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AN OUTREACH OF CHURCH RELATIONS

THE SPIRE

Strengthening the presence of the Church in the College and the presence of the College in the Church.

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Gustavus Academy for Faith, Science, and Ethics

By Evelyn Doran '21

In a constantly evolving world defined by the ever-expanding limits of technology and scientific discovery, young people often struggle to connect their understanding of the scientific world with that of their faith. Yet, each summer, high school students gather at Gustavus to explore the intersection of faith and science in the weeklong Gustavus Academy for Faith, Science, and Ethics.

The Gustavus Academy acts as an in-depth study of the ways in which scientific and religious communities around the world can and are collaborating in addressing the ethical issues facing the world today. Each year's Academy focuses on a specific central theme, often linking it to that year's Nobel Conference, a nationally recognized scientific conference hosted annually by Gustavus Adolphus College. Academy Fellows take the week to attend lectures given by experts in that year's featured fields, engage in meaningful conversation with biblical scholars, and participate in small group discussions.

As a high school student, I attended the Gustavus Academy in its inaugural year as an Academy Fellow and came back the following year as a Senior Fellow. As I am now a student at Gustavus, I am proud to further my involvement at the Academy as a mentor. My time at the Gustavus Academy shaped the way I understand the collaborative capabilities of science and



LAND AND IDENTITY

HOW OUR FOOD AND MICROBIOMES CHANGE WHO WE ARE

religion, and has allowed me to apply the communicative skills I learned to my everyday interactions and experiences. As a Political Science major, my classes are often filled with heated debate and controversy-inspiring dialogue about hot-button issues, so being able to understand and respect differences while also moving forward with a communal sense of purpose is integral to my ability to succeed in the classroom. Because of this, I apply what I learned at the Gustavus Academy to my work every single day, and am thankful that I had the opportunity to participate in an environment that encourage the deep dialogue that was so commonplace there.

But the Gustavus Academy does more than encourage discussion and teach deep listening.

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From the Director

PASTOR GRADY ST. DENNIS, Director of Church Relations



With this issue of The Spire we extend God's blessings to you from your partners in ministry at Gustavus Adolphus College! We hope it is a comfort to you to know that in our office we spend a

great deal of time thinking about you and your ministry. We realize that not every one of our member congregations of the Gustavus Association of Congregations is located close enough to campus to take advantage of the congregation resources we provide but we need you to know that it is inspiring to us to know that 500+ congregations think about us and pray for our students. Thank you!

Earlier this year at a gathering on campus of the Three Crowns Ambassadors, a group of volunteers who help connect their congregation to the resources Gustavus makes available for the church, one of the volunteers—when asked why they volunteered to serve their congregation in this role—said, "I want my congregation to be a college-related congregation."

We think a lot about what it means for Gustavus to be a church-related college. This

is an important part of our identity and a central aspect of our mission. There are many ways our missions overlap with each other. I hope you will consider what it would mean for your congregation to be a college-related congregation. We would point to your membership in the Gustavus Association of Congregations as one important way you are connected to Lutheran Higher Education.

The Gustavus Faith Conference is another great connection point each year that brings us together as a community. We held our 6th Annual Faith Conference on April 21, 2018 as we gathered around the theme, "Doubt and Difference: Finding Faith Through Authentic Engagement." Later that afternoon we enjoyed hosting the 31st Annual Business Meeting of the Gustavus Association of Congregations. Thank you for being a part of the Gustavus Association of Congregations and for being a college-related congregation!

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many

- 1 Corinthians 12:14

What does it mean for your congregation to be a college-related congregation?

Upcoming Events

ELCA Youth Gathering – Houston, TX June 27–July 1, 2018

Gustavus Academy for Faith, Science, and Ethics – July 14–20, 2018

Nobel Conference 54 – October 2–3, 2018

Fall Exploring Religious Questions Series – Mondays: October 8–29, 2018

Homecoming – October 6, 2018

Christmas in Christ Chapel – November 30–December 2, 2018



and, if you listen closely, you can hear me sobbing to her about how my plagues of "should" bees were eating me alive from the inside-out. Just as I did in my prayers, I asked Siri to wipe out these bees for good, but, similar to God, Siri said she could not be my exterminator. Instead, she told me that the only one who can truly control my bee infestation was me. I didn't need an exterminator: I needed self-compassion.

