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WINTHROP ECUMENICAL LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT 1

Maggie: Growing in Faith and Finding Supportive Community



Maggie came to Winthrop University from the Asheville, NC, area with a background in the Episcopal Church and a dedication to summer camp ministry. Her background led her to seek a campus ministry where she could continue to grow in her faith and experience authentic and accepting community.

Maggie researched various campus ministries online. To her, *WELCM stood out. It was open to everybody*. After learning more about WELCM via email, she attended the first gathering, the cookout at the start of the semester. She remembers that *everyone was very welcoming and open. I had a great time*.

M**aggie kept, and keeps, participating** in WELCM for a variety of reasons: *It feels safe. It is a space to ask questions—especially faith questions, without anyone pushing their answers onto me. The community is positive and supportive*.

Two WELCM highlights mentioned by Maggie are the "buddy system" and the "community service projects." The "buddy system" invites WELCM students to connect with adults from Grace Lutheran Church who like to be supportive of a student. Maggie connected with Bob and Annie-Laurie who invited her to dinner at their house and stayed in touch with her via email. According to Maggie, t*hey were especially supportive during Hurricane Helene* which had affected her family home in North Carolina. Maggie thinks of Bob and Annie Laurie fondly as *an extra set of grandparents*.

Another important element of Maggie's WELCM experience has been teaming up with the other students to volunteer at a local food bank. *I enjoyed it*, says Maggie.

WELCM NEWS

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT, CONT'D

My faith has grown through being at WELCM, says Maggie. *I figured out what is spiritually important to me*. She gives credit to *bible studies with a good lens, really helpful bible conversations, and not being forced to swallow others' opinions*. Another factor contributing to her spiritual development has been WELCM's Sunday Evening Prayer Service. Maggie, who also played in the WELCM worship band, *enjoyed the centering, the small and intimate feeling, and the peace and quiet*. She summarized it as *"a spiritual vitamin shot*.

Maggie recommends WELCM to other students because of the WELCM qualities most appreciated by her: *WELCM is open to anyone, supportive, open, and affirming*. She quickly adds: *I love the food and the fact that we have table community sitting around one big table*. Maggie sums up her experience with WELCM thusly: *I give it five stars*.

----------STUDENT SPOTLIGHT 2----------



Emma: Finding Deep Friendship and Healthy Religion

Emma hails from Boiling Springs, SC, and she came to Winthrop because she liked the Environmental Studies program, the professors, and Winthrop's location.

Although raised in the Roman Catholic tradition, a very full schedule during her high school years (daily soccer practice, school, a job) left no time to attend worship. At Winthrop, though, she was open to deepen her religious journey: *I still believed in God but I was very unsure about how to get back into it more in a way that felt natural to me and didn't feel that I was forcing it*. A friend invited Emma to a student-led WELCM bible study on campus. She liked it and decided to get more involved with WELCM as soon as her work schedule would allow.

WELCM became an inportant pillar in her faith development. Emma states: *My faith has grown due to my affiliation with WELCM. We have discussions about what happens in the bible and how it relates to present day stuff. I find that personally helpful to get a deeper understanding. Nobody is shoving stuff down your throat*.

Emma's first time at a WELCM event away from the Winthrop campus was an end-of-semester and Christmas party. She was pleasantly surprised: *Even though it was my first time going, there was a Christmas gift and a special note for me. It was really cool to be so welcomed to WELCM*.

Besides the warm welcome, there was something else that kept Emma coming back: *the community and how non-judgmental it is, and how it is a healthy way to go about religion*. WELCM became really important to Emma who says: *I get really sad when I can't go to WELCM*.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT, CONT'D

In addition to the support Emma received during several challenges, her experience of caring Christian community, and her participation in volunteering with WELCM at local charities, she really appreciates this about WELCM: *Whether you are extremely religious or you aren't, it's a good place to find people who are going to love and support you for who you are, not trying to change you, not trying to tell how you think, and you can make friendships that will last a lifetime. And I know about these friendship because I text these girls every single day. It's a very good way to find a close-knit community to make friends that will help you to be the very best version of yourself.*

SERVICE PROJECT





We are always grateful for opportunities to serve our community, especially through volunteering at the Bethel Men's Shelter. On this visit, we helped prepare for the changing seasons by packing away winter clothing and bringing out items for the warmer days ahead.

EASTER SERVICE



Happy Easter! This year, we gathered for our own Easter celebration the Tuesday after Easter. We were joined by the Wesley Campus Ministry for dinner and a beautiful service led by Pastor Hahn and our WELCM band. Together, we broke bread, read the Gospel, shared Holy Communion, and lifted our voices in joyful celebration. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

STUDENT OUTING



For our student outing this semester, some of our students went on a hike at Crowders Mountain to grow closer as a community and take time to appreciate God's Creation.

CATCHING UP!

Bella was a member of WELCM throughout her time at Winthrop (2020-2024). Since graduating, she has moved to Greenville, SC, started teaching, and begun attending Christ Church Episcopal. She has been teaching first grade for two years and will serve as her grade-level team leader next year!

She lives close enough to downtown to walk after school and recently adopted a 9-year-old cat named Poppy. Bella tells us that even though she has a serious RBF, Poppy is the friendliest cat ever. If you ever have the pleasure of meeting Poppy, you must greet her with a hearty butt scratch and an enthusiastic "AYYYE PAPI!"



Bella in downtown Greenville

The RBF in question



Thank You to WELCM's Supporters

Several congregations and individuals provide ongoing and occasional support to the ministry of WELCM. We give thanks for financial and material gifts, for dinners, for special occasions, for prayers, and for personal support. A detailed thank-you note will be published in the Summer newsletter.

Winthrop Ecumenical Lutheran Campus Ministry
426 Oakland Avenue
Rock Hill, SC 29730
www.welcm.org

Campus Minister
Pastor Norbert Hahn
cm@welcm.org

Peer Ministers
Clara Whitehead
whiteheadc5@winthrop.edu
Vanessa Miles
milesv2@winthrop.edu
Roxanne Price
pricer7@winthrop.edu