religious-secular "bridging," see Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

Christian Hospitality and Muslims

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ABSTRACT: This theological reflection incorporates the work of three Christian thinkers, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Willard Oxtoby, and Thomas Michel SJ, who have helped the author, a Muslim, to better understand interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians. The reflection draws on music and popular culture to explore the idea of faithful Christian witness, and how Christian hospitality can help Muslims and Christians to be better faith neighbours. The connections between Muslims and Christians are examined throughout this reflection.

How would it be if you were standing in my shoes
Can't you see that it's impossible to choose
No there's no making sense of it
Every way I go I'm bound to lose.
(Brian May, "Too Much Love Will Kill You")

Starting with a lyric from the rock band Queen is not the conventional beginning for a theological reflection by a Muslim on Christian hospitality. However, for me, the song sung by Freddie Mercury (who recorded the vocals in 1988, but would be dead of AIDS for four years before the song was released in 1995) captures the nuances and conflicts of the topic. I explain by way of confession. Although I am a Muslim, I was born in a Catholic missionary hospital in Pakistan, St. Raphael's, and brought into the world at the hands of a nun, Sr. Elizabeth. Some fifty years later, I find myself teaching theology at a Catholic university in Los Angeles. Holy Mother Church, it seems, has a way of bringing us all back to her bosom.

I cannot remember the first record I ever bought, but one of the first half-dozen was Queen's 1977 release, *News of the World*. At that time, I had no idea that the lead singer, Freddie Mercury, was a Parsi (a South Asian Zoroastrian) who was born in Zanzibar with the name Farrokh Bulsara. It was only after his death that I learned his back story. I had assumed he was another white English singer, although I knew he was familiar with Islamic culture from the "Bismillah" lyric in "Bohemian Rhapsody"; "The Prophet's Song" from the same record in 1975; and "Mustapha" from 1979 (Mustafa, or "the chosen" is one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad). What I loved about Freddie, aside from his superb voice, was the showmanship with which he led the band onstage. He was important for his talent, not for his identity. This for me was an early example of what I would later come to know as faithful witness. I loved him for his music and only later came to know about his heritage as a Zoroastrian of Indian descent. That, for me, is also the best sense of Christian mission, to express your Christianity through the poetry of your lives.

A second reason why the lyrics are relevant is the difficulty in being a Muslim in contemporary North America. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism are not seen as religions of violence by Christians, and Christians rarely see their own Christianity as a religion of violence. In the case of Buddhism, people usually have preconceived notions of Buddhism as a religion of peace. In class, I often bring out the cover of Michael Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer's edited collection, *Buddhist Warfare*, with its picture of a novice in robes holding a handgun, to disabuse them of that notion. All of our religions are religions of peace and violence, but it is Islam that is usually seen only through the lens of violence and fear.

Often, it is the satirists who understand things that the mainstream media does not. For the case of Islam, a particularly delightful example comes from Stephen Colbert where, in a segment titled "Radical Muslim Snacks," he examines the "threat" that *halal* ("permissible") food brings to non-Muslims.¹

A plea, here, to Christians to speak out when those in your community malign us, just as we Muslims must speak out when those in our community malign you. Without naming names (I am a Canadian, and we Canadians are nothing if not polite), there are a number of people in the Christian tradition who have said hateful things about Islam and Muslims. This certainly cannot help the cause of hospitality.

We can be seen in conflict and competition, and we have been in both conflict and competition in our history and our present as Christians and Muslims. The Great Commission for you and the Qur'anic teaching on *da'wa* or calling people to Islam for us are certainly in competition. It is because of those commandments in our traditions that we are the two largest religious traditions in the world. But we can also be in cooperation with each other, being in what the Catholic Church describes as a culture of dialogue. I have learned the most about Catholic perspectives on this from my friend and Jesuit colleague, Fr. Thomas Michel. About this dialogue, Tom wrote:

. . . the focal question is not whether the church should be proclaiming the Gospel or engaged in dialogue, but rather whether Christians are actually sharing life with their neighbors of other faiths. The basic distinction is not between being a church in dialogue or one that proclaims the Gospel, but rather the option of being a church that is following the Spirit's lead to partake humanly in life with others, and thus constantly engaged in dialogue, witness, and proclamation, or else that of being a church that is closed in on itself and exists in a self-imposed ghetto with little concern for and involvement with people of other faiths with whom Christians share culture, history, citizenship, and common human destiny.

When people of various faiths live together—not simply cohabiting the same town but sharing life *together*—the question of dialogue or proclamation doesn't arise. When they work, study, struggle, celebrate, and mourn together and face the universal crises of injustice, illness, and death as one, they

don't spend most of their time talking about doctrine. Their focus is on immediate concerns of survival, on taking care of the sick and needy, on communicating cherished values to new generations, on resolving problems and tensions in productive rather than in destructive ways, on reconciling after conflicts, on seeking to build more just, humane, and dignified societies.²

I return to this culture of dialogue later in my reflection.

