

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

I Contain Multitudes

BY STEVE

Part of the ritual of meeting people for the first time is to share what I do for a living. I'll say something like, "I teach at the University of Lynchburg" or "I teach philosophy and religious studies." Typically I receive one of two responses. One refers to personal experience: this person has studied here or knows someone who has. Or they took a philosophy or religious studies class when they were an undergraduate. The second response bubbles up out of curiosity. What exactly goes on in a philosophy class? Does religious studies have anything to do with being religious? Sometimes they will share that they read the Bible regularly or practice yoga. One thing leads to another, and suddenly I am being asked if I am religious or what religion I practice. These are questions I never know how to answer in a way that feels right to me.

A large part of why I find these questions difficult to answer is that a specific response is presumed by the questioner. If I were to answer that, yes, I am religious, then the follow-up question requests to know which religion. And, for me at least, that is the horn of the dilemma. There's no convenient label that adequately describes what I do. Labels are like boxes, and I am a religious square peg (I'm switching metaphors in midair) that does not really fit neatly anywhere. For a long time I tried to embrace the label of secularist, which skirted the issue of religion altogether. The problem with that label, ultimately, is that it is untrue. My use of this label seemed to suggest that I am only or always a secularist. But in fact regarding religion (and spirituality, for that matter), I am rarely if ever any one thing exclusively. My dilemma of being religious, of having a religious or spiritual identity that actually refers to me in some meaningful fashion, was described perfectly by the American poet Walt Whitman:

*Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)*

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by Dr. Steve Dawson

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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).

I Contain Multitudes (cont'd)

Inter-religious is one way to point to an ever-changing religious identity and the practices associated with that identity. In homage to Whitman I might say, somewhat playfully, that I am a *multitudianist*—a wild embrace of all that nourishes me. If you, dear reader, find this label useful, you are welcome to make it your own!

Food

The Office of Equity & Inclusion,
The Spiritual Life Center,
& The Center for Community Engagement
invite you to help stock the:

CAMPUS FOOD PANTRIES

WE ACCEPT DONATIONS OF
NON-PERISHABLE AND
CANNED FOODS. PULL-TOP
LIDS ARE PREFERRED.

SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION
REGARDING DONATIONS
OR ASSISTANCE



Food Pantries

Drop-off locations for our pantries are in locations all across campus. For details, click link in email. The three main pantries are in these locations:

- The SLC (500 Brevard St) - inside and outside
- Flynn Multicultural Center in Drysdale
- Hundley Hall phone booth inside Dell side door

Dates to Remember

Sundays at 4:30 p.m.
Weekly ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS
in Snidow Chapel

Thursday, November 3 - 6 p.m.
SOUND BATH WITH GREG BURNS
Hall Campus Center
Memorial Ballroom

Friday, November 4 - 2-4 p.m.
DOGGIES IN THE DELL

Rescheduled from October 31

Sympathies, Concerns, and Congrats

Our sympathies are extended to:

- Elyzabeth Benoit (first year, Front Royal, VA) on the death of her uncle.

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."