Siri gave me a book called Practicing Compassion by theologian Frank Rogers Jr. In his book, Rogers explains how human beings experience thoughts and feelings that interact with one another and attempt to gain influence over ourselves. Oftentimes, we tend to view such inner voices as sinful, and thus we try to ignore and suppress them. However, Rogers argues that our inner voices are not "bad" voices that must be stifled but burdened ones that deserve to be heard. In other words, "should" bees don't need to be killed: they need to be loved. According to Rogers, the first step towards practicing self-compassion is to identify a singular inner voice and cultivate a non-judgemental awareness of it. In doing so, we can then listen for this voice's cry of suffering. Rogers employs the acronym FLAG to name the four types of suffering: Fear, Longing or desire, an Ache or a previous wound, and Gift or talent that has been oppressed. Once we identify the FLAG or FLAGS that mark the suffering behind an inner voice, we must love and accept that voice unconditionally and extend tender care towards its' need or wound.

This is the step I struggle with the most, because I used to see self-compassion as a kind of selfishness. It seemed to me that, if I took the time to listen to and care for the many voices and "should" bees inside my head, then I would become too preoccupied and obsessed with my own wellbeing, and I would therefore overlook opportunities to care for the wellbeings of others as God calls us to do. However, as Siri reminded me, God commands us to "love our neighbors as we love ourselves." Furthermore, 1 Cor. 3:4 ensures us that "the Father of compassion... comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." In other words, in order to be compassionate and loving towards others, we need to accept God's unconditional compassion and love for ourselves. In this way, self-compassion becomes an act of selflessness, not selfishness. So, as our Magic School Bus at last departs my mind, take one last look around at my "should" bees. You will notice that some of them now carry little flags. These bees are much calmer and more peaceful than the ones without flags- the ones who still need to be heard, understood, and loved. Self-compassion for me is a work-in-progress, one that is going to require much time, practice, and patience, but, through God's loving and compassionate example and presence, I will continue to find healing. Self-compassion, like field trips on the Magic School Bus, can be a risky and messy journey at times, but it is worth the ride.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

According to the Gustavus mission statement, "we embrace the notion that authentic leadership expresses itself in service." One of the ways in which the Gustavus community expresses its passion for serving others each year is through annual Spring Break service trips with Habitat for Humanity. This year, Gustavus students and faculty participated in three habitat trips—one to Taos, New Mexico, another to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and a third to Lafayette, Louisiana. While serving the community, students are able to expand their worldview, gaining just as much as they give. One student described her decision to go to Taos as "one of the best decisions I have made thus far in college. Not only did I have the opportunity to build adobe houses for the most deserving families, but I also had the opportunity to meet and interact with some of the most incredible people I've ever met. (Gusties and Habitat staff included.)" Initiatives like Habitat offer key experiences to the Gustavus community, taking what students discuss in the classroom and putting it into action as they experience life-changing service, while also creating a lasting impact in communities across the country.





The “Should” Bees

By Megan Eide '19

Megan Eide, a mentor with the 2017 Gustavus Academy for Faith, Science, and Ethics, used her time with the Academy to spread a message of self-acceptance. This article is an adaptation of a speech Megan gave during her time as an Academy Mentor, as part of the Body-Self Narrative curriculum, which encourages Academy Fellows and Mentors alike to explore the entirety of their being and become comfortable with participating in meaningful dialogue regarding their body-selves.

When I was in elementary school, I went on some pretty epic and unforgettable field trips: I got to explore an underwater volcano, blast off to outer space, crawl inside an ant hill, and I even had the chance to travel back in time to meet the dinosaurs. All of these adventures were made possible by The Magic School Bus. For those of you unfamiliar with this popular tv and book series, The Magic School Bus is about a fun, quirky teacher named Ms. Frizzle and her third grade class who hop on their shape-shifting, physics-defying Magic School Bus to travel to bizarre, uncharted destinations.

Today, I will be playing the role of Ms. Frizzle, and I am going to lead you, my class, on a unique excursion to a place no one has dared venture before: my mind. I know what you're thinking: this territory sounds frightening and dangerous with all of its hidden thoughts and suppressed memories, but I assure you that my thoughts have yet to consume anyone (other than myself). Nevertheless, I encourage you to please keep your hands and feet inside the Magic School Bus at all times.

