Convocation Prayer 2013

Holder of our lives, we gather in this place from many places, bringing with us
• Stories that, when told and received with grace, may reveal the sacred
• Worldviews casting a rainbow view of what is and what is possible
• Longings that have the capacity to strengthen and to shatter relationships

Power which,
    Surrendered
    Shared
    And stewarded . . .
could transform our living on behalf of fuller life for all.

Holder of our past, present, and future, challenge and bless us as we join our lives with this community
Generations of hope, thousands of dreams, breath-taking knowledge, and lofty ideals fill the air that we
breathe. In gratitude for all that is here,
• For the love that has brought us and sustains us;
• For the mentors who model intentional, generative, and thoughtful living and the care-givers who provide daily bread and human comforts;
• For the beautiful, grand, cozy, simple, inspiring, and simple spaces in which we work and play;
• For the privilege of time to ponder;
• For differences to uncover and experiences that teach us to respect persons, thoughts, perspectives, and visions that we have not yet even imagined;
• And for the opportunity to shatter tightly held misconceptions that hold us the whole world captive.

We give deep thanks.

In return for much, much is required – and so, at the beginning of another year, we ask:
• Give us insight to perceive the fear and the courage hidden behind shy smiles
• Teach us to withhold sharp words and hasty judgment in times of stress
• Bind us through shared experiences and new insights into a community that respects and honors our members through just structures, flexible policies and humane practices.

Holder of our collective past, present, and future, press back the walls and borders we construct around our communities. Dismantle our fear of loss, shame, hurt, or even death that together we might live full and generous lives.
• Restrain the pride that dehumanizes or infantilizes those who have not had the educational or material resources that have graced our lives.
• Give us the courage to learn from one another when we are tempted to debate and shame.
• Tear away the blinders which allow us to imagine that our lives are normative and our wants paramount.
• Save us from “conscience laundering” – which substitutes self-congratulatory charity for rigorous and transformative
• Enlarge our capacity for love which overcomes greed and envy

Holder of our shared past, present, and future, shape and mold each interaction that together our contribution to the world will be one of blessing.

Reverend Dr. Linda Morgan-Clement
Chaplain and Director of Interfaith Campus Ministry
Dear friends, alumni, and family of Interfaith Campus Ministries,

I am honored to share this annual report of Interfaith Campus Ministries from 2013-2014. OICM offers programs and services that teach and support intergroup dialogue, community building, religious literacy, and service and social justice. These support the College’s core values of Education in the Liberal Arts Tradition, Community of Learners, Social and Intellectual Responsibility, and Diversity and Inclusivity. The Interfaith Ministry contributes directly to the graduate qualities of Integrative and Collaborative Inquiry, Dynamic Understanding of the Liberal Arts, Effective Communication, Global Engagement and Respect for Diversity, and Civic and Social Responsibility.

This year was one of those when life gives the opportunity to look back in order to look forward. Since its establishment, thanks to the foresight and vision of outgoing president, Henry Copeland and Hank Luce and the Luce foundation, the ministry has grown from a vision to a fully established suite of people, programs, services and space. A one-woman office charged to wonder about and create an interfaith ministry that would compliment, challenge, and nurture the College of Wooster – has become a full-time Chaplain and Assistant Chaplain, a part-time campus rabbi, and affiliate staff from the Diocese of Cleveland and InterVarsity, International. A cluster of individual student organizations is now a “community of communities.” Students, faculty, staff, and community members who participate in OICM are truly diverse in terms of religious affiliation, racial background, country of origin, socio-economic class, gender identity, academic interests, and approaches to constructing meaningful and purposeful lives. While students are the heart of the ministry, we understand that the continuing community of faculty and staff creates the learning and mentoring structure that holds students and challenges them to become more than they might have imagined. The suite of programs and services integrates and challenges both our students and the continuing community that is the College of Wooster.

