FALL 2025 · ISSUE 26

WINTHROP ECUMENICAL LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Up until sixth grade, Alex conformed to the family's Pentecostal and Baptist religious traditions. Then the claims and methods of Alex's religious environment stopped working. Alex remembers: *Nothing felt authentic. Nothing was authentic. I didn't feel much of an affinity to the one who created me.*

Then, during a long and often painful process of identity formation, Alex discovered the sexist, homophobic, and heavy-handed "you are a sinner and worthless without God" characteristics of the church. It wasn't helpful at all. Alex states: *I no longer felt any love or gentleness from the Word of God.*

"Nothing felt authentic. Nothing was authentic. I didn't feel much of an affinity to the One who created me."

But a stubborn streak and several supportive people helped Alex cope with pain and religious trauma. Eventually, things started to get sorted out. After rejecting the religion of the past and a brief flirtation with secularism, Alex discovered the affirming, loving, accepting, and welcoming content of the Bible and churches that practice those values. Still, Alex remained an agnostic.

After encountering WELCM at Winthrop's 2024 Convocation Involvement Fair, Alex came to a Tuesday gathering. Alex recalls: *Pastor Hahn was there, and he was just as welcoming as he was at the involvement fair. I felt awkward and quiet. "I'm an autistic introvert, what am I doing here?" I asked myself. But this girl named Clara immediately started talking to me, and I started to ease into the new energy of the house almost instantly.*

"Remember that scene from the Grinch where his heart grew three sizes? That was my heart. My bitterness for religion started to melt away."

WELCM NEWS

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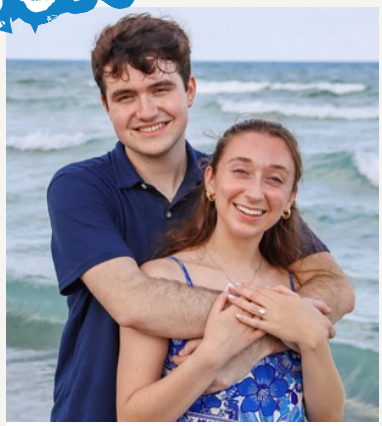
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

The WELCM community and the immersion in modern-age, relevant topics and Bible study affected Alex profoundly. Alex says: *Remember that scene from the Grinch where his heart grew three sizes? That was my heart. My bitterness for religion started to melt away. I don't know when exactly, but I started praying again. It helped with my anxiety attacks. Like the name "Jesus" was an ointment to my wounds. Then, I started believing again. WELCM showed me not to give up on faith. The kindness and authenticity of the people there was something I needed to see. They didn't pretend to agree with each other on everything, but they were civil. They were loving towards each other. They were Christians.*

CONGRATS



To Gracee on her engagement. Gracee has been with WELCM since 2022. She recently got engaged to Dallas Rollyson. We wish them well!

WELCM BAND



Evening prayer is back in full swing! Thank you to our newly founded WELCM band for providing us with great music on Sunday evenings. Our WELCM band consists of Maggie (far left) playing violin, Roxanne (middle) playing guitar, and Vanessa (far right) on keyboard!

A NOTE FROM THE CAMPUS MINISTER



So far, the fall semester 2025 has been filled with blessing for WELCM:

The students are simply awesome! It is a privilege for me to serve as their campus minister. Almost all of last years participants have returned, and God also sent us new students. At many Tuesday 6 PM gatherings, all the chairs around the dining table are filled. Bible study is still popular!

Students are excited about two special events: a service projects at a local shelter for homeless men and an afternoon at a horse farm. The last one is new, as is the WELCM band at Sunday 7 PM evening prayer.

The WELCM community continues to be the grateful recipient of the financial and food generosity from a growing number of supporters. (Details on page 4.) Thank you!

God's Peace!

SEMESTER START



We had a great turn out for our annual WELCM Back cookout! We were happy to see so many returning faces and new ones, too. Thanks to everyone for coming out!

FROM OUR PEER MINISTERS:



Hi, my name is **Savannah,** and this is my third semester being a WELCM peer minister, but my fourth year attending WELCM. I absolutely love the group of people who attend WELCM and enjoy getting to know them even more every semester. I have also loved getting to know the new members to our WELCM family this semester. WELCM has not only given me an amazing community of people, but has also helped me strengthen my faith. I am excited to continue to learn and grow as I prepare for a new journey after I graduate this December!



Hi everyone! My name is **Clara**, and I'm so excited to be joining WELCM as a new peer minister. I'm really looking forward to walking alongside you all and helping both current and future members feel joyful, safe, and affirmed. This semester, I'll be leading a service project that gives us the chance to give back to our community. My hope is that through this work, we can share and reflect the incredible love God has for each of us.

Welcome to WELCM!



Welcome Vanessa! She is a junior English major here at Winthrop.



Welcome Roxanne! She is a freshman at Winthrop, majoring in Music Therapy.

Thank You to WELCM's Supporters

Several Lutheran congregations in SC and one in NC have responded generously to a special one-time matching gift invitation from an anonymous WELCM donor. Previously mentioned were Reformation in Lancaster, Crossroads in Indian Land, Amazing Grace in Waxhaw, Pine Grove in Lone Star, and St. Peter's on Pawley's Island.

Recently, generous gifts--matched by an anonymous WELCM supporter--were given by Redeemer in Columbia, SC and Pastor and Mrs. Haggerty also in Columbia. In addition, a personal gift was given by Ms. Tonya Whitehead.

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.

The WELCM students are grateful to the members of the four congregations who are sharing God's Love in a practical way by providing tasty dinners for WELCM's Tuesday gatherings: Amazing Grace in Waxhaw; Crossroads in Indian Land; Epiphany and Grace in Rock Hill.

Behind the scenes, WELCM is supported by a Campus Ministry Committee.

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