



# Interfaith House

THE COMMON MINISTRY AT WSU

Fall 2011

## *From the President of the Council —Fall Appeal for Annual Support*

Dear Friends,

The Common Ministry is dedicated to offering a safe space for spiritual development to all WSU students, and to fostering religious pluralism and tolerance in the WSU community. Thanks to your continuing support, we are able to provide vibrant programs at the Interfaith House. The Interfaith House is buzzing with various activities every day, and student participation in the programs is steadily increasing.

This year has been financially challenging for us. Some of our traditional institutional funding sources have experienced a decline in giving, and that has impacted their ability to contribute at the same level to the Common Ministry. Others have changed their policies in how they direct their resources for campus ministry, resulting in less direct funding to the Common Ministry. Our ability to maintain the Interfaith House and to provide a place for dialog, hospitality, and spiritual growth, requires that we find additional sources of support.

All of us are experiencing a need to reevaluate how we use our limited resources. If you are in the position to make an end-of-the-year contribution to help support our work, we would be very grateful. In addition, if it is possible to consider giving on a monthly basis for 2012 year, even a small amount, this would be very helpful in allowing us to meet our building maintenance and programming needs in the coming year.

The Common Ministry continues to be dedicated to sharing the love of Christ and welcoming all who enter our doors. We know that '*it is in giving that we receive.*' Your support is need more than ever. An envelope is enclosed for your use. Please make checks to: *The Common Ministry at WSU.*

In thanks and peace,

Sue M. Durrant, President  
Common Ministry Council

**Reflections: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, . . . 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed thee . . . and a stranger and welcomed thee? As you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me." Matthew 25: 33-40**

Students are "hungry" for spiritual food and fellowship. At Interfaith House we are here in service to the students at Washington State University. All are welcomed and fed with food for the body and food for the soul. We can only continue this ministry with your help and support. Help us feed and comfort and console all who knock on our door with your generous support.

Sincerely, Rob Snyder - Interim Director

## Student Retreat at St. Gertrude's

By Dylan Judge-Hoff

For the third year in a row, I enjoyed a retreat at St. Gertrude's Monastery near Cottonwood, Idaho. Sponsored by the Interfaith House, this yearly retreat has been one of the highlights of my year each time I attend.

St. Gertrude's is a Catholic monastery that shares a similar understanding of hospitality to what the Interfaith House tries to engage in. What we sometimes refer to as "radical hospitality" is the norm for the sisters of St. Gertrude's. They go so far as to allow any visitors to join them for their daily prayer vigils and partake in Sunday communion.

Our group of 15 settled into the farmhouse St. Gertrude's rents out to large retreat groups on Friday, Oct. 7. After getting acquainted, settling in and enjoying our first few hours together, we began a weekend of relaxation and reflective meditation.

The Director of the Interfaith House, Rob Snyder, took time each day to lead our group through meditation practices based on breathing exercises that are friendly to use for anyone of any religious persuasion.

Through these breathing exercises, we practiced both looking inward to calm ourselves and trying to expand our sense of peace and tranquility into the surrounding area.

The beautiful environment surrounding St. Gertrude's aided greatly in our abilities to achieve

a relaxing state of mind during our retreat. The monastery is located on a large hill, with a beautiful view of the surrounding Idaho countryside from the guesthouse.

The St. Gertrude's retreat epitomizes everything the Interfaith House works for. It is a beautiful, spiritual environment where people of various religious traditions can come together and not only meditate together, but share each other's faith with one another. My biggest regret about graduating in May is that I won't be able to enjoy this yearly retreat anymore.

*Dylan Judge-Hoff is a senior journalism major at WSU*

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### ***Inspire: A great place of acceptance and relaxation***

By Jeff Harris

What is the *Inspire* program? It is a get together for students who share a common ground in particularly a religious background, but all are welcome to join no matter what denomination they are from. *Inspire* is great for students who may be catching up on rest before an exam or after an exam.

It is a relaxing, safe place in which one may express their ideas in intellectual conversation, or may just listen to others ideas. *Inspire* consists of peer ministers who are about the same age as the students coming to the meetings who plan some of the activities that the program carries out. Sometimes the

activities involve skits, sometimes talking about controversial issues and talking about solutions to them, dealing with spirituality.

*Inspire* is a great conduit for getting involved in other projects that are in the works. A group from *Inspire* normally goes on a mission trip every spring in which the experience is a life changing one.

Another example of going beyond in getting involved is that there are numerous activities in which getting involved helps the community. Sometimes playing music at other programs that are similar to *Inspire*, or helping at the Red Cross blood donations, etc. The mission trip was personally one of the best experiences for me that came as a result of attending *Inspire*.