As we drive through my mind, there are several sights you will take in: mostly piles of to-do lists and photographs of family and friends.

But, what I really want you to keep an eye out for are bees. There are usually dozens of them buzzing around my mind, so they should be easy to spot. Of course, these are not your typical honey bees or bumble bees. These are “should” bees. They infest my mind with notions of what I should and should not do and think. For example, they might spread ideas like “I should eat healthier” and “I should not feel homesick my second year of college.” One of the most common “should” bees is the one that says that “I should get all As every semester.”

If you know anything about “should” bees (perhaps have a few of them buzzing around your own mind), then you know that they have a tendency to multiply, fight, and compete for dominance. For me, my “perfect grades” “should” bee is often attacked by another bee that says “grades shouldn't matter because it's the learning that counts,” and that bee shames me for being so shallow as to value a letter printed on a transcript over knowledge imprinted in my brain. That bee is then bombarded by another “should” bee who frightens me into believing that if I don't get all As, I won't receive the scholarships I need to go to seminary, and then I won't achieve my dream of becoming a pastor. As you can see, within a matter of seconds, my mind can become infested with “should” bees, and as they grow louder and fight harder for my attention, they tug my emotions in all directions and tear my self-confidence to shreds. When this self-destruction ensues, I usually pray to God and beg Him to be my exterminator. I plead with Him to please wipe out these intrusive “should” bees from my thoughts, so I can hear what He truly wants me to do and understand. Although I ask for immediate and thorough action on God's part, He has yet to exterminate my “should” bees with some sort of miracle spray or to give me any instantaneous bee repellent. Thus, I often resort to swatting these pesky “should” bees away myself by ordering the bees to just shut up and suck it up, but these commands only seem to anger them even more.

This brings us to the next stop on our Magic School Bus tour.

We are now driving through my memory bank and parking inside my vault of memories from three months ago. Here, you will see an image of me sitting in a chair in Chaplain Siri Erickson's office,



(Gustavus Academy for Faith, Science, and Ethics continued from cover)

One of the central lessons of each year's Academy is the Lutheran understanding of vocation—an idea which encourages everyone to pursue their calling by living at the intersection of their gifts and talents and the needs of the world. When I first attended the Academy, I was unsure of what I wanted to be “when I grew up.” I knew that I loved writing and communicating thoughts and ideas, but wasn't sure how best to apply that to my adult life. After exploring my personal vocation through the Gustavus Academy, I am now much more able to articulate how I plan to use my gifts for the good of the world, and can move forward in my life with intentionality knowing that I can do my part to make the world a better place. I think that this is one of the most important things that the Gustavus Academy teaches—it empowers students to recognize their talents, and encourages them to look to their communities with an eye for how they can help. By encouraging young people to see their own potential and use it to positively impact the world around them, the Academy acts as a catalyst for positive change, and is helping to create a better world through each Academy Fellow.

38th Annual MAYDAY! Peace Conference

Gustavus Adolphus College's 38th annual MAYDAY! Peace Conference was held on Wednesday, May 2, in Christ Chapel. This year's conference focused on gender, justice, and peacebuilding, with Nobel Prize-winner Leymah Gbowee as the keynote speaker.

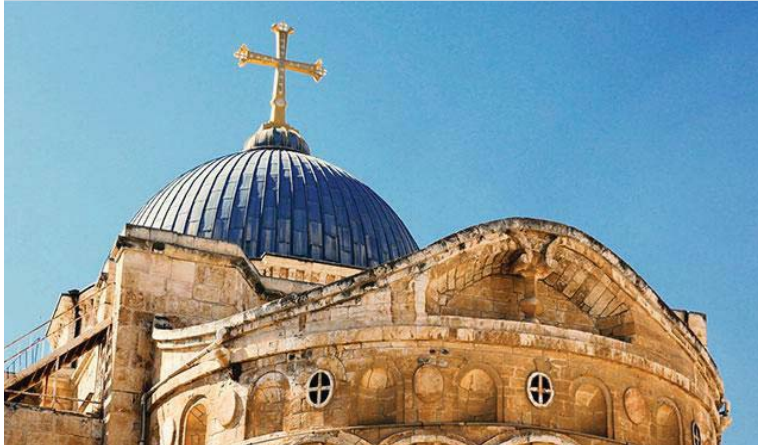
Gbowee is a Liberian peace activist, trained social worker, and women's rights advocate. She is the founder and current President of the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa and is a distinguished activist in residence at Union Theological Seminary. Her memoir, *Mighty Be Our Powers*, and the award-winning documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* depict her work with the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. In 2011, the Nobel Committee recognized Gbowee as a Nobel Prize Laureate.

