

EMORY

OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF THE CHAPEL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE



Spring/Summer 2009

Weekly Religious Services

Christian:

**University Worship
Ecumenical Service**
Sundays, 11am
Cannon Chapel

Roman Catholic Mass
Sundays, 9am and 6pm
Cannon Chapel

Muslim:

Jumma Prayers
Fridays, 2:15-3pm
DUC 363

Jewish:

Hillel Shabbat Services
Fridays, 6:15 pm
DUC

**Emory Chabad Shabbat
Services**
Fridays, Varying Times
Chabad House

Hindu:

Pujas
Throughout the year

Office of Religious Life remains an active force on campus while undergoing transformations

60 Days, 14,000 Interactions

During September and October of 2008, there were more than **14,000** encounters between campus religious organizations and students. Events included the Catholic Center's biweekly masses and dinners, Evangelical Christian Fellowship's small groups, and Hillel's Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. Ramadan, the Muslim month of prayer and fasting occurred during this time and the Muslim Students' Association hosted 18 iftars, or break-fasts. Many were cosponsored with organizations such as the Evangelical Christian Fellowship, Arab Cultural Association, and supportive community members. Also, both the Indian Cultural Exchange and the Hindu Students Association hosted well-attended and brightly-colored celebrations of Diwali, an Indian celebration of the Festival of Lights.

Each opportunity provided the potential for positive interaction with students of

all faiths or non-faith. This was a record number of events, and illustrated the vitality of Emory's Religious Life.



Café Unity

Brooks Commons is currently undergoing renovations. The space is in the process of being outfitted with a sound system and the artwork has also been enhanced. There are plans to turn the space into a coffee bar, where Candler School of Theology and a variety of student organizations will program events each evening. Several nights each week, students will have an ideal space to study, gather together, and dialogue. Coffee and snacks will be available at minimal cost. Plans are to have the renovation completed by Spring 2010.

Emory Hires Full-Time Rabbi to serve as Campus Chaplain

During Fall 2008, Rabbi Victoria Armour-Hileman joined the Office of Religious Life's full-time staff. Armour-Hileman's position as Associate Dean of Religious Life and Jewish chaplain has enhanced Emory's connection with the Jewish community. She has added a unique perspective to discussions surrounding Jewish needs, and also advises the Inter-religious Council. She is passionate about teaching others how to productively dialogue and think about sensitive and emotionally-engaging issues.

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The Inter-religious Council leads bridge-building activities within the university and the community

Mission Statement

The mission of the Emory University Inter-Religious Council is to foster inter-religious conversation and create a safe space for affirming one's own tradition while understanding the religious practices and beliefs of others. We seek to build bridges through service, education and dialogue to promote a mindset for living peacefully in the global commu-

Active Faith: Religion and Human Rights in Atlanta

The Inter-religious Council hosted a panel discussing the role that religion plays in the fight for human rights in Atlanta and worldwide. The panel discussion featured four distinguished speakers, including Rabbi Alvin Sugarman, a Muslim Attorney, Khurram Baig, a local Christian pastor, Buddy Hoffman, and Emory Physics professor and Hindu thinker. Dr. P.V. Rao. Approximately seventy-five people, including students, faculty, and community members, attended the panel, which lasted about two hours. The Inter-religious Council hopes to continue the lecture series *Active Faith*, annually

Black-Jewish Passover Seder

The members of the Inter-religious Council attended a Black-Jewish Passover Seder in

April, just before the beginning of the Passover. The dinner was sponsored by Hillel, and was an insightful way to bring two distinct communities together, and to do so over a meal—a ritual that many religious traditions use to symbolize and to create unity.

Gurudwara Visit

In October 2008, the Inter-religious Council participated in a sacred site visit. Six members of Inter-religious Council, Hindu Students' Association, and other Emory University students attended prayer services at a gurudwara in Stone Mountain, Georgia. The group observed the Sikhs in their morning prayers (kitten), joined them for the midday meal, termed langar, and spoke with a senior member of the community to learn about basic principles of Sikhism.

Spring Break Seminar at the United Nations Church Center

Eight members of the inter-religious council attended a seminar in New York City hosted by the United Nations Church Center during March 2009. They visited a Buddhist temple in Chinatown, toured both a Sikh temple and community center in Queens, and engaged in dialogue with individuals of secular institutions, dialogue projects, and community leaders. It was an insightful experience for all and strengthened bonds and connections among the members of the group. They intend to continue to promote dialogue among Emory community members about challenging topics.