The world is constantly changing and certainly the ways in which we are called to serve and live have changed since the college was founded in 1866, since you or I were born, and even since this phase of the ministry was begun in 1996. All of this necessitates an open-mind coupled with a strategic vision that is born out of a respectful sense of history, awareness of the current context, and creative energy that is undergirded by sustainable community and structures, and the on-going human, physical, and fiscal resources that hold all of this together and form the community of communities. This report is our annual offering of a few snapshots of the rich and full spiritual and religious life, on and off of Wooster’s campus, which is OICM today. It is also a reflection of current challenges for the ministry and a renewed invitation to support and join us as you are able.

I am deeply grateful to the many partners who come alongside of OICM to join in our mission, give generously of their time, energy, expertise, thoughtful advice, financial support, and love. As always, the students, staff and faculty, who participate in our programs or just sit in the beanbag room, overwhelm us with a sense of hope. I include those of you who read this report and share it with others in my heartfelt gratitude. As always we welcome your feedback, visits, and support of any kind.

Respectfully yours,

Reverend Linda J. Morgan-Clement, DMin.
Chaplain and Director of Interfaith Campus Ministry
The College of Wooster

On the Cover: Group photo of “Asian Feminist Theology” class at Songdhammakkayani monastery, Nakhonpathom Thailand
Daring to Talk about Religion at Dinner

A common rule of etiquette is to remember that polite dinner conversation carefully avoids religion as a topic. Recent media articles reinforce the risky nature of religious conversation and on a campus that is culturally secular—students of faith may shy away from faith talk. However, research has made abundantly clear that emerging adults from any or no faith tradition hungry for engaged and honest conversation that allows for exploration of both similarities and differences within and among those who practice religion.

So every other week Wooster’s interfaith scholars gather to eat and talk about religion. Invited to apply as incoming first year students, 6-7 scholars are invited to make the commitment to meet with peers and a member of OICM every other week for two years. This past year students who call themselves, Unitarian Universalist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Evangelical Christian, and Jewish shared powerful stories from their own lives that reflected on the theme of inclusion and exclusion. Listening to one another they were able to wrestle with questions about the relationship between hospitality and security for members; about growth in communities of similarity and those of difference, and even about our own country’s immigration policy or the value of a U.S. passport. By learning the vocabulary of a faith tradition, not their own—the scholars revisit the vocabulary of their own communities and traditions, looking for more depth and traditions that they may not have encountered before.

Whether we—at the dinner table, on a bus to—a visit to the Mosque, or walking across town to visit someone’s church—the interfaith scholars are practicing skills for interfaith dialogue and engagement while making friends that will last them a lifetime. The world is sorely in need of citizens who are religiously literate. Our scholars are one small way that Wooster is helping persons learn to talk about religion at the dinner table.
Reflecting to Learn
Jillian Yoder, Assistant Chaplain

This year, 61 students formed living/serving communities committed to serving partner organizations in the City of Wooster. While service experiences are often shared organically through community living in the WVN program houses, guided reflection sessions bring volunteers together to ask questions, draw connections, and think critically about their role in the communities served.

Guided reflection conversations begin with something that students have in common, whether the shared experience of a group, or a poem, story, or film clip to unite students working with a range of organizations. Gradually, more open-ended, exploratory questions are presented. Through the lens of their experience in service, students consider different values, assumptions, and beliefs – sharing what has surprised them, and what has challenged them, encouraging awareness of the ways that service impacts the way they view the world.

Time dedicated to reflection allows students to achieve a depth of conversation not often afforded by the busyness of their lives. They ask questions of one another, curious about the ways that a common challenge might impact different organizations. Often, knowledge from the classroom is shared, brought to light in new ways through meaningful experience.

Though formal reflection may occupy just an hour each month for students, our hope is that rich, reflective dialogue and learning continues – not only within the WVN houses, but in classrooms, campus organizations, and the greater Wooster community.
Facilitating religious/spiritual growth and educating and mentoring for social justice is increasingly challenging AND increasingly critical given the speed, complexity, and diversity of the national and global context.

To meet the College’s mission of preparing students to become leaders of character and influence in an interdependent global community, OICM staff persons need to have the ability to apply a sophisticated understanding of multiple religious traditions, student development, cross-cultural and inter-group dynamics to the ministry. They also possess skills in pastoral care, mentoring, group process, and program development. Without these essential human resources the ministry will be seriously compromised.

