

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## Fostering Spiritual Diversity

BY AMY

April is a month filled with big religious holidays. Members of our campus community have celebrated Passover, Buddha's Birthday, Easter Sunday, and Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), to name but a few. Later this week, Muslim members of our community will bring Ramadan to a close with Eid al-Fitr, a tremendous celebratory feast that marks the end of a month of fasting. These holidays remind us that Lynchburg is a much more religiously and spiritually diverse place than we might realize. These observances also invite us to explore the significance of that diversity on our campus.

In a Courageous Conversation held last month, student leaders, faculty, and staff members gathered to share our stories of spiritual diversity on campus. We noted that our spiritual lives are a key part of our identity and shape our plans for the future. We also realized that the Spiritual Life staff has done a great job of creating supportive and welcoming spaces for so many of us. At the same time, we discovered that it is hard to talk about religion or to share our spiritual identities outside of those spaces. We are afraid that we will offend and anger others if we talk about it in the caf. We are afraid that our peers in the residence halls will judge us. We are afraid that if it comes up in the classroom, we will be the victims of discrimination or a complaint might be filed against us. In short, there are some real barriers to fostering spiritual diversity and interfaith cooperation.

Even so, we know that we want and need to overcome those barriers. Eboo Patel, a sociologist of religion who works to create interfaith awareness and cooperation on college campuses, reports that even though "70 percent of college students said that they believed bridging religious divides was important ... fewer than 15 percent participated in any kind of interfaith dialogue."

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by Dr. Merrill Willis

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

# Fostering Spiritual Diversity (cont'd.)

The good news is that we can change that. Earlier this year, the Office of Equity and Inclusion, the Spiritual Life Center, and the Religious Studies department began an initiative called “Spiritual Practices in Lynchburg: An Experiential Journey.” Thanks to funding from the Council of Independent Colleges, we are working to create meaningful experiences of religious diversity inside and outside of the classroom. Please consider being part of that journey! For more information, you can reach out to one of us in Religious Studies, in Spiritual Life, or in the Office of Equity and Inclusion. While you’re at it, join us next Monday for the Shumate lecture with Dr. Brahmachari Sharan, the Hindu spiritual advisor at Georgetown University. He will be speaking about “The Spirituality of Difference” at 7 p.m. in the Snidow Chapel. I hope to see you there!



UNIVERSITY OF LYNCHBURG SPIRITUAL LIFE CENTER AND  
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF LYNCHBURG PRESENT

**DR. BRAHMACHARI  
SHARAN**

*See details in box at right*

## Sympathies, Concerns, and Congrats

Our sympathies are extended to:

- **Tracey Garrett** (Business Office) and her family on the death of her mother-in-law, Peggy Ann Garrett. Link to obituary in email.

## Dates to Remember

Sundays at 11 a.m.

Worship with  
CHURCH OF THE COVENANT  
in Snidow Chapel

Sundays at 4:30 p.m.

Weekly ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS  
in Snidow Chapel

Sunday, April 23

4 p.m. - First Christian Church  
(3109 Rivermont Ave.)  
TURNER WARREN LECTURE  
by Dr. Brahmachari Sharan

Monday, April 24

11:30 a.m. - East Room  
LUNCH AND DISCUSSION  
with Dr. Brahmachari Sharan

Monday, April 24

7 p.m. - Snidow Chapel  
SHUMATE LECTURE  
by Dr. Brahmachari Sharan

Thursday, April 27

7 p.m. - Schewel 231  
CAKE CHAT: Death Cafe