

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Serving Seekers

BY JER

“What religion are you anyway?” This question was recently asked of me, not out of rudeness, but out of complete curiosity. I looked down at the yin yang pendant my spiritual guru gave me. Next to it was a Buddha charm once worn by a friend who no longer physically exists in this realm. I responded with, “Well, I walk many paths.” The asker moved on.

I am grateful that I have spent over twenty years of my life learning from diverse systems of faith. I did not know that opening my heart this way would one day assist me in becoming the University’s first interfaith chaplain. This is a role that I deeply cherish.

I serve seekers. Many of our students, like countless other young people, are interested in exploring spirituality while also piecing together their own paths-- individualized practices based on various traditions. My friend, Vanessa Gomez Brake, Humanist Chaplain and Associate Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life at University of Southern California, was recently interviewed in Religion News Service. The article, focused on how Humanist chaplains can “guide nonreligious students on [a] quest for meaning,” mentions how Humanist chaplains are “prepared to handle Gen Z’s tendency to fashion a highly personal spiritual practice out of an assortment of faiths and spiritual backgrounds.” It warms my heart that Vanessa can be there to help students during their spiritual seeking. This is what chaplains at all universities should do. No matter our own religious or spiritual identities, we must assist students who are seeking and who are actively forming a spiritual self.

Personally, I advise and participate in several student spiritual groups, and what I have found is that many of the members are working towards their own definition of the divine. Sometimes this definition involves Jesus, Buddha, Allah, Yahweh, Krishna, The Great Mother, or another sacred name. Other times, it involves humanity. Regardless, the personalized

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BEST WISHES TO:

Rev. Dr. Katrina Brooks (Assistant Chaplain), who has resigned her position on June 30, 2022. She is relocating to Florida to be closer to family. Chaplain Brooks has been a huge asset to our community, and she will be greatly missed.

Serving Seekers (cont'd)

path being created is one that encourages looking inward and outward. In a culture in which religious identification among those forty and under is in serious decline, I am so pleased that our students see the value of spirituality and spiritual community.

It is not lost on me that I have been given a great gift. I am trusted to listen to our students' stories, provide resources for them, and let each know that I support them in their searching. When students ask me about my own faith tradition, I let them know that I find comfort in Buddhism and Taoism and that I am inspired by many paths to Oneness. I make no judgments about their own spiritual identifications.

In our University's journey to inclusive excellence, we must remember religious diversity. We must remember that our student body is made up of souls from different religious and spiritual identities, and as members of the faculty and staff, I believe it is our duty to acknowledge and to celebrate the beautiful ways that our students are seeking the divine. May we always keep an open mind and an open heart, and may compassion and love be present as we celebrate our diverse community of seekers.

Sympathies, Concerns, and Congrats

Congratulations to:

- **Jessica Collins** (Advancement) and **Dr. Sean Collins** (Exercise Physiology) on the birth of their son. Dorian Rhys Collins was born on June 25, 2022. He weighed 6 lbs, 6 oz and was 19 inches. He joins big brother Kiernan, who Jessica reports is absolutely in love with his new little brother. (See Dorian's photo at right.)
- **Shanaya Young** ('22, grad student) on the birth of her twin sons on May 26, 2022. Henry Slade was 7 lbs, 1 oz., 19 inches and Robert Levi was 7 lbs, 1 oz, 19 inches.

Our sympathies are extended to:

- The family, friends, and colleagues of the **Rev. Dr. Diane Vie** (co-rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church) who died on June 15, 2022. A memorial service will be held at St. Paul's on Friday, July 15, 2022 at 1 p.m. The service will be live-streamed via a link on the St. Paul's website.

Dates to Remember

During each semester you can find information about upcoming Spiritual Life activities here

The Chaplain's Corner is a newsletter published by the Spiritual Life Center (SLC) at the University of Lynchburg. We share campus concerns and updates, spiritual life events and activities, and words for the journey.

If you have a joy or concern you'd like to share, reply to this message, email the SLC office - spirituallife@lynchburg.edu, or call 434.544.8348. We only share with your permission.

Current and previous issues are on the SLC page of the University website - go to Link in signature (www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life) and click on "Newsletter."

For more information about the Spiritual Life Center, including info on student spiritual life groups, go to our webpage - link in the email signature. You can also visit our Linkt.ree (link is in email).

