



## Letter from the Director

### *Warm Greetings from the Common Ministry-*

The holiday season swells orchestrated themes of joy, thankfulness, and community throughout the fixtures of our lives- be it school, our religious community, work, and more. We know the values of the season- to reflect on what really matters- yet in a inhumane time of terrorism and the refugee crisis, it seems we are ironically pegged against the celebrated values of the holiday season. With tragedies such as Paris, Beirut, and Baghdad and countless others- we are face to face with an opportunity to promote the values of the Common Ministry, and interfaith work as a whole, which will hopefully offer us a more genuine holiday spirit. What are the values of the Common Ministry? Alongside our vision of providing a "safe space for spiritual development", we value people of all walks of life. We are inclusive of people regardless of faith, identity, understandings, and outlook. We celebrate diversity and use people-first language that bridges dignity with our humanitarian outlook. As we celebrated our 36th Roger Williams Symposium this fall, we were reminded of religious freedom through the symposium's namesake: Roger Williams. Williams pursued religious tolerance for all, including Native Americans, as the colonies were established. He wanted to provide a state for all religious refugees – a place where the faithful could come together to practice their kaleidoscope of faiths safely and equally. Amongst both the holiday season and international tragedy, let's remember our shared convictions with Baptist faithful Roger Williams and the mission of the Common Ministry. Thank you for supporting the Common Ministry and joining our hopes of safe spaces, inclusion, and peace for all through interfaith work.

Thank you, *Rev. Jessica Stokes*

### Programming update:

What a life-giving semester! Our programming was cerebral and inclusive. We continue to offer WSU students a unique way to engage spirituality through interfaith dialogue. Our group is younger this year; mostly freshmen and sophomores but we still have a few graduate students. Our two primary groups, **Interfaith Respite** and **Progressive Christian Small-group**, met throughout the semester. A couple of our memorable topics included an interfaith outlook on Pope Francis' visit, and conversations on morality. We also collaborated with GIESORC (Gender Identity-Expression Sexual Orientation Resource Center) to provide various workshops on faith and identity. We look forward to continuing our programming through the spring as well as our weekend retreat to Camp Twinlow in January.

## The 36th Roger Williams Symposium



This year's Roger Williams Symposium featured Sister Simone Campbell and social justice issues of peace building, economic justice, and poverty awareness. This was a successful symposium as nearly 300 individuals attended the keynote talk, workshop and luncheon, or the collaborated talk at the WSU Thomas Foley Institute. What a joy to share such an accomplished speaker with Pullman! Sister Simone joined us from Washington D.C. where she is the executive director of NETWORK, which is a Catholic social justice nonprofit that lobbies on Capital Hill for systemic change to promote the common good.

Sister Simone is best known for her "Nuns on the Bus" tour and speaking at the 2012 Democratic National Convention. This trifold event offered ample chances to talk personally with Sister Simone, learn, and engage fellow attendees on the crucial topics addressed. Many thanks to the supporters of our symposium and special thanks to the symposium's planning committee: Francy, Roy, Jane, Mary Beth, and Tim. The hope of this symposium is to catapult topics of faith and social justice to the forefront of our lives. Sister Simone has encouraged us all to pursue the common good, be faithful in the myriad of ways that we are called, and to proactively engage our communities. ~Thanks to all that attended.

## Fall Evergreen Meeting 2015

In early October, I attended the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Church's annual meeting in Palo Alto, CA. The Evergreen Baptist's are a regional group of the American Baptists that are represented by Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Utah, and Colorado. So, needless to say, I met wonderful clergy and layperson from all over the west. The Common Ministry has received abundant support over the years from the Evergreen Association, with special focus towards our Roger Williams Symposium. This weekend-long conference served as a chance for ministers, congregants, and all those concerned with justice and Baptist life to come together for conviction and renewal. It was a busy weekend full of laughter, worship, and learning. I had the chance to network with many folks that are already familiar with the Common Ministry through various connections. Our keynote speaker was the well known Rev. Dr. James Forbes of Riverside Baptist Church (New York City), an icon in mainline Christianity, as well as interfaith and social-justice work. Dr. Forbes offered us words from the Gospel of Luke, invoking leaders and laypeople alike to be aware of our constant growth and to allow grace with ourselves as we journey through life. The workshops and small-group discussions were very helpful, ranging from combating institutionalized racism to learning African-American spirituals. The sunny weekend in Palo Alto offered respite and encouragement.

~Jessica

### Join Us

Celebrate your support of the Common Ministry  
at a reception on **Saturday Dec. 12th, 2-4 pm**  
in the Community Congregational  
United Church of Christ

~and~

Save the date! **April 10th, 2016**  
**Annual Dinner Auction**

To be held at Banyans in Pullman, WA

We are accepting good quality donation items for auction

### 2015 Common Ministry Council Members:

Jonathon Bliss  
Nicholas Cerruti  
Emi Dickens, President  
Sue Durrant-Episcopal  
Roy Johnson-American Baptist  
Chip Laird, Past President-United Church of Christ  
Nancy Nydegger-United Church of Christ  
Brad Vonhof, Vice President

## Student Spotlight! Abbey



*What year are you and what are you studying?*

I am a sophomore and I am studying Pre-Law and Comparative Ethnic Studies.

*What was it like to grow up in Pullman and now attend WSU?*

Although I initially resented moving to Pullman, it ended up being a great place to grow up. Pullman is a great community and looking back I am thankful to have grown up in a small town with such great people. The first couple months of my first year as a WSU student were difficult because everyone was adjusting to being here and they were finding so much enjoyment in activities and events that had become mundane for me. Although I always knew Pullman was a college town, I did not realize it until this past summer when all my new friends from college left for home and I was still here!

*How have you been challenged by our small-group bible study and interfaith conversations?*

Our small group conversations have definitely challenged me. New ways of thinking and new perspectives can be difficult to conceptualize and understand, but in the end I always benefit from engaging with difference. At our most recent interfaith discussion, we talked about subjective and objective morality. This topic was the hardest for me because I had never really considered what morality means in my life and for the greater society around me. I have been mulling over where I derive the meaning of morality for almost a week now.

*How would you define what a "safe space" is:*

A safe space is where an individual is free to speak their mind, opinions, experiences and view of the world without fear of judgment or condemnation. In a safe space individuals can be fully themselves.

*Why is interfaith dialogue important to you?*

Interfaith dialogue is important to me because it encourages healthy conversation about the diversity and difference in our individual beliefs. Interfaith dialogue lets me engage and reflect upon this difference and helps me to understand the perspective of other's.

*Tell us your favorite class of this semester:*

My favorite class this semester is Women in the Media. This class has challenged how I think about and internalize the media all around me.

### 2015 Common Ministry Staff Members:

Jessica Stokes, Common Ministry Director-American Baptist  
Amelia Craigen, Office Manager

### Keep in Touch!

See events at **Facebook.com/InterfaithHouseWSU**, or follow on **Twitter@CommonMinistry**

Visit the website **interfaith-house.com**

or stop by the office at **525 NE Campus St, Pullman, WA 99163 (inside UCC)**

Phone, **(509) 332-2611** or email, **office@interfaith-house.com**.

**\*\*Mailing address is PO Box 1138, Pullman, WA 99163**

To update your contact information / be removed from this mailing list / stop receiving multiples copies / receive your newsletter electronically, please contact the Interfaith House with all relevant contact information.

Please consider including the Common Ministry in your estate plan. For more information, contact the Common Ministry office.