Café Unity

The Inter-religious Council organized three Café Unity's in collaboration with the Student Government Association, Emory as Place the Ethics and Servant Leadership Program, and .

The first was part of the annual Unity Month and included an evening of live entertainment, food, and dialogue about identity and experiences with other religious groups and , was held in the intimate setting in Brooks Commons. The entertainment represented a wide range of religious backgrounds and practices. Individuals performed Hindu prayers for peace, performed their Christian praise music, and others shared their Jewish nighttime rituals.

To promote dialogue among those attending, there were questions written on the back of each napkins, asking "How do you embrace other faith communities?" or "What is your favorite religious ritual?" or "What do you find challenging about your practices?" These questions provoked conversation among the performers and the participants.

The second event was part of Emory's PlaceFest and focused on environmental concerns. It included an open microphone for all those who wanted to share their insights. The final Café Unity of the year brought refugee struggles to consciousness, and included presentations from various relief organizations and from Colombian and Rwandan refugees.



Journeys of Reconciliation

Purpose

An interreligious project promoting relationships between Emory University and Communities around the world with a history of violence and exploitation.

At the program's heart is an affirmation that barriers of race, religion, nationality, gender, and class can, and should, be overcome.

History

In the last decade, the program has taken 27 journeys both domestically and internationally, including to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Mississippi Delta, South Africa, and India. This spring, students will travel to Cuba and in Montana to dialogue and act for peace.



Reflections from the Middle East

This past spring break, I traveled with the Inter Religious Council to New York in order to study immigration issues with the Church Center of the United Nations, led by Reverend Susan Henry-Crowe. This critical analysis of the various perspectives on immigration made me reflect to over a year ago to my first expedition with the Reverend when I was traveling in a group of fourteen through the Holy Land, studying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Looking at my choices over the past fifteen months, I realize the great effects the Journeys trip has had on my life. I suppose one could ask the rhetorical question of how visiting refugee camps, a Bedouin camp, Yad Vashem and meeting with organizations and individuals that have spent years trying to overcome the problems in the region cannot change one's perspective. It is true because no matter how much one can read about a situation, studying it is different from observing it and seeing people live it each day.

Although I had a wish to learn Arabic because I always regarded it as a beautiful language, my trip only heightened this passion to learn the language. While I was there, I wanted

to converse with the shop owner in the corner who sold tea and smiled as we walked by every day, the children in Jerusalem who carelessly ran through the streets playing soccer and the women in the Bedouin camp who humbly met with the women of our group to share their perspective. However, my inability to speak Arabic infringed my communication with these various individuals. Thus, when I returned, I started my independent study to learn Arabic. This passion then prompted my summer abroad five months later to Morocco where I immersed myself in the language while taking part in the culture as I sipped my sweet mint tea before class each day. Thus, learning the language has granted me another door to learn from when I return.

More than just experiencing the realities of life in the region by learning about the political situation through individual stories, the journey to the Holy Land was also spiritually enlightening. Although every individual will have his or her opinion, I believe there is a certain mystical aspect to walking the same path that Jesus once took over 2000 years ago. Visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the eve of the Christian Orthodox Christmas was an unfor-

Surabhi Agrawal

gettable experience. It helped me remember the unity behind religions as the chanting and incense reminded me of Sanskrit *cloaks* chanted at a temple in India during *Diwali*, one of the most sacred Hindu festivals. Having *Shabbat* dinner with a Jewish family after visiting the Wailing Wall helped mold the threads of religious unity together by trying to understand the historical roots the various religions have. On the last day, we visited the Dome of the Rock and the magnitude yet delicacy of the structure amazed me as I walked, gingerly glazing over the Arabic calligraphy that surrounded the mosque's outer walls. I realized how communal gatherings are important for the various religious and the way a sacred place can create that atmosphere. Thus even among the turmoil of the region, there is a sense of peace that I gained from this spiritual journey.

The Journeys of Reconciliation trip to the Middle East was a transformative experience, as I will continue to carry those faces, voices and stories in my work with interreligious dialogue and conflict transformations.

What is Holy?