Islam is a post-Christian religion. I mention that not to state what is obvious to readers, that Islam comes chronologically after Christianity, but that Muslims have to account for Christians in a way that Christians do not have to account for Islam and Muslims. So this is one difference between our discussions of Islam as compared to the discussions of other religions. Unlike Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist texts, for example, the Qur'an mentions Mary and Jesus, as well as other figures from the New Testament such as John the Baptist and Zechariah. In fact, Mary is mentioned more by name in the Qur'an (34 times) than she is in the New Testament (19 times). The story of the virgin birth is mentioned in the Qur'an (Chapter 19, The Chapter of Mary). Jesus is named in 15 chapters (and 93 verses) of the Qur'an. More to the point, 11 times he is referred to as *al-massihyah*, Arabic for the Hebrew, *moshiach*, the messiah, which becomes the Christ in Greek.

I mention this because at the University of Toronto, I had the extraordinary privilege of being mentored by Will Oxtoby and Wilfred Cantwell Smith. I'll mention Will at the end of my reflection, but I need to acknowledge here, as I do every day, my debt to Wilfred and Muriel Smith for teaching me as much about Christianity as they taught me about Islam. On the intertwined relationship between us, Christians and Muslims, Wilfred wrote this in 1977:

Christians throughout their history have been *muslim* (in the literal meaning of that term; they have consecrated themselves to God's will and truth) as best they have been able to discern how to be so; in the highest sense to which in the best light of their intellect and conscience they could rise. Muslims throughout theirs have been *Christian* (in the literal meaning of that; they have been followers and reverers of Christ) as best they have been able to discern how to be so; in the highest sense to which in the best light of *their* intellect and conscience they could rise. And if it be retorted that Muslims have not been Christian in the *true* sense of that word, or that Christians have not been *muslim* in the true sense of that, then a possible riposte might in turn be that also relatively few Christians have been Christian in the true sense, or Muslims muslim . . .

. . . the historiography of the Islamic-Christian encounter will be moved to a new level when we have learned to see it as the intertwining destiny of human beings whose relation to

God has for now fourteen centuries taken these two classes of forms.

The religious history of the world is the history of *us*. Some of us have been Muslims, some Christians. Our common history has been what it has been, in significant part because of this fact. Yet it is a common history for all that; and cannot be properly understood otherwise.

And if that be true of the past fourteen centuries, how much more so of the coming fourteen.³

In 2007, based out of Jordan, a number of Muslim scholars, clerics, and intellectuals issued a call to Christian leaders with the publication of the document *A Common Word Between Us and You*.⁴ That document calls Christians and Muslims into dialogue based on the two great commandments in each tradition, found for example in Mark 12:28–32, love of God and love of one's neighbour. It is instructive for us to remember that when Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment, he repeats the words of the *shema*, Deuteronomy 6:4, "Here O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." This verse is incredibly helpful to me when speaking to Muslim audiences to address Muslim misconceptions of Christianity. Some Muslims mistake the Triune God with the polytheism of three gods. Of course, this isn't true, and although Christian faith *is* Trinitarian, it is anchored in the same unity of God that Muslims know from the *shahada*, "there is no god but God." To be sure, we Muslims and Christians both get this from the Jewish tradition.

Mark is my favourite Gospel, and as a Muslim, one of my practices is to read it each year during the Lenten season to help me become more familiar with Jesus, who as mentioned above is an important prophet for Muslims. One of the most puzzling stories in Mark is the Syro-Phoenician woman.

Those seven short lines (Mark 7:24–30) vexed me from the first time I read them as an undergraduate student in English translation, and again when I read them in Greek as a graduate student:

From there [Jesus] arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed (Mark 7:24–30 NKJV).

The woman asks not for help for her, but for her daughter. She is in a triple category of being “othered”: she is a woman, a foreigner, and a non-Jew. Jesus comes not for her or her kind, but for the chosen, the children. The only way I could make sense of this was through one of my teachers at the University of Toronto, the Mennonite scholar Bill Klassen. This passage reflects Jesus as God with a twinkle in his eye, who with the omniscience of God knows what the woman knows and knows what she is going to say before she is able to say it. While this story is sometimes used as an example of hospitality, with great temerity, let me suggest a different reading. Don’t think of this in the context of hospitality; instead think of it in the context of mission and pedagogy. I learned this interpretation from Fr. Elias Mallon. He said that we read this as docetics, who think of Jesus only in his divine nature. We forget also the full humanity of Jesus. What if we heard this as Jesus learning his role from the foreign, non-Jewish woman? That it is the woman who teaches Jesus. That he is come for all, not just the chosen. Or to echo a song by the Canadian singer, Bruce Cockburn,⁵ 1991’s “Cry of a Tiny Babe,” written in my hometown of Toronto:

There are others who know about this miracle birth
The humblest of people catch a glimpse of their worth
For it isn’t to the palace that the Christ child comes
But to shepherds and street people, hookers and bums
And the message is clear if you have ears to hear
That forgiveness is given for your guilt and your fear

If mission were ever to “work” on me, it would be because of the theology in the lines above. And more importantly, it would be because of the Christian hospitality that I have experienced.