“I admire Gbowee not only for her courage, peace-building work, and advocacy for women's and children's rights but also for her leadership the worth and dignity of all people and to seek peace and justice with people of all faiths.”

When asked about what influenced her to want to work diligently or peace, Gbowee explains that her faith background and community played a huge role. “I knew deep down inside there was always a sadness for anyone who was suffering from injustice. The semblance of community I had experienced as a child was destroyed as a result of the war, but because the seed of social justice was planted at a young age, I knew I had to be the force of change. I would be a disappointment to myself, my community, my faith, if I didn't find the adrenaline to get up everyday and do something for peace,” she said.

The Annual MAYDAY! Peace Conference was founded at Gustavus in 1981 by the late Florence and Raymond Sponberg of North Mankato and is designed to educate the community about issues related to peace, human rights and social justice. The conference occurs every year on the last Wednesday in April or the first Wednesday in May. Previous conference themes have focused on land rights, violence in community, hunger, the banning of landmines, food security, global water issues, and political policies relating to peace issues.





Holy Land Study Tour 2018

This October 12–25, Rev. Grady St. Dennis and Professor Emeritus Darrell Jodock of Gustavus Adolphus College will join Dr. Monte Luker from The Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies as they lead a trip to the Holy Land. The trip, lasting for 14 incredible days of biblical study and adventure, will travel to Bethlehem, the Sea of Galilee, Jerusalem, and many other spiritual sites. The accompanying curriculum will discuss the people of Israel-Palestine, ancient and modern times, and much more.

This once-in-a-lifetime trip gives worshippers the chance to enhance their faith by diving deeper into their biblical studies. Lessons will combine the chance to learn more about their faith in a real world context and explore where the sacred text was written.

Those attending the trip will have the opportunity to become a student again and experience the world—just without the tests and papers. The Gustavus faculty are experts on the destination highlights found in any guide book, and then take travelers deeper, allowing them to explore the Holy Land in a way one simply cannot without such companions. The faculty are experienced guides designing trips that are a mix of learning and leisure, sharing their vast knowledge and passion for a destination and utilizing their connections to discover unique experiences.

Trip participants were recently given a glimpse into the life of the Lutheran church in the Holy Land as they enjoyed dinner and discussion with Bishop Emeritus Dr. Munib Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land, on April 21. Dr. Younan is a prominent leader of the Lutheran church in the Holy Land, leading such organizations as the Middle East Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches. Because of his depth of experience and understanding, Dr. Younan was able to provide an engaging first hand perspective of what trip members might experience during their time abroad.



Office of Church Relations Staff

In reviewing the past year in the Office of Church Relations, one word comes to mind: community. This fall our community doubled in size, welcoming in six new student coordinators and our wonderful new Assistant Director of Church Relations, Jodi Maas.

Our community has worked together to create amazing results, hosting 1,186 students and 230 adults as they attend various retreats on campus. Some favorite guests include a group from our sister synod in South Africa, complete with a luncheon and cultural exchange with traditional African singing. This spring we were able to host the 6th Annual Faith Conference, focusing on the theme: *“Doubt & Difference: Finding Faith Through Authentic Engagement.”* Our collaborative efforts helped to bring guests to Gustavus to enjoy an insightful day of speakers and dialogue.

