

# WINTHROP ECUMENICAL LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY

## A NOTE FROM THE CAMPUS MINISTER

**“A joyful, affirming, and safe community”** -- that is the WELCM tagline that was imprinted on the pens and plastic cups that were given away to incoming students to help them find a supportive community as they began a new chapter in their lives as freshmen at Winthrop. It is our goal, and we are moving towards it.

**WELCM is a “joyful” community.** When we get together, there is a lot of laughter and delight as well as gentle ribbing and teasing. (Sometimes, I must admit, when the humor is too generation specific, I need to ask the students to translate or explain.) **WELCM is also an “affirming” community.** Students who march to the beat of a different drum, who are on their own unique journey of self-definition, who need to move beyond the religious and cultural strictures of their younger years are all affirmed as beloved children of God. **WELCM is “safe” community.** Here you can be truly yourself, how God made you. Here you will be lifted up, not put down. At WELCM you hear words of encouragement, not words of judgment or prejudice. Here you will be included, not marginalized.

**Don’t take my word for it.** One WELCM freshmen, confined to bed due to an injury towards the end of the first semester and, therefore, unable to participate in WELCM’s Thanksgiving dinner and worship stated: “I can’t believe I’m missing Thanksgiving dinner. I miss y’all so much.”

God’s Peace, Pastor John

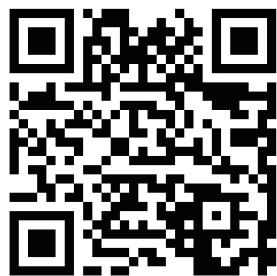
### Words of Thanks

For prayer and financial support of WELCM during the 2024 Fall Semester, we give thanks to Grace and Epiphany Lutheran Churches in Rock Hill, the SC Synod of the ELCA, The Lutheran Campus Ministry Network (LuMIn) of the ELCA, Reformation Lutheran Church, Lancaster, SC, and Fairfax Lutheran Parish, Fairfax, SC as well as to various individuals. For food and hospitality during the previous semester, we give thanks to members of Grace Lutheran Church, Rock Hill, and Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, Waxhaw, NC. For behind-the-scenes support and throwing great start-of-the-semester cookouts and end-of-the-semester Christmas parties, we give thanks to the WELCM Committee consisting of representatives from Grace and Epiphany Lutheran Churches in Rock Hill.

## WELCM NEWS

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# A NOTE FROM THE PEER MINISTERS

## Emmie Tatum (she/her)

Hi, I'm Emmie! I have been attending WELCM since spring of this year, and this is my first semester being a WELCM peer minister. WELCM has been an amazing space and experience for me so far, and I love being able to serve this group as much as it has served me. I have been really grateful for the opportunity to be a peer minister, and cannot wait to see where the role takes me next semester.



## Savannah Rennell (she/her)

Hi, my name is Savannah! I am a Junior at Winthrop and I have been attending WELCM since my freshman year. WELCM has made such a big impact on my life. This community of people is so loving and accepting of everyone. This is my first semester being a peer minister and I have loved being able to make everyone feel as welcome as I have. I am very excited to keep working with this wonderful group of people next semester.



## FROM THE PEER MINISTERS

We've been up to some cool things this semester! We've volunteered at Hope of Rock Hill, tabled at multiple new student engagement events, planned a group trip to Windy Hill Orchard, and planned a lot of really great discussions for the group. Discussion topics this semester have included exploring LGBTQ+ affirming Bible verses, Christian nationalism and politicized Christianity, and the afterlife. We've also hosted game night, an election watch party, and Thanksgiving and Christmas parties. We've also maintained an active presence on social media platforms including Instagram and Facebook, and revamped the WELCM website to make it easier to navigate. We currently have fourteen active members, seven of whom have just joined us this semester! It's been a joy to see WELCM grow and to get to know our new members

## SERVICE: HOPE OF ROCK HILL



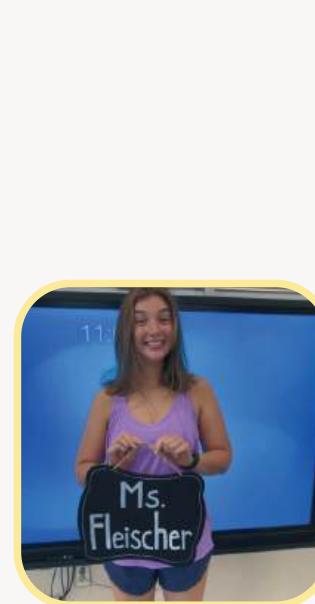
On Tuesday, November 19th, WELCM volunteered with HOPE of Rock Hill, a non-profit organization that works to provide assistance with food and utilities for those in need. We helped to clean and reorganize their facilities, including their walk-in fridge, and packaged food goods to be distributed to those who needed them.