"Ramallah? Are you crazy?" my father's voice was crisp on the phone. I had just secured my place on Emory's Journeys of Reconciliation, and one of the stops was Ramallah. I quickly recited my well-practiced answers, although I knew that nothing of what I was telling my father was the whole truth. "A different perspective on the world", "good connections in the Middle East" "interdenominational friendships" - my father was unconvinced. I had always wanted to visit the region, to connect all that I had heard and read with what life was like on the ground. Every newspaper, website, and commentator had a different take on the conflict, and I wanted (perhaps naively) to find the Truth.

We boarded the plane for Amman late at night, and the demographics of the plane immediately struck me. Royal Jordanian Airlines is not known as "Royal Daycare" for nothing. Scores of children peered over seats, ran down the aisles, and cried like there was no tomorrow. What had I gotten myself into?

The next day we entered Jerusalem through the Allenby bridge checkpoint. The checkpoint was highly traveled, and the traditional flowing *jallabiyas* of the farmers contrasted sharply with our blue jeans. Upon approaching the lines, we were escorted by Israeli soldiers to the very front. Indignant cries of frustration rang out from the crowd. "They are American. They go first."

But Israeli checkpoint security is a double-edged sword. Aisha, a Pakistani-American Muslim member of our group, was pulled aside and questioned for 2 hours. Eventually, having told the soldiers that it was a multi-religious trip, we were all interrogated. Turning to my Jewish friend, one of the soldiers asked "Why would you want to go on a trip with a Muslim?" After

some serious questioning, the soldiers decided we were peace-loving hippies who had no concept of geo-politics, religion, or group identification. We were allowed to pass. Exiting the building, I couldn't help thinking about all those who were still in line because they weren't American, weren't the right religion, weren't the right race.

Wadi Al-Khalil was once a beautiful olive producing valley where olives are no longer produced. The trees, centuries old and the basis for the village's survival, were bulldozed. A settlement now stands atop the fertile land

while the villagers have been relocated to the mountain next-door. Their fields taken, their livestock unable to survive on the rocky mountainside, the proud Jahiliya tribe have been reduced to near starvation. Standing on the dusty slope of the 100 family encampment, I could look down into the valley and see the reflected blue of swimming pools, the red tiles of new Mediterranean homes, and the sleek new roads reserved only for Israelis. The injustice hit me hard. I marveled at how we could advocate equality and universal rights, but still tolerate this.

We left exhausted after interviewing farmers and peasants until the sun started sinking behind the jagged line of mountains. But sleep was not in the cards for us. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, my friends and I wasted no time in walking from the Arab quarter (where we were staying) to the Jewish quarter (where the nightlife is).

I think there is value in the suffering we see. It shows us what is really holy. Not walls, not churches, not mosques, but people.

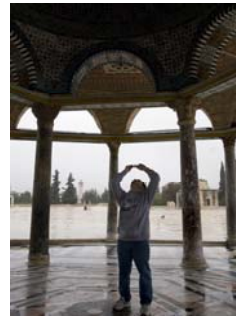
-Brenton Kinker

Brenton Kinker

The Layla Bar is a dance club located in the heart of the chic west Jerusalem suburb of Haneviim. Frequented by off-duty soldiers, we were about to get a new perspective on what we had seen. "If there were no soldiers, we would be slaughtered." Miriam gazed at me over her beer. She'd had family killed in the holocaust. Miriam and I hit it off instantly; we talked at length about everything from old bollywood movies to academic interests. She also wanted to be a lawyer, but was afraid for the security of her country. As our night came to an end and my friends beckoned me to go, I turned to Miriam and asked her, "why"? Why was there such violence? Why did she stay here? Why didn't she leave? She looked back at me with confusion in her eyes. "There will always be violence here. But this is the *Bet*. This is home."

I walked back to the hotel alone that night. The cobbled limestone of the streets had been worn smooth by countless people. Pilgrims, soldiers, saints, they all walked these streets. I passed by the Al-Aqsa mosque, the Western Wall, the Holy Sepulchre. I was still confused. I looked out over a city that has been the center of conflict for so many generations that most have stopped counting. It was then that I decided that nothing made of mortar or brick in that city was holy. If anything, the city was a curse. A curse for the people who lived there, the people who fight for it, and the people who have died for it.

Yet, I think there is value in the suffering we see. It shows us what is really holy. Not walls, not churches, not mosques, but people. As far as I am concerned, until we learn a lesson that should have been learned countless thousands of lives ago, we will continue to see tragedy unfold in this beautiful land.



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