

CONQUER & PREVAIL WOFFORD COLLEGE



ISSUE #7 | APRIL 9, 2020 | FROM THE OFFICE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



Holy Days

The first text that appeared in my Messages this morning was from a recent Wofford graduate. It included a photograph of a steaming bowl of soup, and the message said simply, "Hope you are doing well during this scary time, Rev. Ron." I was moved by the thoughtfulness, and as I looked more closely at the photograph, I noticed words printed on the outside of the soup bowl. The words were "A Simple Meal, Wofford College."

One of our holy times on campus is a weekly gathering in which there is a brief service of worship with music and a brief sermon by a student or me as the chaplain. I then offer communion for those who wish to receive or a blessing for those who prefer that. We light candles as we offer personal prayers, and we place the candles in a large, sand-filled container. Following the service, we gather for a simple meal of soup, bread and conversation. It is mostly a Christian experience, but we have student attendees from a variety of faith traditions and some from no particular faith. We enjoy being together and learning from and about each other. When students graduate, we give them a soup bowl to take with them.

We are now in the midst of holy days for Christians and Jews, and Muslims will begin their holiest time later this month. I miss being on campus these days. We have Holy Week events for Christians, including Maundy Thursday communion and a labyrinth walk and a Good Friday Procession of the Cross through campus. We also have an annual Passover meal, led by our Jewish students. We have an Eid al-Fitr meal whenever its date coincides with the academic year.

The first year we held the Passover meal, the number of Jewish students was small and they asked for help putting together the celebration so they could offer it to the campus. Very quickly the Muslim Student Association and an evangelical Christian group pitched in to assist. All were participants in the Passover celebration. It was a religious event for our Jewish community and an educational event for our larger college community. Students brought friends and some faculty and staff brought children. People who were just curious showed up. I remember looking around the gathering and thinking, “I wish the world could be this way.”

We have many religious traditions represented on campus, and we have folk who identify with no religious or spiritual tradition at all. When we are at our best, we learn from and support each other. In my role as chaplain, I see on a regular basis people offering love and care and respect for each other across identities and differences.

Come Sunday, I'll celebrate Easter at home for the first time ever. It will be a holy day — one that, as a child, I used to refer to as the “most holiest” just to make sure its importance was emphasized. When I offer my prayers to God, I'll give thanks for the promises of Easter, and I'll give thanks for this beloved Wofford community. I'll remember especially our students who take time to create deep friendships across differences. And I'll remember the recent grad, the former president of our Muslim Student Association, who reached out today to show me that she still uses her soup bowl and that she remembers the relationships forged here on campus. She and I have different holy days. But today, in some manner I can't fully explain, we shared one. We share love and care and respect.

I wish the world could be that way.



Collins conquers and prevails while deployed to the Middle East

Dr. Christopher Collins '95, a dentist in Greenwood, S.C., has been deployed with his S.C. Air National Guard unit to the Middle East. When COVID-19 hit, however, his deployment was extended, and he is now on the public health team addressing coronavirus issues while supplying emergency dental care for soldiers. He is even helping serve meals when needed. Back home, Dr. Josh Fennell '98 and Dr. Lang

Foster '90 have helped cover Collins' practice and are now helping with emergency cases while all of their private practices are closed because of the pandemic.

“Even with all this on his plate, Christopher stays in good spirits taking things one day at a time,” says Elise Rogers Collins '93. They met at Wofford in 1991, were married in 2000 and now have three children, Dawsey, Emma and Lily. “His positive perspective sets the tone for his family, who miss him and love him. We are so proud of him. And we know that God will bring good out of all this. Like we used to sing with Dr. Vic Bilanchone and Mr. Gary McCraw '77, ‘conquer and prevail,’ and we don’t do it alone.”



Old Main lit blue to draw attention to autism

During the month of April, Old Main is lit each evening in blue in observance of National Autism Awareness month.

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