The Council for Interfaith Engagement serves a variety of functions at Brigham Young University.

- Student mentorship and the BYU Interfaith Student Association: The first and central priority of the Council is to support and mentor students, particularly through the BYU Interfaith Student Association. This will include teaching, mentoring and offering experiential learning opportunities.

- Academic Interfaith Dialogue: The Council serves as an organizing body for a number of academic interfaith dialogues that are supported by the Dean of Religious Education and the Council.

- Interfaith scholarship and training materials: The Council supports, encourages, and helps to create scholarship that promotes interfaith understanding as well as training materials designed for BYU’s students and for the broader membership of the Church.

- Hosting of religious visitors to BYU Campus: The Council acts as a hosting and networking resource for the University, providing an organized group of academics who are trained and experienced in interfaith engagement to assist the University and the Church when religious leaders or academics with a religious focus are invited to campus.

- An organizing center on campus for interfaith engagement: The Council assists in communication, promotion, and organization of university interfaith events and efforts. Council fellows work to generate a culture of interfaith work broadly within the University community that is reflective of the efforts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in these areas. The Council serves primarily to bless the lives of students and faculty at BYU, and to do so by engaging with the world.

The Council for Interfaith Engagement, housed within Religious Education, was created in 2015 to foster and support interfaith efforts across the Brigham Young University campus. Although other important positions and organizations devoted to interfaith activity exist at BYU, the Council for Interfaith Engagement is unique in that it functions with the continued support of an academic college. Therefore, it is able to maintain long-term projects and effectively support student mentoring efforts and student interfaith engagement opportunities. In its various endeavors, the Council often partners with other organizations and individuals across campus, including the Richard L. Evans Chairs of Religious Understanding.

Message from the Council for Interfaith Engagement
Chair

2022 brought significant changes to the composition of the Council for Interfaith Engagement. For those familiar with the history of the Religious Outreach Council, the name change to the Council for Interfaith Engagement marked an important development as we seek to align the Council’s purpose and mission. Within academic and religious circles, the term “religious outreach” often brings with it overt efforts to evangelize and convert, and while in many contexts this is exactly what members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints strive to do, such efforts are not always welcome or productive in dialogue. The name and logo change to include “Interfaith Engagement” more properly focuses us on the need to build bridges with people of faith and those of no faith, of the desire to contribute to the good around us, and to foster more sincere cooperation with those in our communities who act on the noble and service-oriented calls of their traditions. The name change brings with it a sharpened focus on teaching and mentoring students and seeking to coordinate many of the interfaith related activities and projects occurring at BYU.

During this Fall semester, we welcomed Marin Roper (Dance), Morgan Davis (Maxwell Institute) Matt Wickman (English), and John Hilton (Ancient Scripture) to the Council as Faculty Fellows. We also welcomed three new student fellows to the Council: Sophia Snyder, Leah Marrett, and Garrett Maxwell. We said farewell to Ashley Davis, Sydney Ballif, and Nadia Mando as former Student Fellows.

The individual members of the Council have been extremely busy this past year and much of their work has been coordinated through or connected to the mission and purposes of the Council. You can read about some of these efforts in this Annual Report. The Council along with Religious Education and the International Center for Law and Religion Studies helped support two significant student mentoring and study programs. The first was headed up by Mike MacKay and is examined in some detail below. This experience became affectionately known by students as the “West Coast Interfaith Tour” and made a popular appearance on the BYU Instagram storyline. Three students participated in this program of interviewing twenty religious leaders and scholars. To be so close in conversation to an individual who knew Malcolm X from years of close association, to people who faced political and religious persecution, to others who work tirelessly to promote pluralism as a civic good, helped these students see where their voices and actions could help. Although COVID prevented the Woolf Institute Summer Program (Direct Enrollment in Cambridge, England) from happening in the previous summers, 17 students joined Andy Reed and Paul Kerry to learn about the history of interfaith work and the current issues in the Middle East, Europe, and also looked at how to begin working toward greater involvement in interfaith arenas.

