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Oct. 28, 1998 Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

IWU Announces New Evelyn Chapel Advisory Board

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--A new 13-member Evelyn Chapel Advisory Board --composed of students and faculty--has been formed at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The advisory group--made up of five faculty members and eight students--will suggest ideas for upcoming university chapel programs. Individual members may opt to participate in chapel services. The group also will advise Dennis E. Groh, university chaplain and professor of humanities and archaeology.

The group will convene its first meeting Oct. 29. The advisory group will meet twice a semester.

Members of the faculty who are on the advisory group are: Susan Brandon, associate professor of piano; April DeConick, assistant professor of religion; Ruth Ann Friedberg, associate professor of accounting; Narendra Jaggi, professor and chair of physics; and Michael Weis, associate professor and chair of history.

Student members of the advisory group are: Michael Balsley, a senior majoring in English from Roscoe, Ill., and Student Senate president; Katie Brokaw, a freshman double majoring in theatre arts and art from Bloomington; Nikki Carnevale, a sophomore majoring in music from Elmhurst, Ill.; Inna Kagan, a junior majoring in history from Skokie, Ill.; Kendra King, a sophomore majoring in English from Aledo, Ill.; Haneef Omar, a sophomore majoring in international business from Rockford, Ill.; Lauren Sopocy, a junior majoring in music from Glenview, Ill.; and Gary Thompson, a sophomore majoring in theatre from Normal, Ill.

"The Evelyn Chapel Advisory Group's importance," Groh said, "resides in the fact that it is drawn from student and faculty arenas spread across many religious traditions--Christian and non-Christian."

Groh believes faculty members of the advisory board "will bring important perspectives from their disciplines and their own faiths and traditions--Protestant, Roman Catholic, Hindu, and Jewish" to Evelyn Chapel.

"This will introduce a whole new group of communities and their issues to chapel programs," Groh said, "and we'll take a quantum leap in that area."

Student board members, Groh explained, also will bring to Evelyn Chapel a new diversity of religions and departmental viewpoints, which also will contribute to enhancing the richness of chapel programs.

The structure of the advisory process is new, Groh explained, but not the direction of the IWU's chapel program.

"For years," Groh said, "IWU's chapel program has brought to campus outstanding scholar-practitioners representing various Christian and non-Christian traditions. That will continue with our new advisory structure."

The multifaith diversity of IWU's chapel program is seen in the range of guests it has hosted recently, including:

- The Rev. John E. Platt, an Oxford fellow, theology tutor, and college chaplain at Pembroke College, Oxford, in England, whose chapel service was titled, "Do we need the Great Words to encounter God?"
- Duke University's Eric M. Meyers, a renowned archaeologist and world-class cantor, who led a service of music and readings for the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, which celebrates the harvest

and the time when the Jews wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt led by Moses.

- James F. Strange, professor of religious studies at the University of South Florida, who spoke on "The Great Anti-Rebellion." Strange is director of USF excavations at Sepphoris in Lower Galilee, four miles north of Jerusalem in Israel. It is the ancient site of a city built by Herod the Great. Groh has described Strange as "one of the most famous Biblical archaeologists in the world, if not the most famous."

- The Rev. Thomas R.W. Longstaff, Crawford Family professor of religion, from Maine's Colby College, who spoke on "The Prodigal Party."

- Muneer Fareed, a lecturer in Near Eastern studies at Detroit's Wayne State University, whose chapel topic was "Islamic Spirituality."

- Father Ron Palmer of Normal's Bellermino-Newman Center, who discussed, "How to Mismanage a Miracle."

- Saraswati Puja: Worship of the Saraswati, Hindu Goddess of learning and the arts using dance liturgy by Bharatanatyam dancer Tonushree Jaggi, Harvard University '01, daughter of Narendra Jaggi, professor and chair of physics.

Groh sees several key roles for a chapel on a multifaith campus.

"A university chapel is not a church," Groh explains. "A university chapel is a place where the institution's educational aims can be developed by all races and creeds. This diversity of faiths is welcomed and celebrated at all multifaith universities--IWU included.