Overholt itself is literally in need of bricks and mortar. Built in 1874, the building is one of a very few distinctive “stick style Victorian” homes still in existence. It is currently on the National Registry of Historic Structures. The building retains its woodwork in original finish upstairs and still has its walnut “flying” stairway and intricate gingerbread decoration on its porches. Lack of repair over the years has resulted in a number of expensive structural concerns inside and outside of the house. In addition, inadequate regular maintenance (e.g., installation of new floors and furniture, fresh paint) has resulted in an increasingly dilapidated appearance. More than aesthetics, deteriorating space makes it difficult for OICM to fulfill its basic mission. A safe, welcoming, and adequate space is more and more important as the interfaith work, difficult conversations and personal reflection necessitates comfortable, private, and welcoming public spaces.

We welcome your suggestions, support, and advice as we wrestle with these challenges. If you are interested in more detail, please feel free to be in touch with the College’s development office, and particularly Keith DiDonato or Kevin Lowry to receive our strategic vision.
Baccalaureate Prayer 2014

Giver of peace, we pause in the midst of our overflowing lives to give thanks.
Take a hold of all that has filled these past days, and weeks –
• looking forward and gazing back
• Exams, papers, and final things
• Farewells, tears, laughter, memories, and packing
• Mulching, cooking, cleaning, and mowing
• Anxiety, uncertainty, and the satisfaction of accomplishment
And settle us into the trust that enough is enough – that we might open our hands and still our breath.

Binder of community, countless persons have played a part in leading to this weekend. In our gratitude, may we be mindful of the thousands of ways that our lives are bound – one to another.
Across the generations, we remember
• alumni,
• emeriti faculty,
• donors and housekeepers,
• grandparents and groundskeepers
• staff members, sisters and brothers, coaches, and trustees;
As we gather their memories we acknowledge the ways that these have enriched our lives, this place, and our community.

While the limitations of our imaginations and the blinders in our vision often leave us oblivious to the impact of our lives on others,
• Remind us of the fragile web of life, which is so much more than human – that we might commit ourselves to step lightly.
• Remind us of the many persons on this tiny globe whose lives are threatened by violence and lack of basic needs, that we might set aside the discontent of greed.
• Remind us of those whose choices are limited by our freedom – impoverished by our plenty—and of the responsibility which comes with education, opportunity, and freedom.

Beyond the Wooster bubble, there is so much more to the world. We ask that the friendships and groups, misunderstandings, classes, struggles and conversations, failures, and achievements give to our graduates
• empathy for strangers,
• compassion for those who grieve
• wisdom that sees beyond self-interest
• courage to act morally and choose justice
• Humility and gratitude which overcome greed and pride
that they may add more to the world than they take.
We lift all our hopes, our histories, and our lives to you. With deepest gratitude we pray. Amen.

Reverend Dr. Linda Morgan-Clement
Chaplain and Director of Interfaith Campus Ministry
Office of Interfaith Campus Ministries
Staff for 2013-2014

Linda Morgan-Clement ........... Chaplain and Director of Interfaith Campus Ministry
Jillian Yoder ...................... Assistant Chaplain
Celeste Tannenbaum ............. Jewish Life Coordinator
Nathaniel Addington ............. Newman Catholic Campus Minister
Mike Greer ....................... InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Staff

The Advocate is the bi-annual publication of the Office of Interfaith Campus Ministries for friends and alumni with an interest in the Spiritual and Religious life of the campus.

To subscribe, email: alumni@wooster.edu or contact the Office of Alumni Relations.

To read this or other issues of the Advocate, please find PDFs at:
http://www.wooster.edu/students/oicm/publications

Key acronyms:
OICM (Office of Interfaith Campus Ministries)
CDGE (Center for Diversity and Global Engagement)

OICM Mission Statement
The Office of Interfaith Campus Ministries fosters religious, spiritual, ethical, and moral growth for students, staff, and faculty at The College of Wooster. As a community of communities and as seekers after meaning, we wrestle individually and communally with questions of ultimacy. Interfaith Campus Ministries supports and encourages the development of character and commitment required to be agents of just and peaceful transformation in the world.