

Creating Common Ground: Embracing Difference & Giving Voice

Examples from the Kalamazoo College Chapel Program

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Supplementary Resources

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Faith & Feminism Panel

Panelist Questions:

- Describe yourself a little...what does your religion mean to you? What does feminism mean to you?
- Do you consider there to be historical, text-based or doctrinal ideas within your faith tradition that perpetuate oppression or injustice towards women?
- Are there stereotypes or misconceptions of women and your religious tradition that you wish to dispel?
- Do you know of, or have you personally explored, historical, text-based and doctrinal ideas within your religion that are empowering for women?
- Have you encountered feminists who are condescending of your religious practice? How have you responded to those people/ideas?
- Have you encountered people within your faith tradition that are opposed to the language and/or the ideology of feminism? How have you responded to them?
- Do you think there are things antithetical with feminism in your faith tradition? What about congruous things?
- How do you think being a woman has impacted your religious practice and development?

Interfaith Student Panel

Panelist Questions:

- Please briefly describe your faith background.
- If you had to describe what your faith means to you in one quote, sentence, idea, or story, what would it be and why?
- Is there a generalization, assumption, stereotype or criticism about your faith that you would like to address?
- What are some specific ways that you experience your faith, what connects you with it? (Such as meditation, music, fellowship, scripture study...)
- How has life at college affected your faith?

Race & Identity Panel Jama

Questions for the Audience to consider:

- How do you identify difference?
- What privileges do you have?
- What privileges are you denied?
- What assumptions do you make about other people?

Panelist Questions:

- Can you share a story that illustrates your experience as a religious and/or ethnic minority. What do you want people to know and understand about your experience? *Where and how have you encountered privilege and assumption?*
- How do you react when you feel that a student, professor, friend or colleague is asking you, either directly or indirectly, to represent the entirety of your ethnic/religious group?
- What is your opinion of the campus-wide discussions that we do have about “race” and events with the goal of promoting “diversity”? Are they effective? Do they promote change? Why or why not? If not, do you have any ideas on how might they be more effective?
- What does “Being American” mean to you?
- It seems like part of white privilege is ignoring differences of race. I tell myself that I do not have prejudice because when I look at you I see a man, not a [black] man. Are there problems with this color-blind type of reasoning? What can the affects be? How do you feel your distinctiveness?
- Because of the ways that race can be “ignored,” do you feel the need to compartmentalize your identity? That is, in certain groups you have to downplay your ethnic identity or What do you want other people to know about the joys/difficulties of living as a minority.

Chapel Program Goals from the Kalamazoo College Student Chaplains Student Chaplain Retreat, Fall 2007

Chapel Musts:

- ❖ The Chapel must be a safe and comfortable place, a refuge, where people can be themselves.
- ❖ It is a place for people to come together.
- ❖ A place to appreciate the people around you.
- ❖ A place where time is flexible, as are people's expectations of you.
- ❖ A place to grow.
- ❖ A place where the details are important.
- ❖ A place for Spirituality groups to meet.
- ❖ Community-Centered Friday Jamas.
- ❖ A place with a presence you can feel throughout campus.

Important to us:

- Facilitate connection and direction towards religious communities.
- Outreach to First Years.
- We want people to have respect for the Cavern Space
- Use spaces frequently and effectively
- Use our own individual talents as Student Chaplains effectively.
- Training for student Chaplains to serve in a peer counselor role
- Make sure that the Chapel stays a restorative, relaxing place for us as student chaplains
- Invite faith leaders to campus

