SUMMER 2025 · ISSUE 25

WINTHROP ECUMENICAL LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY

A NOTE FROM THE CAMPUS MINISTER

"**The only person** who likes change is a baby with wet diapers." That was a favorite phrase of one of my mentors, Dr. Kent Hunter. And yet, as someone else wise said, "the only thing you can count on, besides death and taxes, is 'change.'"

WELCM had its fair share of change during the first half of 2025: Due to a heavy school load and teaching duties this fall, peer minister, Emmie, completed her year of serving as a peer minister. Thanks, Emmie! Clara will take her place.

Clara graduated, but is sticking around. **Grace** joined the WELCM community. **Alex** celebrated his baptism. **New supporters** stepped up.

After many years of faithful leadership of the WELCM Committee, Bob Stonebraker, passed the leadership baton to Sabrina Blanks. Thanks for your service, Bob!

Pr. Rachel and Pr. Gregg, the pastors of our host congregation, Grace Lutheran, moved to serve a congregation in Florida. Godspeed, Pastors Hoffman.

God's Peace!

Thank You to WELCM's Supporters

Several Lutheran congregations in SC and one in NC have recently responded generously to a special one-time matching gift invitation from an anonymous WELCM donor:

- Reformation in Lancaster
- Crossroads in Indian Land
- Amazing Grace in Waxhaw
- Pine Grove in Lone Star
- St. Peter's on Pawley's Island

A number of other congregations and individuals have also indicated their interest or willingness to make use of the matching gift invitation.
We continue to give thanks for the support provided by the ELCA, the SC Synod, and the Lutheran churches in Rock Hill, Grace and Epiphany.

WELCM NEWS

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Scan below to support us!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Do you care to hear about an awesome faith journey?
Look no further. Savannah's story has it all: minimal exposure to religion as a child; a spiritual awakening as a teen; a couple of bumps on the road of faith development; finding the welcoming and safe spiritual community she's been looking for; and, finally, the decision to get baptized. Read on.



Before arriving on the Winthrop campus, Savannah's educational journey included Wando High School in Mt. Pleasant, SC, and Trident Technical College in Charleston, SC. "At some point," she said, "I realized I didn't want to live at home anymore. I wanted to broaden my horizon, and since I had friends at Winthrop, I transferred to WU."

Religion did not play much of a role when she was growing up. After graduating from High School, however, a need to go to church emerged in her. "I wanted to explore my faith on my own," she said.

Savannah's faith exploration blossomed after she arrived at Winthrop and she tried out several campus ministry opportunities. Being very blunt, she states: "Compared to other places that do the same thing WELCM does (campus ministry) and felt scary, I felt at home and very comfortable at WELCM. Other places didn't feel as welcoming as WELCM. I felt that there I couldn't be my full self, that I couldn't explore my religion."

From the start, WELCM was a great fit for Savannah. WELCM was, and still is, what she was looking for: "a community that felt safe, where I could explore my spirituality and religion, and that was welcoming to everyone."

WELCM brought me
a sense of community!
It felt safe and welcoming!

Savannah gives high marks to the hospitality she experienced both at WELCM and at Grace Lutheran Church. About WELCM, she states, "I came to the first WELCM event in my first semester (a cookout) and everyone was so nice and welcoming. It brought me a sense of community. I kept coming back because of the people and the gatherings."

During her freshman year, she began worshipping at Grace Lutheran Church, one of WELCM's main supporters. She reports a very positive experience: "I was always scared to walk into a religious space or church when I was growing up." Grace, however, was different: "Seeing people that are part of the church who were understanding and welcoming made a big impact on me. They made me feel safe and didn't want to beat up on me spiritually or emotionally. I was invited and allowed to take Communion."

In the Fall of 2024, Savannah's faith journey led her to take on the role of peer minister. In the Spring of 2025, she made the decision to be baptized. One can only imagine what other awesome things God has in mind for her as her journey of faith continues.

END-oF-SEMESTER



The WELCM community celebrated the end of the 2025 Spring semester and the end of the 2024-25 academic year with a cook-out sponsored by the WELCM Committee. Unfortunately, not all students were able to participate.

CONGRATULATIONS, CLARA AND ALEX!



"You did it, Clara!"

After graduating from Winthrop this spring with her Bachelors of Science in Biology and a minor in Spanish and Educational Studies (and wrapped in her WELCM graduation gift, a prayer blanket), Clara will continue in the Masters of Arts in Teaching program at Winthrop. This fall, she will also begin serving as one of WELCM's peer ministers.



"That was some special experience, Alex!"

At the beginning of May, surrounded by family and friends, Alex, a Sophomore studying Social Work with a minor in Religion, celebrated his baptism in the Atlantic Ocean near North Myrtle Beach, SC. The water was reasonably warm, the joy was great, and the celebration meal included pizza and soft drinks.

This fall, Alex, will serve as a WELCM peer minister understudy.

A NOTE FROM THE NEW COMMITTEE CHAIR



After a long and fruitful tenure as WELCM Committee chair, Bob Stonebraker handed over the reins to **Sabrina Blanks.** Sabrina grew up in Charlotte where she attended Queens University and was a stage manager and costumer for live theatre for over 25 years. Her family moved to Rock Hill in 2018 and joined Grace Lutheran Church where she sings in the Parish Choir, rings with the Grace Ringers, and serves on various committees. She has been serving on the WELCM Committee and supporting the WELCM students for several years.

She lives near Historic Brattonsville with cats, goats, her husband, and a beagle. She does a lot of crocheting and sewing and is the Vice President of her garden club. Earlier this year she got to check off an item on her bucket list when she appeared as a contestant on Jeopardy!

Welcome to WELCM: Grace Marty



Grace Marty joined the WELCM community during the Spring Semester 2025.

This fall she will be a senior studying Social Work with a minor in Children and Youth Wellbeing. She hopes to become a school social worker. She is also a member of the Winthrop sorority, Zeta Tau Alpha, and currently serves as the treasurer.

In her free time, she loves to play video games, read, hand embroider, and hang out with her friends and fiance'. She also loves all things Disney and enjoys visiting theme parks. **About WELCM** she has this to say:

"Joining WELCM has really helped me come out of my shell and explore my faith. I look forward to this year and hope to grow more connections to God and my Winthrop community."

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