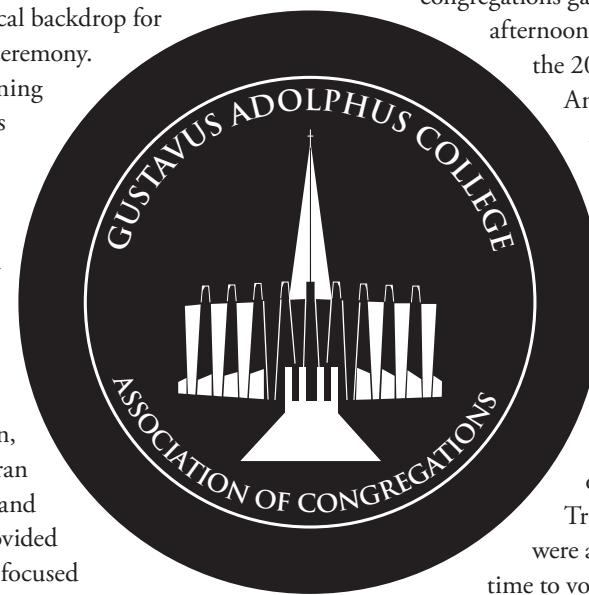
Our community has also grown to be a family, bonding through wonderful retreats and out-of-office experiences. Beginning in September with an overnight retreat at Prairie Oaks Institute, the spirit of fun and friendship has never left our office. From Christmas parties to Wow Zone end-of-year celebrations, being able to enjoy time together outside of our work has allowed the staff to become close friends. The relationships fostered in our community go beyond office hours, creating lasting memories of true friendship. As Carrie Probst, a student coordinator and senior describes, “I will miss working here after graduation, but I look forward to staying in contact with my colleagues, as I’ve made friendships that will last a lifetime.”

As we near the end of the year, our community will grow a little smaller as three student workers will graduate in May to continue their vocation in the world. We wish all the best to our graduating seniors, knowing that while they pursue their dreams around the world, they will always have a place in our hearts and on The Hill. Thank you Shane Collings, Jake Glaser, and Carrie Probst, for all you’ve done in the Office of Church Relations.



6th Annual Faith Conference

On Saturday, April 21st, Christ Chapel welcomed a day filled dialogue, learning, and discernment as it hosted the 31st Annual Association of Congregations Business Meeting and the 6th Annual Faith Conference: “Doubt & Difference: Finding Faith Through Authentic Engagement”. The day’s proceedings began at 9:30am, as the Gustavus Choir provided the musical backdrop for a joyous opening ceremony. Following the opening ceremony, speakers Dr. Jacqueline A. Bussie, Professor of Religion and Director of Forum on Faith and Life at Concordia College, and Bishop Emeritus Dr. Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land provided insightful lectures focused on the topic of the conference. Dr. Bussie, theologian and author, built on themes from her book *Outlaw Christian*, which focuses on authentic, rule-breaking faith. In her book, Bussie describes her own journey, stating that “in my journey toward becoming a more authentic person, I came to realize I was not like most other religious folks I knew.” Bussie has used her book



and lectures to promote an authentic relationship with personal faith, and continues to do so in her newest publication, *Love Without Limits: Jesus’ Radical Vision of Love With No Exceptions*, which will be released in late August.

Following the morning lectures, GACAC delegates from Association member congregations gathered for an afternoon luncheon and the 2018 GACAC Annual business meeting. The business meeting featured a welcome address given by President Rebecca Bergman and the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Delegates were able to use this time to vote on important business matters, as well as to present the Covenant Award to Professor Florence Amamoto.

Please watch for communications shared on our website at gustavus.edu/churchrelations and mailings directed to Association congregations and delegates.



CHRISTMAS IN CHRIST CHAPEL 2018

“Visions of Divine Mystery”
November 30 at 7:30 p.m.,
December 1 and 2 at 3:30 p.m.
and 7:30 p.m.

Christmas in Christ Chapel, an annual event at Gustavus Adolphus College, is an integral part of the Christmas season on campus. Past themes for Christmas in Christ Chapel have ranged from the South African concept of “ubuntu,” focusing on African heritage and the oneness of humanity, to the lasting impact of the Protestant Reformation in Germany and celebration of the 500th anniversary of Luther’s 95 Theses. For the 2018 Christmas in Christ Chapel, the program will shift its focus to the divine, drawing inspiration from awe-inspiring natural wonders as the event describes the ways in which God is revealed through angels and prophets.

This year’s Christmas in Christ Chapel will feature music that combines the talents of Gustavus’s entire music department, featured dancers, and the Gustavus Symphony Orchestra. This year’s concert places a specific emphasis on featuring mass choir pieces, which utilize the singers of all three choirs at once, rather than on small ensemble pieces.

As Christmas in Christ Chapel is one of Gustavus’s most popular events, tickets often sell out quickly. Pre-order your tickets at gustavustickets.com, or tune into the livestream performance. Christmas in Christ Chapel will take place on November 30, December 1, and December 2. To gain access to additional benefits like reserved seating and invitation to special events, you can become a member or join Friends of Music.