Boundary Markers: **Practices which Create & Bound Safe Space**

- 1) **Come with 100% of the self.** Set aside the usual distractions of phone mail, e-mail, things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Bring all of yourself to the work, not just the parts of yourself and your experience that would be obviously related to this work. "I" statements--speaking for oneself--help to support this full presence.
- 2) **Presume welcome and extend welcome.** Understand that in so doing it is possible to emerge refreshed and less burdened than when you came, even with some surprises!
- 3) **Understand that there is genuine freedom in the circle.** The rule is INVITATION not INVASION, OPPORTUNITY not DEMAND. It requires that we acknowledge Silence as an honored and eloquent member of our community.
- 4) **Listen with "Soft Eyes," with compassion.** The safety of our space will be enhanced as we listen to each other's stories with compassion and understanding, finding that of ourselves in each other, and in our varied experience. This is what the poet Rainer Maria Rilke called being present with "soft eyes."
- 5) **Deep confidentiality, double confidentiality.** Our work requires you to commit yourself to a special, deep confidentiality, which promises that you will not speak outside this group of what is shared here. Further, double confidentiality, requires us to commit ourselves to never raise again with the sharing person, or others in the group, the deep confidences shared.
- 6) **When things get difficult, turn to wonder.** Commit yourself to a new approach to being together: when you hear difficult things, mysterious things, or perhaps ideas which seem to fly in the face of your usual way of looking at things, let your first response be that of wonder rather than harsh judgment or criticism. Switch from saying to asking--from stating to questioning, from advocating for your opinion to inquiring about the other's...move from knowing to wondering. Thus we are open to learning from each other.
- 7) **No Fixing.** Believe in the voice of the inner teacher; believe that there is wisdom resident in each of us, which allows us to bring extraordinary light to bear on our own issues. No "saving" allowed here!

Hand Meditation

Sit with your eyes relaxed or closed, your hands, resting in your lap. Palms are up. Tune into your breathing. Let the day drain out of you. Let the tension flow out of you. Let it go from your eyes, your neck, shoulders, chest, legs, and feet. Breathe. Just breathe.

With your hands in your lap, become aware of the air at your fingertips, between your fingers, on the palm of your hand. Know the richness, strength and maturity of your hands. Think of the most unforgettable hands you have known. Remember the oldest hands that have rested in yours. Envision all their furrows and folds. Think of the hands of a newborn child. Once your hands were just that small. One day your hands will hold creases.

Think of all the learning your hands have done. Think of all the activities they have mastered. Do you remember when you first learned how to tie your shoe? What about when you first were able to write your name?

Our hands have been for ourselves, but for others, too. Remember all the kinds of work they have done. Remember the tiredness and aching they have known. Remember the cold and the heat, the soreness and the bruises. Your hands. Remember the caresses you have shared, and the tears you have wiped away, be them your own or another's. Remember the times they were used not to love, but to express anger. Your hands.

Think of how often your hands have been held open in prayer or meditation, as a sign of their powerlessness and of their great power. Our guardians have guided these very hands in the great symbolic language of the hand-shake, the wave of "hello" or "goodbye." And even the simple and reassuring pat on the back.

What of the hands of a man or woman whom we love? And the hands of a doctor, nurse, artist, teacher or friend? Those are hands that won't be forgotten.

With your eyes still closed raise your right hand slowly and gently place it over your heart. Place your left hand over it. Try to pick up the beat of your heart. Hold your heartbeat and be it. Is that not the most mysterious of all sounds? The rhythm you learned from your mother while still in the womb. That is the something constant which will accompany you throughout your life.

Lower your hand carefully as if it were carrying your heart. It does, in fact. When you share your hand with another, it is so much more than bone and skin; it is your heart, your being. Think of all the hands that have touched yours. Think of all the hearts you have held, caressed, and loved with your hands. Think of all the hands and hearts that have left their indelible imprints on you. The hand has its own memory. Imagine all the places that carry your handprints and all the people who bear your heart print.

Still with your eyes closed, extend your hands on either side and find another hand. Do not simply hold it, but explore it. Sense the history and the mystery of that hand. Let your hand speak to it and let it listen to the other. Express your gratitude for this nameless hand stretched out to you in the dark. Now, bring your hands back to your lap. Experience the presence of that hand lingering upon your hand. That might fade, but that print is there and will remain.

Rock Meditation

Pass around the rock basket, inviting members to take one. Do this slowly.

Invite them to "explore" the rock: "Look at your rock and notice the markings, the colors. Feel your rock: is it smooth or rough? Are there places that it changes? Feel its weight: how heavy is it?"

Invite them to hold the rock and shut their eyes: "This rock was formed thousands of years ago. Perhaps it was lava; perhaps it was part of a much larger rock formation. This rock has existed for thousands of years, long before you or your parents or grandparents were thought of. Sense your connection through the rock to that world where it was formed.

"This rock has changed. Perhaps it was broken off; maybe it was scooted along on the bottom of a glacier. It has probably been worn smoother than it was over years of grinding, of waves, of movement. What has come along in your life that has worn you down? What has made you smoother?"

