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# Evelyn Chapel Provides Home for Interfaith Community

Aug. 31, 2018

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Newly renovated Evelyn Chapel serves as the hub for Illinois Wesleyan University's diverse religious programming by offering students unique avenues of respecting, understanding and celebrating religious and secular diversity.

Directed by University Chaplain Elyse Nelson Winger, one of the Chapel's most distinctive campus-wide events to foster interreligious awareness is its annual Light the Night celebration, which invites students to collectively appreciate the food, music and traditions of different faiths during their winter celebrations.

Throughout the year, the Chapel also hosts worship events, lecture series, meetings for faith-related RSOs, and other programs led by Nelson Winger for the purpose of giving students the means to live their faith while appreciating the value of an interfaith campus.

A recent audit from an external review team affirmed the positive impact of Nelson Winger's work on campus life: "The external review team believes that the Illinois Wesleyan University Chaplain is providing ground-breaking work for this church-related institution, which is inclusive and welcoming to a wide diversity of students," the audit stated.

Nelson Winger also coordinates with a dedicated team of student Multifaith Ambassadors with a variety of religious and non-religious perspectives who work to create an inclusive interfaith community. Ambassadors lead several of the Chapel's initiatives, such as weekly ReligiosiTEA meetings where students of diverse religious and non-religious beliefs openly converse about topics that tie to religious diversity.

In addition, the new annual IWU Interfaith Summit provides a platform for affiliates of Illinois Wesleyan and other universities to join workshops on interfaith leadership, take part in service projects, and hear from influential leaders and social justice activists.

The Chapel also sponsors several off-campus opportunities, such as "Pursuing Passion, Claiming Callings: A Weekend Retreat on Vocation," which prompts students to consider the ways that religious and secular perspectives approach the idea of one's calling, or vocation. Similarly, [Alternative Break Programs](#) allow students to build their spirituality through hands-on interaction with different faith communities as well as through service trips that take place throughout the United States. This year's programs are "Changing Climates, Changing Faiths" during the fall and "Habitat for Humanity Collegiate Challenge" during the spring.

These opportunities and more are vital to the Illinois Wesleyan student experience.

"Diverse beliefs, convictions, and spiritual practices are welcome here as are a diversity of questions," said Nelson Winger, as part of Evelyn Chapel's philosophy. "Questions — about who we are and what we are for — are perennial in and for the liberal arts tradition."



Evelyn Chapel