At Loyola Marymount University, we have some fifty Muslim students, who attend because of the excellent reputation for both education and social justice in Jesuit and Marymount colleges. Our past president, Fr. Robert Lawton, has spoken of the value that non-Catholic students (including not just other Christians, but members of other religious traditions, as well as atheists) have in Catholic universities. At our Mass of the Holy Spirit in 2008, the traditional beginning to our fall term, Fr. Lawton said this in his homily:

Non-Catholics and nonbelievers are not here at the university simply because we need you to pay our bills or raise our grades or SAT scores. We want you here for a deeper reason. By helping us to doubt, you help us get closer to a deeper understanding of our God, this life, and this world we share.

Muslim students can help us to understand more about faith, and we should recruit them to our schools because they can help us to be the best that we can be.

Many of us Muslims have heard the proclamation of the Gospels. Some of us have even read them in Greek. The key here is not only to proclaim the gospel, but to live it out. That’s what Fr. Michel spoke of so eloquently in the

passage I quoted earlier about the culture of dialogue. I only wish that more people would read the New Testament and discover the Jesus, the Christ, found therein. Let me quote my favourite lines from the New Testament, from Matthew's Gospel. And as I read these words, I am reminded by Jack Miles that the "you" in the Greek text, when Jesus is speaking, is not the singular you, the individual Christian, but the plural you, the Church. This is the parable of the Great Banquet:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me (Matthew 25:31–46 NKJV).

I feel the need here, again, to confess, confess the terror that I sometimes feel when I read these words and am reminded at how often I fail to live out what Jesus commands us. Then again, perhaps I wasn't invited to do this reflection as a means to proclaim the gospel but to write about Islam.

We are alike in many ways, we Muslims and Christians. While we are both Western, we are also deeply Eastern. I would argue that at its beginnings, Christianity is not at all a Western religion but, like Judaism before it and Islam after it, a deeply Eastern, or Oriental religion. To help my students to make the connections between Christian and Muslim conceptions of prayer and fasting, especially during the times of Ramadan and Lent, I use an article in the October 23, 2008, edition of the *New York Review of Books*, titled "The Egyptian Connection," where William Dalrymple reviewed the work of Michelle Brown on the Lindisfarne Gospels.⁶ Illustrated around 700, they are a treasure of religious art. In 950 a gloss in Old English was added to the Latin text, providing the first English translation of the gospels. Of these gospels, Dalrymple wrote:

Michelle Brown demonstrates convincingly how the same Coptic and Eastern Christian manuscripts that influenced the

Lindisfarne Gospels also influenced the work of early Islamic painters and calligraphers. The fascinating point that emerges from her book is that, to a considerable extent, both the art and sacred calligraphy of Anglo-Saxon England and that of early Ummayyad Islam grew at the same time out of the same East Mediterranean culture compost and common Coptic models.

I for one had no idea until I read Brown's book that Northumbrian, Celtic, and Byzantine monks all used to pray on decorated prayer carpets, known as *oratorii*, just as Muslim and certain Eastern Christian churches have always done, and still do. She also demonstrates how these prayer mats influenced the "carpet pages" of abstract geometric ornament which are such a feature both of Insular and early Islamic sacred texts.

All of this is a reminder of just how much early Islam drew from ascetic forms of Christianity that originated in the Byzantine Levant but whose influence spread both to the Celtic north and the Arabian south. The theology of the Desert Fathers was deeply austere, with much concentration on judgment and damnation, a concern that they passed on to the Irish monks:

The space of air is choked by a wild mass
of [Satan's] treacherous attendants . . .
The day of the Lord, most righteous King of Kings, is at hand:
a day of anger and vindication, of darkness and of cloud . . .
a day also of distress, of sorrow and sadness,
in which the love and desire of women will cease
and the striving of men, and the desire of this world.⁷

There is much in the Koran—notably its graphic hell scenes and emphasis on Godly Judgment—that, though off-putting to many modern Western readers, would have been quite familiar both to a Desert Father and a monk on Iona. Today many commentators in the US and Europe view Islam as a religion very different from and indeed hostile to Christianity. Yet in their roots the two are closely connected, the former growing directly out of the latter and still, to this day, embodying many early Christian practices lost in Christianity's modern Western incarnation.