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## Bella Fleischer (she/her)

Since graduating last spring, Bella has moved to Greenville and begun teaching as a first grade teacher! She's been attending church with her parents and occasionally sings with the chapel musicians. She's very thankful to live near family again and be able to stop by anytime for a home cooked meal or hug. They helped her a lot with setting up her classroom, and her cousin even helped her create a paper tree that she change according to the season. Her favorite thing to do with her students is to sing songs with them! Her new school, home, and church has made her feel so loved and supported. She misses the community and friends at WELCM! They always offered love, a fresh meal, and a listening ear.



## Courtney Franklin (she/her)

No stranger to church, Courtney grew up in her local AME congregation and had been singing with its gospel choir since she was a young child. But, as a first-year student at Winthrop, she felt a need to "explore other ways of seeing God." I wanted to "find who God was for myself," she said. "I wanted a safe space where I could be honest with God."

When she saw a flyer in a friend's residence hall advertising WELCM's Sunday evening prayer service Courtney thought: "I like prayer, I'll give it a try." She did. She enjoyed it. She started attending the weekly meals and programs and never looked back. She cherished the intimate conversations she shared with the other WELCM students and said that the physical space felt safe, even sacred, especially the garden where she enjoyed coming to pray. Courtney stayed involved throughout her undergraduate years, even helping to lead a contemplative Bible study and serving as WELCM's representative to the ELCA Region Nine campus ministries.

Courtney explored other campus ministries as well, but was bothered they that expected her to be "specific type of Christian." WELCM, she said, opened its arms to everyone and showed a true commitment to diversity and inclusivity. WELCM walked the walk, Courtney explained. It was "come as you are; it embodied its name," and she loved being in its diverse community where "minorities were the majority."

After the killing of George Floyd, WELCM took time for conversations centered around issues of Black Lives Matter and racial justice. What did they mean and how should we respond? "I had all these feelings and fears," Courtney explained, and "I didn't have another place to share those thoughts." At WELCM, people listened and people cried. She saw that people really cared and showed that she could trust WELCM. It brought the community members together in a deeper way, willing to share their real true selves and show their vulnerabilities.



Now married to her high school sweetheart and finishing her graduate degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Courtney talks enthusiastically about her experiences. "WELCM gave me a family," she said. "I listened and I learned." WELCM also helped develop the critical skills needed to be a successful counselor. "It opened my mind" she explained, "and made me better at inclusivity and acceptance and grace."

Many others at Winthrop University need that same space to explore as Courtney did. Your support makes it possible for us to serve these students in building the authentic and safe community where they can be honest with God.

# MEET OUR NEWEST WELCM MEMBERS!



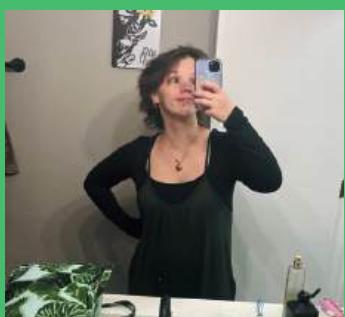
Lydia, Winthrop Freshman



Siri, Winthrop Freshman



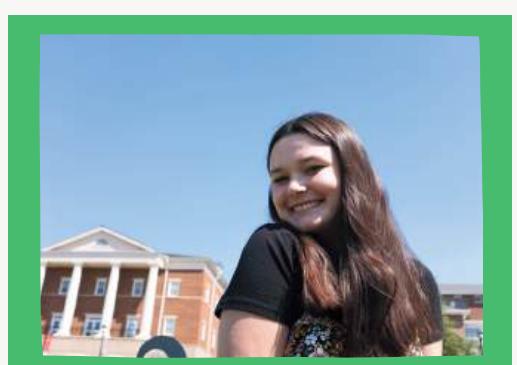
Alex and Felicia, Winthrop Freshmen



Mary, York Tech Student



Sara, Winthrop Freshman



Hannah, Winthrop Sophomore

This semester we have welcomed seven new students to WELCM! Mary, Lydia, Siri, Alex, Felicia, Sara, and Hannah have been the sweetest additions to our group and it has been wonderful having them in attendance.

## Campus Minister

Pastor Norbert Hahn  
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## Peer Ministers

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## Winthrop Ecumenical Lutheran Campus Ministry

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