Letter from the Director

May 7, 2014

Dear Friends,

The spring semester here at 67 College Ave was busy and exciting!

Our Wednesday evening dinner and discussion groups have continued to meet weekly, with attendance varying from 7 to 40 students. Our Monday meditation group under the leadership of Father Richard Johnson (Episcopal Priest and MCA Board member) continues to meet weekly as well. Join them at 5:30pm over the summer.

Some of our Wed night discussion topics this semester have included “Is happiness spiritual?”, “Connections between Christianity and Islam,” “Celtic Christianity and it's approaches to Meditation” and “Modern Parallels to the Exodus story”

The Orono Friends meeting continues to hold worship services in our building each Sunday morning, and various student groups have used our space for fundraisers and meetings throughout the semester.

As always, our goal throughout these varied events is to provide all UMaine students with a safe space in which to explore their own spirituality – their personal relationships with the Divine, their relationships with one another and their roles in creating a just and caring world.

A big focus of our work at the Wilson Center this semester has been to build interfaith and multicultural collaborations across campus. It seems clear that if the violence and distrust in our world is ever going to end, more such work is needed.

At our Wednesday night dinners, we have hosted visitors from both the Islamic Center and the new Judaic studies program on campus. We also worked extensively with the Office of Multicultural Student life, the Philosophy Department and the Black Student Union to plan the Martin Luther King Day celebrations this past January, and we have begun to reach out to the Wabanaki Center and the Native American Studies program on
In the area of LGBT rights, we continued our advocacy by hosting a party for the Maines' family upon their supreme court victory for transgender youth last January and by co-sponsoring the film *God Loves Uganda* in April. This film is a documentary on the efforts of some American right-wing Christian groups to pass anti-gay legislation in Uganda (including bills that would punish homosexuality with the death penalty). Our goal was to let UMaine students know that not all Christian groups support such efforts and to provide an alternative religious voice full of inclusion, love and acceptance, rather than violence, judgment and death. I highly encourage you to watch this film!

During Holy Week, we hosted our largest Interfaith event of the year – a joyous and delicious Interfaith Passover Seder. Passover is the celebration of the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt 3000 years ago. It also provides an occasion each year to reflect upon modern forms of oppression and what we can each do to end them. This kind of reflection seemed like the perfect venue for interfaith discussion. With more than 60 people in attendance, our event included people from many of the different faith traditions represented on campus – Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Native and Islamic to name just a few. The Seder was led by Rabbi Darah Lerner from the Beth El synagogue in Bangor and included prayers and blessings by Native and Protestant leaders as well. The event was jointly planned by the Wilson Center and the new UMaine Judaic Studies program. It provided Jewish students with a place to celebrate Passover on campus, Christian students with a chance to directly experience the holiday Jesus was celebrating during the Last Supper, and Islamic students with a chance to hear the Exodus story, so central in the Qu'ran, told in a Jewish context. Mostly, it was a true celebration of what can happen when so many faith communities join together– laughter, camaraderie, fellowship and deep discussion about the injustices and oppressions still present in the world and what we can all do to end them. If Dorothy Clarke Wilson were still alive, it would have been her 110th birthday this month and I do not believe we could have hosted a more beautiful birthday party for the woman who wrote the “Prince of Egypt” than this dynamic and love-filled event.

As we (finally!) enter the season of growth and rebirth in Maine– as our mud-filled world comes alive with color and flowers – may we remember that we are all, no matter what our faith traditions, surrounded by a living and loving God – a God who resurrects hope each year, over and over again.

May we all choose to be a part of that hope.

Sarah
Interfaith Seder - Wishes for an end to Oppression

At the Interfaith Seder held on April 16th, we asked people to share with us and with each other what oppressions they would most like to see ended in the coming year. People of all ages and all faith traditions responded. A partial list of the their answers can be found below. For a complete list, see our website at http://www.umaine.edu/wilsoncenter:

What oppressions would you most like to see end in the world?
- Discrimination toward the unknown or non-conventional
- Oppression and discrimination against the poor
- The injustice of climate change most quickly and negatively affecting the most vulnerable and least culpable
- Violence against women
- Unequal education opportunity
- Discrimination against the LGBT community
- Discrimination between religions
- Racism/religious intolerance
- Thirst and hunger
- War
- Cruelty to people and animals
- Gender discrimination
- Denial of acts committed against Native peoples
- Oppression and discrimination against people with disabilities

What is your wish/prayer for the world next year? Next year may there be . . . .
- More acceptance and lack of judgment
- Self-love
- Environmental justice for all
- Forgiveness
- Greater joy
- Peace
- Freedom from oppression for women
- Clean water for all
- More equal distribution of resources
- Religious tolerance and harmony
- Peace in Jerusalem
- More joy and less pain
- An end to violence
- Gender equality
- Family
- Less economic inequality in the USA
- Medical care for all
- Spring