"This rock would be hard to destroy. Chances are that long after this building is rubble, this rock will be sitting somewhere, being its rock-like self. If you think forward seventy or eighty years, to a point where your body doesn't have much more time on it, what would you like to have permanence? What about your life would you want to have the solidarity of this rock?"

"In sacred texts from a number of religions God is compared to a rock because of the permanence and solidarity. What in your life is rock-like? What does that feel like?"

"Have you ever had an experience when a rock was important? (Like maybe stepping from deep mud onto a rock or laying on a warm rock...) What was the sensation that rock gave you?"

Invite people to share something that came to them from this meditation.

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Iona Service Readings & Meditations

Walk in with candles...

Put into 3 bowls of earth with rocks and leaves scattered

God teach us the silence of humility,
The silence of wisdom
The silence of love,
The silence that speaks without words.

God teach us
To silence our own hearts and minds
That we may listen
For your movement,
And feel your presence in the depths of our being.

God,
God the Maker,
Maker of color, sound, texture, quietness,
And the restless beauty in living things,
Be in our midst.

God,
God the Maker,
Maker of granite and mustard seed,
Of grey cloud and starlight,
Of earthquake and heartbeat,
Be in our midst.

God, God the Maker
Maker of all that is unseen
Of all that has been,
Of all that words could never capture,
Be in our midst.

Breath of God,
Breath of life,
Breath of deepest yearning.
Come to us.

Pied Beauty by Gerard Manley Hopkins

Glory be to god for dappled things-
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose moles on in stipple upon trout that swim,
Fresh fire-coal chestnut falls, finches wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced-fold, fallow and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim;
All things counter original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, flow, sweet, sour, adazzle, dim;
He fathers forth who beauty is past change,
Praise him.

Glory be to god for dappled things-

With swift, flow, sweet, sour, adazzle, dim;

Glory be to god for dappled things-

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Glory be to god for dappled things-

Glory be to god

Glory

Ralph Waldo Emerson said this:

All things with which we deal, preach to us. What is a
farm but a mute gospel? The chaff and the wheat, weeds and
plants, blight, rain, insects, sun, --it is a sacred emblem
from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the
snow of winter overtakes in the fields

All things with which we deal, preach to us.

All things counter, original, spare, strange; preach to us

With swift, flow, sweet, sour, adazzle, dim;

Glory be to god

Jesus said:

Consider the lilies of the field.

Consider the birds of the air.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Consider the birds of the air.

Can you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

Consider the birds of the air.

Consider the lilies of field, how they grow. They either

toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his
glory was not clothed like one of these.
Consider the lilies of the field.
Consider.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Consider.

With swift, flow, sweet, sour, a dazzle, dim;

Consider.

All things with which we deal, preach to us.

Glory to god.

Glory.

If We Surrendered to Earth's Intelligence by Rainer Maria Rilke

How surely gravity's law,
Strong as an ocean current,
Takes hold of even the smallest thing
And pulls it toward the heart of the world.

Each thing-
Each stone, blossom, child-
Is held in place.
Only we, in our arrogance,
Push out beyond what we each belong to
For some empty freedom.

If we surrendered
To earth's intelligence
We could rise up rooted, like trees.

Instead we entangle ourselves
In knots of our own making
And struggle, lonely and confused.

So, like children, we begin again
To learn from the things,
Because they are in God's heart;
They have never left him.

This is what the things can teach us:
To fall,
Patiently to trust our heaviness.
Even a bird has to do that
Before he can fly

Each thing-
Each stone, blossom, child-
Is held in place.

With swift, flow, sweet, sour, adazzle, dim;

Held in place,

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Held.

If we surrendered
To earth's intelligence
We could rise up rooted, like trees.

If we surrendered

If we surrendered
To earth's intelligence

We could rise up rooted, like trees.

All things with which we deal, preach to us.

Consider the lilies.

Glory.

So, like children, we begin again
To learn from the things

If we surrendered
To earth's intelligence

We could rise up rooted, like trees.

Instead we entangle ourselves
In knots of our own making

And struggle, lonely and confused.

,lonely and confused.
So, like children, we begin again

Because they are in God's heart;
They have never left him.

Things...in God's heart...have never left him.

All things with which we deal, preach to us.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

That is what the things can teach us:

To fall,

Held.

To fall,

This is what the things can teach us:

Glory.

Held.