"This type of chapel," Groh added, "functions as a place where the campus community can intersect and interact with various Christian and non-Christian people with whom we share the campus and the planet."

Addressing the diversity of faiths and religious traditions around the world, Groh said: "I'm a committed Christian minister, but my take on the gospel is that for whatever reasons God has chosen Christians to share the planet with a whole variety of people who embody and teach divine truths.

"It is my job as a Christian," he explained, "to learn to meet these other faiths and traditions on their own turf and on their own terms in order to understand and appreciate them."

A key barometer of IWU's chapel program, according to Groh, is how well it facilitates the university's educational mission.

"A university chapel," Groh said, "should be a leader in making sense of life in a community of scholars."

The Evelyn Chapel Advisory Board replaces a narrower group, the University Chapel Committee (UCC), which was composed solely of Christian students.

"The mission of the chapel," Groh said, "is to deal with a variety of religious traditions to help produce graduates who are global citizens. Its purpose is not to serve a sectarian view of religion no matter how deeply held those views are.

"As university people," Groh added, "we need a place in our lives to confront the diversity of religious traditions--Christian and non-Christian--in reverence and respect. We want to bring diverse peoples together."

This goal, Groh points out, is in concert with the university's mission statement, which says, in part: "We want Illinois Wesleyan to reflect the ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of the world."

Groh sees his role as chaplain as "helping people at IWU find their religious stance and ways to act out that faith. This is a professional clerical role--not that of a pastoral counselor.

"My primary role," Groh said, "is to help empower people to find their way into religious

activities--and to explore and experiment through chapel programs."

Of IWU's 2,000 students, 1,240 registered a religious preference last September. Of the 1,240 students indicating a religious preference, 1,204 said their preference was Christian and 36 identified themselves as non-Christian.

Twenty-nine Christian faiths were identified by those students registering a religious preference, including 739 Protestants, 456 Roman Catholics, and nine Greek Orthodox students. Among the 10 non-Christian faiths identified by students registering a religious preference are: Hindu, Islam, and Jewish.

The University Chapel Hour takes place every Wednesday at 11 a.m. in Evelyn Chapel, 1301 Park St., Bloomington.

The public is invited to attend IWU chapel services and special events.

Chapel programs scheduled for the balance of the fall 1998 semester are:

- Nov. 4--A Service of Contemporary Christian Music, Sheryl Glofelty, an IWU senior majoring in religion from Shorewood, Ill.
- Nov. 11--University Chaplain Dennis E. Groh: "When Life Sends Us a 'D-Slip,' What Then?"
- Nov. 15--Sunday at 6 p.m. in the Evelyn Chapel Gallery. Ecumenical Christian Supper and Holy Communion.
- Nov. 18--Faculty Credo Chapel, Narendra Jaggi, professor and chair of physics, "What is a Hindu Physicist Doing in a Christian Chapel?"
- Dec. 2--James Sire, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., "Habits of the Mind: How Thinking Feels."
- Dec. 9--University Christmas Chapel
- Dec. 10--Thursday, 4:30-6 p.m., IWU Hanukkah Celebration, Main Lounge, Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University, Bloomington.
- Dec. 11--Friday at Midnight in Evelyn Chapel, Joint Illinois Wesleyan/Illinois State University Midnight Advent Communion Service; IWU Chaplain Dennis E. Groh and ISU Wesley Foundation Director C. Raydean Davis and IWU-ISU students.

Groh joined IWU in 1996 after serving as a professor of the History of Christianity at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill. A 1961 IWU graduate, he is a former member of Illinois Wesleyan's Board of Trustees. Groh earned a bachelor of divinity degree from Garrett and a doctorate from Northwestern University. He is associate director of the Sepphoris Excavations of the University of South Florida and has twice taken IWU students on archaeological digs in Israel.

For more information about IWU chapel programming, call: 309/556-3005.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts.

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| [Top of Page](#) |