Here on campus, the Council fellows are busy with individual projects and publications. One outgrowth of the Restorations dialogue project is the publication of Restorations Scholars in Dialogue which was edited by Faculty Fellow Casey Griffiths and Andrew Bolton (Religious Studies Center 2022). Significant effort by Matt Wickman to produce through the Humanities Center here at BYU dozens of podcasts where the questions and interviews focused on literature, spirituality, and interfaith practices have been highly successful. In support of the BYU Kennedy Center’s “Global Religious Experience Seminar Series” during the Fall 2022, Marin Roper convened choreographers and dancers to explore the performative aspects of interfaith engagement and how religious actors speak to one another through movement. Elliot Wise and John Hilton played significant roles in a short video produced through the Council on Palm Sunday and its significance for Christians. This short video is highlighted later in this report.

Our students have, as always, continued to inspire and motivate the work we do. The development of two courses that go live in January 2023 serve as direct outcomes of their involvement in this Council. The first course is an online World Religions survey that was put together to help expand the offerings of Religious Education to the BYU Online catalogue and is designed to increase student capacities in religious literacy. The second course is one that as a Council we look forward to promoting in the years ahead and is focused on developing within students interfaith leadership skills and ethics that will benefit them in future careers, families, and service to the world.
Council for Interfaith Engagement Fellows 2022-2023

Andrew Reed, Chair
Specialty: Jewish-Christian Relations, History of Anti-Semitism, Eastern Orthodoxy

Marin Leggat Roper, Fellow
Specialty: courses in somatics, contemporary technique, composition, Dance History, and Dance & Identity

Matthew Wickman, Fellow
Specialty: Interdisciplinary literary studies, Scottish literature, literary theory, intellectual history

Mike MacKay, Fellow
Faculty Advisor
Student Interfaith Association
Specialty: Religious Studies, Ritual, Religious Authority, LDS History

John Hilton III, Fellow
Specialty: The Atonement of Jesus Christ, Teaching and Learning, Open Educational Resources, Religious Pedagogy

Rachel Cope
Fellow
Specialty: Methodism; Evangelicalism; Women and Religion

Morgan Davis, Fellow
Specialty: Islamic and Qur'anic Studies
Comparative Scripture Sufism

Casey Griffiths, Fellow
Specialty: Latter-day Saint Educational History; Restoration Movements; Latter-day Saint Pacific History

Elliott Wise
Fellow
Specialty: Roman Catholicism, Art and Religious practice, Eastern Orthodoxy

Paul Kerry, Ex-Officio Fellow
Specialty: Interfaith humanitarian partnerships; First Amendment; International Religious Freedom

Matthew Wickman, Fellow
Specialty: Islamic and Qur'anic Studies
Comparative Scripture Sufism

Elliott Wise
Fellow
Specialty: Roman Catholicism, Art and Religious practice, Eastern Orthodoxy

Paul Kerry, Ex-Officio Fellow
Specialty: Interfaith humanitarian partnerships; First Amendment; International Religious Freedom
“First, we can expand the number of students who have a meaningful experiential learning opportunity. We can, for example, look for ways to provide more faculty mentoring opportunities for them. The impact of faculty mentoring can be enormous.”

Student Fellows and Mentoring
Leah Marrett is a neuroscience student from Kansas. In 2017, she began a faith journey to learn what she believed about God, and it brought her to a deep study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, among other religions. While she is now a Christian who believes only in the Bible as the Word of God, she has much love and appreciation for Latter-day Saints, and continues to learn about their heritage and doctrine as well as her own. She enjoys talking about God's grace and love towards us, learning from different worldviews, and fostering meaningful discussion, especially pertaining to her studies of the brain.