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*,

I'm in the market for some present tense; I'm on the lookout, shopping
around,
more so every year. Time is the one thing we have been given, and we have
been
given to time. Time gives us a whirl. We keep waking from a dream we can't
recall, looking around in surprise, and lapsing back for years on end. All I
want
to do is stay awake, keep my head up, prop my eyes open, with toothpicks,
with
trees.

I'm in the market for some present tense;

I'm on the lookout,

shopping around,

looking around in surprise.

All I want to do is stay awake, keep my head up, prop my eyes open, with
toothpicks, with trees.

All I want to do is stay awake,

Keep my head up

So, like children, we begin again

looking around in surprise

To learn from the things,

Looking around in surprise

Because they are in God's heart;

All I want to do is stay awake,

They have never left him.

Each thing-

Each stone, blossom, child-

Is held in place

If we surrendered

Consider the lilies of the field.

We could rise up rooted, like trees.

Consider the birds of the air.

With swift, flow, sweet, sour, adazzle, dim;

We could rise up rooted, like trees.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

If we surrendered

Instead we entangle ourselves in knots of our own making

lonely and confused.

This is what the things can teach us:

To fall,

All things with which we deal, preach to us.

Things teach us to fall.

Held.

Consider.

Glory be to god for dappled things-

Glory be to god.

Glory.

New Beginnings

Meditation on “opening.”

Open up; grand opening; opening an academic year; open a new chapter; open house; open your wallet;

Open-ended; open your home; open mouthed; open arms;

Open your mind; Open your heart; open your life; open your soul; open your hands, wide open;

Acorns are passed.

Guided meditation on the acorns.

Come Here
By Erin Agee

Be Still.
For just a moment.
Breathe in and out
Heart beats up and down, in and
Out.
You do not have to listen, at least not
The hard way
Rest your hands from grabbing,
From grasping, clapping, holding,
Praying
Heart still beats up, and down.
The air is still here, the ground beneath—
It listens,
It knows you are here—
for just a moment,
so be still.

Readings on New Beginning and this moment:

You reading this, be Ready by William Stafford

Starting here, what do you want to remember?
How sunlight creeps along a shining floor?
What scent of old wood hovers, what softened
sound from outside fills the air?

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world

than the breathing respect that you carry
wherever you go right now? Are you waiting
for time to show you some better thoughts?

When you turn around, starting here, lift this
new glimpse that you found; carry into evening
all that you want from this day. This interval you spent
reading or hearing this, keep it for life—

What can anyone give you greater than now,
starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?

Starting here, what do you want to remember?

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world than the breathing respect that you carry
wherever you go right now?

What can anyone give you greater than now, staring here right in this room, when you
turn around?

Starting here, what do you want to remember?

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world?

What can anyone give you greater than now?

Starting here

Opening...

Starting here

Starting here...

Lost by David Wagoner

Stand still. The trees ahead and the bushes behind you
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
I have made this place around you.
If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.
No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.

If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find you.

Stand still.

Stand still.

Open hearted.

Stand still.

Wherever you are is called here,

Listen.

Listen.

Wherever you are is called here,

You must let it find you.

Stand still.

Stand still.

Still.

Open your heart.

Starting here, what do you want to remember?

Listen.

Listen.

From the Psalms: Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Still.

Open up!

You must let it find you.

Become that Moment by the artist Paul Cezanne

Right now a moment of time is fleeting by! Capture its reality in pain! To do that we must put all else out of our minds. We must become that moment, make ourselves a sensitive recording plate... give the image of what we actually see. Forgetting everything that has been seen before our time.

Right now a moment of time is fleeting by!

Starting here, what do you want to remember?

Be still and know.

We must become that moment.

Right now a moment of time is fleeting by! Wherever you are is called here,

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world?

What can anyone give you greater than now?

Starting here, open.

Be Still.

Still.

An excerpt from C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*.

“Humans live in time...therefore...they attend chiefly to two things, to eternity and to the Present. For the present is the point at which time touches eternity...in the present alone freedom and actuality are offered.

“The Future is, of all things, the most completely temporal part of time---for the Past is frozen and no longer flows, and the Present is all lit up with eternal rays....

“Hence nearly all vices are rooted in the Future. Gratitude looks to the Past and love to the Present; fear, avarice, lust, and ambition look ahead.

“With the present...there, and there alone, all duty, all grace, all knowledge, and all pleasure dwell.”

For the present is the point at which time touches eternity...in this present alone freedom and actuality are offered.