I felt so comfortable around the group that I decided it would be good for me to use my spring break to help give back to the community by helping on the mission trip. We attended a Shoshone-Bannock reservation in Blackfoot Idaho and helped the kids on the reservation with their studies while helping with a little manual labor as well. I met some awesome kids, got to work with them and help them in their studies and best of all, I got to bond with them during their recess.

The kids actually got me into a little bit of trouble because I helped them too much when they were on their typing programs. They had always wanted to get to the fun typing games and they would have me type fast through it for them so they could do the fun features in the typing pro-

gram. It was one of the best experiences and I also bonded closely with colleagues outside of *Inspire*.

Overall, *Inspire* is a friendly space that accepts all people in all walks of life. All beliefs and opinions are welcome during the discussion and are not discriminated against. *Inspire* is a great place to learn, make friends, and give back to the community which makes it such an awesome experience weekly throughout the stressful academic year.

*Jeff Harris is a student at WSU.*

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## **Taize Keeping On The Lights**

By Hajera Ahmed

Want a chance for self-reflection, calming music, good conversation, and centering during a busy week? *Taize* service, held every Tuesday from 5:30-7:30 is a chance for students to get together and sing in devotion and Love.

It brings together students of different backgrounds with different beliefs on the common ground of spiritual opening and Presence of mind. The service is opened with calming, live music and choral like singing [anyone can come] and sprinkled with readings on diverse spiritually relevant themes.

The 10-20 minute silent meditation held in the middle of the service is a really wonderful apex to the whole thing. Afterward, we all join together in a delicious evening meal [which varies each

week] and discuss various topics around the table.

Each service brings me into better Cosmic alignment. I find that the period of silence between the music and readings to be incredibly expansive, especially since there are a whole group of people encircled around Light [very metaphoric] building energy both before and after the silence. I imagine a pulsating body of light growing during the silence, effecting all of WSU campus, all of Pullman, by extension the state of Washington, the United States, America, and the World. Ultimately, this small bulb of silence effects the Universe. Anyone who is interested in Loving People, Good Words, Spirit, Light, and Music should join us at the Interfaith House! Love and Light to All!

*Hajera Ahmed is a senior philosophy major at WSU*

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## **Interfaith Mythbusters**

By Arlie Reeves

*Interfaith Mythbusters* provides a unique environment in which students may share their beliefs and learn about the beliefs of others in a friendly and encouraging setting. Consisting of a group of students from many different faith backgrounds, *Mythbusters* meets weekly for a discussion followed by a delicious dinner, which we all cook together. Each week a different topic is discussed: religious holidays, acceptance of oneself, enlightenment, etc. Such topics allow for a broad discussion encompassing individual religious

beliefs and philosophies. Students are also encouraged to share readings from their sacred texts or from other sources that complement their personal responses.

As we experience a world of religious conflict, it is our purpose to establish an interfaith group built by relationships and mutual respect. Through discussions and getting to know one another, we have “busted myths” about various religious theologies and practices, often stereotyped ignorantly and incorrectly by society. It is not a place for conversion or any expressions of negative energy, but rather a place for a growth in knowledge and acceptance of people, religions, and cultures that vary from our own.

My experience with *Mythbusters* has been life changing. One might assume that a group comprised of all different faiths would be fatal when discussing faith itself, but it is entirely the contrary. This group is inspiring and always full of love and acceptance, regardless of faith differences. Separately, we are individuals with belief systems. Together, we are the beginning of peace between religions, cultures, and people.

*Arlie Reeves is a student at WSU.*

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### **Interfaith House Staff**

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## ***Interfaith Campus Ministry: by Dr. Rob Snyder***

A new initiative has just been launched at Washington State University. ***Spirituality at WSU*** is the result of joint efforts by the Common Ministry and Interfaith House at WSU and the Dean of Students Office at WSU. ***Spirituality at WSU*** is intended to help students explore their own unique spirituality during their time at WSU. This is a safe, open, and welcoming approach intended to reach out to all students of all faiths and no faiths. ***Spirituality at WSU*** affirms all expressions of spirituality. Students are 'hungry' and seeking for meaning and purpose in their lives. We at the Common Ministry and Interfaith House are committed to helping students explore and discover their own journey of learning not only who they are but who they want to be. We support students who are facing the challenges of the modern world, encouraging them to reach beyond their limits. Developing an open mind, questioning their beliefs, and trying to understand other's beliefs are all part of the modern day spirituality. We are here to help students discover their own meaning and purpose. Students who cultivate their spirituality frequently find there are many benefits on such a path. They can begin to find balance in their emotional and physical life. They may develop skills to help them navigate the challenging dynamics of modern life. We are here at Interfaith House at WSU to feed the 'hungry', comfort those in need and visit and support all who are seeking the higher aspects of life.

Webpage: [spirituality.wsu.edu](http://spirituality.wsu.edu)

***Save the Date***

**ANNUAL BUFFET-AUCTION**  
***Sunday April 22, 2012***