Leah wrote, “I engaged in interfaith activities as co-president of the Cross Seekers Christian Fellowship. Cross Seekers is regularly attended by non-LDS Christians of many different denominations, as well as LDS students looking to read the Bible more often. This semester we read the book of James, and had deep discussions about faith vs. works, how to gain salvation, and how to treat other people according to the Bible. I also had booths at the annual club fair and a women’s volleyball game.”
My name is Lucky Bahati. I was born and raised in Bukavu, a city in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The community I grew up in was diverse culturally and religiously. It was uncommon to have a neighbor that shared your culture. I grew up in a non-denominational Christian home. I was surrounded by people of different faiths, primarily Muslims, Roman Catholics, Kimbanguistes, Jehovah Witnesses and others. In order to better understand their beliefs, I found myself having conversations that include what they believed in and how different each of their religions were from my own.
Garrett is a double major in Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies/Arabic, with research interests in Quranic studies, religions of Late Antiquity, comparative theology, and Indology. He believes deeply in grounding discourse on religious texts in rigorous philology and in a comparative context. He also believes that mutual illumination between religious traditions is both desirable and necessary in the modern world.

Sophia is a student from Salt Lake City majoring in English with a focus in literary studies. She transferred to BYU following her freshman year at UCLA and a mission in the Dutch Caribbean and Arkansas. Her research interests lie in comparative theology of the Abrahamic traditions and the relationship between aesthetics and religion. She has spent time studying Judaism, Christian, Islamic relations at Cambridge University and believes interfaith dialogue and religious freedom to be core pillars of building understanding in our contemporary.
I have loved being a member of the Council for Religious Outreach this year. I have especially enjoyed our discussions and the opportunities I have had to interact with and support the students and faculty there in their work. It has been a pleasure to mentor Garrett Maxwell, a member of the council and my research assistant.

This year, I continued to interact with Muslim students here on campus and to promote greater understanding of Islam. I have attended Juma’a (Friday Prayer) in the Wilkinson Center with Imam Ahmad Saleh as often as my schedule permitted. In addition, I was invited by Miranda Wilcox (English) to teach a section about Islam to her class on Medieval spirituality. It was great to be able to present information and answer questions in that setting.

I have also had fruitful conversations with a number of scholars who have visited BYU as part of either the council’s initiatives or other units on campus, including the Neal A. Maxwell Institute where I am housed. Barbara Brown Taylor, Jamillah Karim (an African-American Muslim scholar who studies Islamic practices in Senegal and the U.S.), Derwin L. Gray (author of *How to Heal Our Racial Divide*), and others. My conversations with them have focused on learning from their experience and gleaning insight for that project that has been a major focus for me this year....

My project has been to write a comparison of the Qur’ān and the Book of Mormon for an academic audience in comparative religion. The work has been engaging and challenging; it takes a lot of care to try to anticipate and negotiate the many sensitivities and interests, biases and agendas that may come into play as various audiences encounter a book like this. My work on the project is on-going, but this year was important as I was able to secure an advance contract for publication from the University of Illinois Press. The peer reviews have been both very helpful and encouraging, and in the coming year I look forward to submitting a full manuscript.

D. Morgan Davis
Research Fellow, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

Morgan Davis, Maxwell Institute Research Fellow, Council for Interfaith Engagement Faculty Fellow
Marin Leggat Roper, Council for Interfaith Engagement Faculty Fellow awarded BYU Kennedy Center Research Fellowship

As part of BYU Kennedy Center’s Fall 2022 lecture series, “The Global Religious Experience,” I curated an interfaith dance performance project, “Witness - the role of religion in the performances intentions of dancers.” This project paired five BYU Dance/Dance Education majors with five dance artists of diverse faith backgrounds to create a short dance solo exploring the role of the physical body in one’s connection to the divine. Collaborations between each BYU student and collaborator involved 10 rehearsal hours. Four collaborations occurred virtually, one occurred in-studio.

Student collaborators included:
Jordan Gulledge, sophomore, BA Dance Education
Alyssa Lilenquist, junior, BA Dance Education
Connor Rasmussen, BFA Dance
Abagail Steele, junior, BA Dance
Baylee Van Patten, junior, BFA Dance

Professional collaborators included:
Erik Stern, Ogden Utah
Lisa Ford Moulton, Athena, Ohio
Quilan Arnold, Brooklyn, NY
Tanatchaporn Kittikong, Khon Kaen, Thailand
Veena Basavarajaiah, Bangalore, India

BYU dance majors each performed 5-minute dance solos as part of a lecture-demonstration held on December 7 in the Richards Building Dance Performance Theater. Students and I participated in a Q & A session with audience members following their performance.

Individual choreographic collaborations illuminated the role of the body in one’s connection to the divine. Themes included:

Shared metaphor of “body as temple” within LDS and Lingayat Hindu culture
Worship as performance / performance as worship in church and synagogue
Embodied practice as a way of discovering and activating ‘truth’
Sensorial aspects of presence and transformation
Creative capacity of the human body

While the specific nuances of corporeality and divine connection varied project to project, a broader takeaway - and opportunity for future research - is the unique nature of choreographic collaboration that supports interfaith dialogue. The creative process required to bring an artifact to stage representing both choreographer and performer requires verbal and non-verbal communication, spatial proximity, physical exertion, negotiation, clarification, revision. Information is shared physically, and kinesthetic empathy is required to teach, learn, and replicate movement. Engagement originates from moving and expressing in the presence of another. Aspects of this type of collaborative process could be incorporated into other types of interfaith engagement.
Dance is a dynamic form of expression through which religious identity is shaped, embodied, and performed. Five BYU Dance Majors have partnered with five dance artists of diverse faith backgrounds (India, Thailand, Ohio, NYC, and Utah) to learn dance solos reflecting ‘the search for the sacred.’ This lecture-demonstration features performed solos, classifies unique aspects of dance within religious expression, and explores movement as a tool in interfaith engagement.

Witness: How Religious Theology Frames Performance Intentions in Dancers

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Marin Leggat Roper, MFA is an Assistant Professor of Dance at Brigham Young University, where she teaches courses on Contemporary Technique, Composition, Writing for Dance, Laban Movement Analysis, Dance History and Dance Pedagogy. She directs DancEnsemble, which produces contemporary student choreography. Her creative production and scholarly research addresses the relationship between spiritual and creative practice, with focus on the body as site of embodied learning and divine intelligence. Professor Roper is a Faculty Research Fellow at the Kennedy Center and serves on the BYU Council for Interfaith Engagement.

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In November 2022, Student Fellow and IFSA Sydney Ballif co-authored and co-presented a paper title “When Faith and Institution Collide - Navigating Interreligious Dialogue within Centralized Institutions” with Council Chair, Andy Reed. Their paper examined the complexities of interreligious efforts within highly centralized religious traditions and where the benefits and challenges exist for religious actors in these settings. Using the philosophy of Martin Buber, Abraham Heschel, and Simone Weil, they articulated the Latter-day Saint understanding of prophetic discourse and the theological underpinnings of interfaith engagement for members of the Church. Sydney was the only undergraduate student invited to present at this conference and recently graduated from BYU with a degree in Interdisciplinary Humanities.
“We believe a world yearning for hope and joy needs the graduates of Brigham Young University (BYU). As disciples of Jesus Christ, BYU graduates are motivated by love for God and His children. BYU graduates are directed by living prophets and prepared to serve, lift, and lead. This preparation demands a unique university model: at BYU, belief enhances inquiry, study amplifies faith, and revelation leads to deeper understanding.

At BYU, helping students to develop their full divine potential is central to both our teaching and our scholarship. As the flagship higher education institution of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, BYU strives to emit a unique light for the benefit of the world—a light that will enable BYU to be counted among the exceptional universities in the world and an essential example for the world.”

“For the Benefit of the World,” BYU Core Brand Message (10 August 2022).
Interfaith Student Association

BYU | IFSA
Sydney Ballif, President of IFSA
The Interfaith Student Association jumped feet first this year into building a religiously literate and inclusive environment on BYU campus. With co-sponsoring lectures, gathering in small groups, curated panel discussions, and meetings with administration to open up channels of dialogue between the student body and faculty, we accomplished a great deal of good. We worked hard this year to focus on the language we used in discussions of our own traditions as well as others, outside of our own.

In the winter of 2022 partnered with BYUSA we helped host a PEN talk centered on Religious Diversity. This was an opportunity for non-Latter-day Saint students to express and illustrate for the student body what their experience at BYU has been. With generative candor and helpful insights the panelists were able to open the audience’s eyes to the reality of being a religious minority at BYU. Attending students were encouraged to attend and to bring appropriate, respectful questions to submit to the panelists. As we centered the discussions on the reasons that several non-member students chose to attend BYU and focused on ways other students can help them to feel a sense of belonging we increased in a shared purpose as a student body.

We also held our own panel discussion in April where we tried to replicate the concept of providing a platform for other students that identified as atheist, Hindu, Buddhist, and Catholic. We had prepared questions for the panelist to think about before and then in real time had audience members ask their own questions. With a spirit of charity and active listening we were able to step into the metaphorical shoes of those that are religiously different from us.

One of our officers, Joshua Bishop, worked with the University Chaplain, Jim Slaughter to facilitate an event highlighting international and non-Latter-day Saint students. We had a large room full of chairs arranged in circles. With sandwiches and pieces of papers with poignant and pertinent questions to fill their mouths and bellies we commenced a productive discussion. In my circle was a Greek Orthodox from Greece, an Australian atheist, a Hindu from India, and an agnostic from Rexburg, Idaho. It was wonderfully diverse and fascinating to understand the world view of someone radically different than me.
Fall 2022 began with an opening social where we gathered members, old and new, to go over community guidelines, outline the mission of the club, and cull ideas for the semester. With an intentional discussion on the majority Latter-day Saint tradition not being monolithic by nature. As religious thinkers we collaborated on how we could perform as connectors and catalyst for positive change in the cultural religious discourse of our school. The room was populated with believers, non-believers, and those trying to determine what they believe. This discussion set the precedent for our student association culture to be centered on seeking to understand before being understood, speaking from an “I” perspective, and approaching the conversation with your own personal figurative backpack of convictions.

The fall semester was oriented towards learning about other faiths in deep and influential ways. We had a discussion on the Qu’ran. Ran by a very capable and knowledgeable student, Garrett Maxwell we dove into the historicity, religious significance, and linguistic complexity of the sacred text of Islam. With the help of a scholar from the Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship, Morgan Davis the students in the audience were able to ask all kinds of questions about the Qu’ran but also the Latter-day Saint sacred text, The Book of Mormon. We looked at similarities and differences between the two faiths to help build appreciation and connection. Austin Ball, a student at BYU was transformed by this event, “Last semester, I sat with the interfaith club for an illuminating discussion about the Quran. My friend Garrett Maxwell—an ever punctilious scholar—explained to us the aural nature of this revelation. The Quran at its truest is a holy sound rather than a holy text. I appreciated the opportunity to engage with this alternative understanding of scripture alongside the inquisitive and open hearted students of BYU interfaith. I could tell everyone came to this conversation intentionally, as there were many insightful questions and subsequently careful attempts at answering those questions. I left the event with a mint brownie and an expanded sense for the sacred.
A wealth of audio and visual evidence supports the idea that Qur’anic sura and ideas were primary... The Qur’anic sura were originally considered as primary sources for the purpose of information or instruction. While the specific content of each sura would vary, some would have resonances of cultural, social, or spiritual significance, but none of these would be identical to the Qur’anic sura as they exist today. The Qur’anic sura are seen as a primary source for understanding the religious beliefs and practices of the Qur’anic community.

We also had an event called Islam 101 where we asked an alum from BYU Law School, Eyad Alsamhan to come and give an overview of Islam as a faith practice. We heard this devout Muslim man praise the community and attitudes housed in Provo. He spoke about living within the rules and laws of Islam while living in Utah, a predominately Latter-day Saint demographic. One student in attendance said this about his experience, “Having the opportunity to learn from Eyad was priceless. His willingness to share his beliefs gave me the opportunity to eliminate some of the distance I felt my ignorance was putting between us. The Q&A that followed his presentation allowed me to participate in an environment of developmental discomfort: a place where I could engage with people other than myself, and thoughts other than my own. Additionally, it was incredibly helpful for me to observe the way the students in attendance listened, asked generative questions, and clearly articulated their own beliefs. I left the event admiring (name)’s conviction and love for his Faith, and feeling more confident that I could connect with those around me and live more fully in the pluralistic society I’m a part of.” (McKay Bowman)
Eyad Alsamhan Ph.D. L.LM. Judge
Sydney wrote: “With the office of diversity and belonging with co-Sponsored an event entitled “Who is Jesus” where we had a panel of an Islam Imam, a protestant pastor, Jewish rabbi, and BYU’s own Shon Hopkin moderated by a non-member student, Leah Marrett. This panel had over a hundred people turn out and was incredibly helpful for the students to be exposed to leadership of other faiths. The exploration of the figure and significance of Jesus Christ in other faiths bolstered the importance and idea of Him in the believing Latter-day Saint students.”
“This year, my (Leah) main interfaith activity was a panel that I planned and moderated. Rabbi David Levinsky (Temple Har Shalom), Dr. Shon Hopkin (BYU Department of Ancient Scripture), Pastor Nathaniel Wall (Alpine Bible Church), and Imam Shuaib Din (Utah Islamic Center) came together to discuss questions related to the topic, “Who is Jesus?”. All participants were interfaith leaders in their respective communities, and did a great job sharing their religion's beliefs about Jesus to the audience. The event was co-sponsored by the BYU Office of Belonging, BYU Cross Seekers Christian Fellowship, and BYU Interfaith Student Association, and was attended by between 800 and 1000 students and members of the community who had heard about the event. We garnered very positive feedback from students of many different religions.” Recorded Panel
“We educate our minds so that one day we can render service of worth to somebody else.”

President Russell M. Nelson, New Era 2013.

“As we look to the future, we further anticipate making our “service and scholarship” and resources available to the Church in other important areas, such as alleviating poverty.”

C. Shane Reese “Becoming New Creatures,” University Conference 2022
Educational Programs and Interfaith Study Abroad
Woolf Institute, Cambridge University Study Abroad 2022
In Summer 2022, seventeen undergraduate students from Brigham Young University joined other students in an intensive summer school program through the Woolf Institute. The course, led by Miriam Wagner and Emma Harris, guided students through a wide range of topics centered around the theme of “Religion and Society: From the Medieval to the Modern.” To be a part of bringing students to the Woolf Institute was personally a deeply meaningful experience because it signaled a joint effort on the part of the Institute’s founding director, Ed Kessler, with Miriam and Emma, to formalize a relationship with Brigham Young University meant to more deeply foster our work of expanding student capacities for interfaith leadership. Additionally, it provided me and Professor Paul Kerry (a Council for Interfaith Engagement ex officio fellow) an opportunity to connect our students to a group of people and a place that holds particular meaning for us as we have both been shaped in many ways by the Woolf Institute.

As a student at the Centre for Jewish – Christian Relations from 2006 – 2008, I got my first experience to think about the nature of interfaith work. The CJCR and later the Woolf Institute framed the experiences that helped me sort through the complexity of religion and society. This period also gave me space to wrestle with the thought of people like the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, who argued that “peace is a paradox” and insisted that religious communities and religious traditions be solutions to modern challenges. Those words ring truer today than I think they did in 2002 when he wrote about them in The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations. For the students on the summer program this year, the Woolf Institute, its staff and affiliated faculty, provided a similar kind of experience for my students that earlier motivated me to work in the world of interfaith relations and to commit to working toward solutions to big problems that divide people and communities. I anticipate that in the future those students and others like them will be well-situated for such work in large part because of the work to educate and empower students.