What will you do in the coming year to make your wish/prayer a reality?
- Be more open-minded
- Become more educated and encourage others to do the same
- Accept everyone for who they are and lead by example
- Share love
- Help educate people and give financial support within my means
- Educate for climate awareness and lobby for political and economic action
Start with my neighbors
Practice putting myself in another person’s shoes
Remember to take joy where it is given
Hold more interfaith events and discussions so we can all learn from each other
Advocate for people to learn about other religions and to accept one another without judgment
Use only what is necessary to live comfortably and not above the resources given to me

Continue treating everyone with respect
Pay attention to world events
Be kinder and more generous with my heart and my wealth
Express my opinion to other people
Pray even harder until my wish/prayer is reality
Stop judging others
I will hope

May we ALL act and hope next year!

Wilson Center Coffee House lives again!

Many of you may remember the live- music coffee houses hosted by the Wilson Center in the 1960's and 70s. Thanks to the efforts of the Wilson Center student group, this wonderful tradition has been resurrected! Starting in January, musicians from all over campus have been gathering at the Wilson Center once a month to perform live- music from a variety of genres – folk, rock, blues, broadway, a cappella, jazz, alternative, hip-hop - the list goes on and on! Attendance has varied from 25 to 50 students per month and all proceeds (from concessions sales and donations) have been donated to the Shaw House. The Shaw House provides emergency shelter and other needed services to youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the Bangor area. Check out our website for details of when this event will begin again next fall.

Want more regular updates about Wilson Center events? Want to help us go Green?

If so, please send us your email address! There are always new events happening at the Wilson Center and a bi-yearly newsletter simply can't get you the information in time to participate. Send us your email address and we will notify you about speakers, films, receptions and other events at the Center. You can also let us know if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically. Simply email us at: mainechristianassociation@gmail.com and specify if you want to be added to the announcement list, receive the newsletter in electronic format, or both. Please list your full name and street address in your email so we can locate you on our old mailing list and make the needed adjustments. Thank you!

Join us for Homecoming Open House

Saturday October 18th 9am-12 noon

If any of you plan to attend Homecoming events next fall, please put the Wilson Center on your calendar. The Center will host an open house on Saturday Oct. 18th from 9am-12 noon. Come enjoy coffee, cider, donuts and a chance to meet our director and board members on your way to the game. Go Black Bears!
Maine Interfaith Power & Light (housed at the Wilson Center) helps faith communities become good environmental stewards!

Every day individuals make choices that affect the environment. Some choices are simple, other choices are hard. Maine Interfaith Power & Light believes that climate change is the greatest challenge of our time. It is our moral responsibility to be good stewards and to care for the natural world including its most vulnerable inhabitants. To answer this call, Maine IPL works to engage Maine’s traditional and non-traditional faith communities in efforts to counter climate change through organization, education, advocacy, energy conservation, and the use of clean renewable power.

If you would like information about how to: increase the energy efficiency of your own sacred space; host a window-insert build to benefit low-income families; advocate at the State level for better energy policies; or volunteer with Maine Interfaith Power and Light in any other capacity, please contact: info@meipl.org.

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Want to connect your High School or Middle School youth group with the Wilson Center and with UMaine?

If so, let us know! We can help coordinate campus tours via the Visitor Center and we are happy to host students for a meal, or even an overnight, at the Wilson Center itself. Work projects are also a possibility.

Similarly, if you have students whom you know will be attending UMaine next fall, please feel free to send us their names via email or postal service. Sending us their names ensures that we will personally invite them (via the campus email system) to participate in Wilson Center events next fall.

If you have other suggestions for collaborations between your Youth Groups and the Wilson Center, please contact our director at: sarah.marx@umit.maine.edu or 866-4227

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Wish List:

Thank you so much to everyone who sent us donations from our wish list last December, and to all the folks who sent us financial donations as well. The Wilson Center could truly not exist without you!

A special thanks goes out to Fred Otto who has lent his expertise to lighting our Coffee House programs this spring, redesigning our interior and exterior lighting and building us a new coat rack for the lobby. If a need is there, Fred just jumps in to fill it. Thank you, Fred!

Our spring wish list includes:

- trivets or hot pads (to set hot dishes on)
- silverware
- large rice cooker
- bread knife
- wok or large frying pan
- stepping stool and 10 foot ladder
- paint brushes and scrapers
- outside push broom
- lawn mower
- extra freezer or refrigerator/freezer for the basement

We thank you in advance for your generosity!
The Wilson Center

May your spring be full of blessings and love.

Wilson Center Mission:

…growth and other opportunities for spiritual work for social justice, honor diversity through worship, study and service, to University of Maine community, and, ecumenical campus ministry for the Wilson Center/MCA is to provide an ongoing progressive and spiritual growth.

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The Wilson Center

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