In the present alone freedom and actuality are offered.

Be still.

Stand still.

With the present...alone, all duty, all grace, all knowledge, and all pleasure dwell.

All duty, all grace, all knowledge, and all pleasure dwell

What can anyone give you greater than now?

With the present...there, and there alone, all duty, all grace, all knowledge, and all pleasure dwell.

Starting here

Open to now...

Right now a moment of time is fleeting by!

Starting here, what do you want to remember?

Be still and know.

Be still.

Open your heart.

Be still.

Open your hands.

Be still.

Still.

**Healing of Sexual Abuse
Service of Re-centering, Healing, and Restoration**

Sit in silence with candles at the center.

I light this candle for women who are survivors
I offer this in thanksgiving for those who are learning to be angry.
We acknowledge our righteous anger and our.
We acknowledge the process of growing and healing.
I light this candle for all who are survivors of abuse.
I light this candle for the triumph of hope and despair.

Several readings about abuse. Then writing words onto pieces of paper which are burned in the center of the circle.

We are called to freedom, to wholeness, to power, to courage.

Break the chains that bind our hearts
And hold our spirits captive.

Giver of life, bearer of pain;
You are able to name in us what we cannot bear to speak of;
You are able to hold in your memory what we have tried to forget;
Free us from the prison of self doubt, fear and despair.

Burn rosemary or other herb.

O tender God,
You have searched the depths we cannot know,
And touch what we cannot bear to name;
May we so wait,
Enclosed in your darkness,
That we are ready to encounter,
Our true selves and our true source.

As an act of gentle touch and care, we message each others' hands around the circle.

Take from my instep
The skein of damage
That has threaded its way through my life
Like a tightening cord.

Take from my body
The wounds of unloving
That puncture and bruise
Like a scarring sword.

Take from my mind
The dark engulfing
That has judged my life
Like a damning word.

Take from my soul
The clouds of distrust
That have distanced me
From myself and my source.

We pass a bowl of water around the circle.

Bless my eyes that I have clarity through vision.
Bless my mouth that I may speak the truth.
Bless my ears that I may hear all that is spoken unto me.
Bless my heart that I may be filled with love.
Bless my womb that I may be in touch with my creative energies and the
creative energy of the universe.
Bless my feet that I may find and walk on my own true path.

Passing the bread.

May this bread signify the blessing of mother God.
The crones, and mothers, and mentors and friends who share our journey
May we be wise and strong and creative
May we celebrate life and hope.
May God's image grow within us
May laughter and courage heal us
May the glory of life sustain us
All the days of our journey home.

Blessing

May our sister God, who held us at our birth,
Who stands beside us in our joy and grief
And who gathers us up into her life-giving embrace,
Be with you now and always.

Much is Happening

Much is happening these days--
much that affects all days to come
for you.

Yet, in the middle,
there is a place of pause and quietude
that will have as much to do
with time and the happenings
of years to come
as all the happenings
that now propel themselves
through choice-filled,
hectic days.

There is the being place,
the inner core of you,
that marrow like,
runs straight through
the spine of life,
through all past time in you,
extending further back
through generations gone
to life begun at dawn,
and back again,
clear up to here,
to go right on
being your being place,
as the moments come along.

It is the core of you
that comes to be the inner eyes of you
when, consciously,
you come to see
life being born in you,
present-ly.

Quietly, let's be, and being--see.

--Ross L. Mooney

from *In Ways That Bring the Dawn*, 1976.

When Death Comes

By Mary Oliver

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox;

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower a common
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up having simply visited this world.

Walk Slowly

By Donna Faulds

It only takes a reminder to breathe,
a moment to be still, and just like that
something in me settles, softens,
makes space for imperfection.
The harsh voice of my judgment
drops to a whisper
and I remember again that life isn't a relay race,
that we will all cross the finish line,
that waking up to life is what we were born for.
As many times as I forget,
I catch myself charging forward
without even knowing where I'm going,
that many times I can make the choice
to stop, to breathe, to be,
and walk slowly into the mystery.

[The River]

One of the old ones stood up into the morning light and spoke to those who had come back to the river:

"Now we have come again to this place; it is a good thing. My life apart from you is not as strong.

"Yes, I have danced and I have told the stories at my own fire and I have sung to all the six directions.

"But when I am with you, my friends, I know better who it is in me that sings."

Source: Barbara J. Pescan. 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection

