

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## Answering the "Hard" Questions

BY KATRINA

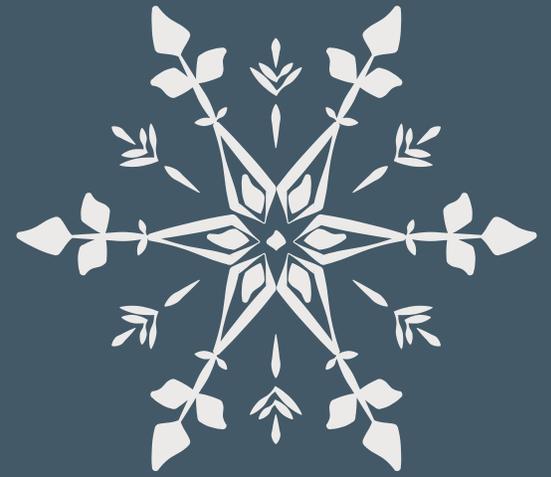
My spouse and I have taken youth to summer camp since 1985. In 1993 we found Passport Camps. Throughout the years Passport Camps had a feature in the evening worship service titled "Question of the Day." Camp staff would interview campers throughout the day to glean their response to the day's question, compile a video of responses, and show the video during the service. Regardless of the year, or the question, responses typically fell into two categories: profound and just plain silly. Both responses were appropriate and both were applauded as church groups cheered on their fellow youth group members and marveled at their ability to answer questions.

Over the years and even in different contexts, I found similar responses to questions. Depending on the question, and the experience with the question, responses varied from profound to silly. (If I had a dime for every "I don't know" response, I could be bankrolling the university.) What I came to understand is that "I don't know" typically means "I need more time to process" or "I need to get my words together so I don't embarrass myself," or even "Wow. You are asking my opinion? No one has ever asked my opinion before."

Being asked for your opinion is different from answering a question. Questions have quantitative or qualitative responses. Opinions are personal and vulnerable responses undergirded by the hope the opinion will be heard. Speaking out of a personal and vulnerable context is not easy. It is much easier to be defensive and reactive. Much easier to provide quantitative and qualitative data. Much easier to say, "I don't know" or remain quiet.

Every two years our university participates in a NSSE Survey. The survey asks questions about the student experience at University of Lynchburg. Essentially, the instrument is about belonging. Assessing belonging (or how one feels connected) matters. For universities and colleges, responses impact morale, graduation

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# Answering the "Hard" Questions (cont'd)

rates, student success, retention, and recruitment. The survey asks students for their opinion, and the expectation of students (and rightly so) is that the survey data will be taken into consideration and not dismissed. Optimally, the data is used to inform change.

The 2022 NSSE survey will open towards the end of February and I am hoping student participation is extraordinary. While I appreciate the NSSE Survey and others like it, what if we normalize asking students for their opinions, particularly about belonging? What if we model language by sharing our connection, our Lynchburg belonging story, with students? What if we encourage questions and cheer students on as they wrestle with what it means to honestly and vulnerably offer their opinion? Sure, sometimes the responses might be silly, or perhaps impossible, but sometimes student responses could be the catalyst that changes everything.

Sharing my opinion as a fan of hard questions,  
Katrina

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](mailto: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 - [www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life](http://www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life).

For a list of regularly scheduled fellowship group meetings, go to the Spiritual Life webpage and click on "Spiritual Organizations on Campus."

**Helpful Links on LinkTree at - SpiritualLifeCenter**

# Sympathies, Concerns, and Congrats

*Our sympathies are extended to:*

- **Dr. Eric Baldwin** (Student Development) on the death of his father, Ron Baldwin, on January 30, 2022.

# Dates to Remember

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

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Events this week include:

- TODAY at 3 p.m. - Keynote by Zyahna Bryant on "Equal Access for Students of Color and the Navigation of PWI's." (Virtual - [Link to join](#))

Friday, February 18  
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
SPIRITUAL LIFE POP-UP  
Topic: Winter Blues Remedy  
Drysdale 3rd Floor

**WELCOME BACK!!!!**  
**If you would like to join a student Spiritual Life group, or start a new one, please contact**  
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