Just as the Celtic monks used prayer carpets for their devotions, so the Muslim form of prayer with its prostrations derives from the older Eastern Christian tradition that is still practiced today in pewless churches across the Levant. The Sufi Muslim tradition carried on directly from the point at which the Desert Fathers left off, while Ramadan is in fact nothing more than an Islamicization of Lent, which in the

Eastern Christian churches still involves a grueling all-day fast. . . . Certainly if a monk from seventh-century Lindisfarne or Egypt were to come back today it is probable that he would find much more that was familiar in the practices and beliefs of a modern Muslim Sufi than he would with, say, a contemporary American evangelical. Yet this simple truth has been lost by our tendency to think of Christianity as a Western religion, rather than the thoroughly Oriental faith it actually is. Because of this, we are apt to place Celtic monks, Coptic Desert Fathers, and Muslim Sufis in very different categories. But as the art of this period so clearly demonstrates, we are wrong to do so. These apparently different worlds were all surprisingly closely interlinked; indeed in intellectual terms perhaps more so in the eighth century than in today's nominally globalized world.⁸

We can use the metaphor of hospitality, and that is a good one. Parents entrust their children to us as students. If we accept them into our schools, into our care, we have a duty to protect them, not to violate them. Another useful metaphor is that of the neighbour. We are neighbours to each other. That is a very important metaphor. Again, I think of my teacher, Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Someone asked Wilfred, "Professor Smith, are you Christian?" If the question had been "are you *a* Christian," the answer would have been a very simple "yes." Instead, Wilfred did what he always did when asked a question. He paused, repeated the question, and thought about his answer. "Am I Christian," he said. "Maybe, I was, last week. On a Tuesday. At lunch. For about an hour. But if you really want to know, ask my neighbour."

Let me close with a reflection on the other mentor who I mentioned, Professor Willard Oxtoby of blessed memory. In addition to being an academic, he was, like Wilfred Cantwell Smith, an ordained Protestant minister who also represented an inclusive view of Christianity. Will ended one of his books, *The Meaning of Other Faiths*, with the following words, and it is with the words of my teacher that I would like to conclude:

At no time have I ever thought of myself as anything other than a Christian. At no time have I ever supposed that God could not adequately reach out to me, to challenge and to comfort, in my own Christian faith and community. Yet at no time have I ever supposed that God could not also reach out to other persons in their traditions and communities as fully and as satisfyingly as he has to me in mine. At no time have I ever felt I would be justified in seeking to uproot an adherent of another tradition from his faithful following of that tradition. My Christianity—including my sense of Christian ministry—has commanded that I be open to learn from the faith of others.

It is this openness that Professor Oxtoby mentioned that I would hope that we all have. That those of us who are religious believe that God works not just in our own communities of faith, but in all communities of faith.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My thanks to Stephen Graham and Frances Pacienza for inviting me to participate in the Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices project.

ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/372154/january-25-2011/threatdown---radical-muslim-snacks--flying-robot-drones---coked-up-vacuums>.
2. Thomas F. Michel, *A Christian View of Islam: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan Omar (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 21.
3. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), 263-4.
4. Available at <http://www.acommonword.com/>.
5. I need to disclose here that as a Canadian, I am required by Canadian law in any publication outside of Canada to mention by name at least one Canadian artist.
6. Those unfamiliar with the Lindisfarne Gospels may learn more about them from The British Library Board: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/lindisfarne/home.html>.
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Muslim Studies in a Christian Theological School: The Muslim Studies Program at Emmanuel College in Toronto

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ABSTRACT: This essay examines the development of a Muslim Studies program within Emmanuel College, a Canadian Christian theological school. The program has grown from a desire within the college to explore meaningfully the diversity associated with its social location in downtown Toronto and to participate responsibly in the important work of inter-religious dialogue. The story of the program's development is placed within an analysis of at least three areas offering challenges to the effort. Faculty members face significant obstacles in reshaping a curriculum within theological education that can address contemporary contexts of both Church and culture in a manner that includes intentional engagement with religious diversity. Within Christian history, a wide variety of methodological approaches have been developed to understand the nature of religious diversity in relation to Christianity. Each offers its own challenges to attempts to shape responsible encounters between Christianity and other world religions. Finally, the rich diversity within Islam existing within the social context of Toronto creates interesting challenges for a program in Muslim Studies intending to take expressions of religious faith seriously. The essay also examines wide-ranging rationales for why a Christian theological school would attempt to face these challenges in order to begin a program designed to provide educational opportunities for Muslims. In the final pages, the three major components of the program are described.

Full text may be accessed
only on the University of Toronto website.

(<http://utpjournals.metapress.com/content/g2m463pg47206427/?p=6efbaeebd51647b8b9e7006083ccf651&pi=5>)

This article originally appeared in *Toronto Journal of Theology* 28, no. 2 (2012): 235–54. Reprinted with permission from University of Toronto Press.
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