Students who participated in the Woolf Institute program in 2022 benefited greatly from the experience and it has led to significant opportunities for them. Each student received a certificate of completion for the Woolf Program and also six credits for BYU. One student, Janai Wright, is returning as Woolf Institute BYU Intern. This internship is significant because it marks a first effort to help students be on the ground at the level of working in an interfaith academic setting where they develop skills that essential for this kind of work in the world. A former student fellow of the Council, Ashley Davis, participated in the summer of 2022 as the first intern in this program. While there, she helped with editing podcasts, developing programs and events for the Institute, and was able to fully participate in nearly every facet of their work.

Thanks to generous funding from the BYU International Center for Law and Religion Studies (BYU Law School) and BYU Religious Education, during the summer 2023, we will again host the Summer program through the Woolf Institute during July. Students can learn more about how to apply and program details by visiting the program website through the BYU David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies.

Adapted from the Woolf Institute Newsletter October 2022 by Andy Reed
“I have to say that I was intimidated coming to Cambridge. But at the Woolf Institute, everyone is so incredibly kind and willing to have a shared dialogue with you. One Friday night we had the opportunity to go to a Shabbat dinner and it was lovely seeing Muslim, Jewish and Christian individuals all interacting. We talked about religion and politics, but also just life in general, and shared food and laughs and conversation. So what stayed with me most was the opportunity to see these individuals interacting and recognizing the human dignity and the value in the other.”

-Meredith Horsley, BYU Undergraduate Student

“Academia has always seemed exclusive and elitist to me, but at the Woolf there is this generosity of spirit, generosity of intellect that you can’t help but be changed by. Academia was transformed for me the moment I arrived at Woolf. Now I see it as getting as many people as you can in the conversation, broadening your horizons, expanding your vision. Their ability to get everyone around the table, and the generosity of spirit there is remarkable.”

– Sydney Ballif, BYU Undergraduate Student

“I think interfaith spaces are spaces for nuance and I definitely felt that at the Institute. I learned a lot more about myself as a person, which I think is one of the beautiful things about interfaith work in general and the Woolf Institute specifically. I feel like I’ve grown academically and intellectually and also as a person.”

-Ashley Davis, BYU Undergraduate Student

“You turn on the news today and it’s very easy to become pessimistic. But I have a lot of hope for the research and everything that they’re doing at the Woolf Institute, and I think that coming to Woolf made me a more optimistic person.”

-Catie Monson, BYU Undergraduate Student
The experiences I had and the relationships I made at the Woolf Institute at Cambridge in the summer of 2022 are those which I will hold as some of the most formative in my BYU experience. The course we took at Cambridge was intellectually challenging and enlarging, lessons which expanded my ability to engage with difficult interfaith concepts/questions and see profound beauty in the traditions of others. Travelling around England with the group was completely fantastic. I will cherish the friendships and bonds that were made and particularly the personal and informal conversations about religion and faith that will forever change the way I view/practice my own and respect/see others.

Student Fellow Reflection on the Woolf Institute Experience: Sophia Snyder
During the Winter Semester 2022, 10 students participated in an online course through the Woolf Institute that was coordinated by Council Fellow Professor Paul Kerry. The “Representations of Jewish – Christian Relations in Literature” course was led by Dr. Emma Harris (Woolf Institute, Cambridge) and helped students better recognize the consistent representations of stereotypes and of religious themes within particular pieces of literature.

This course will run again in February and March 2023. Those interested can learn more by visiting the course website.
Palm Sunday Video by Elliott Wise

Using funds from the Council of Interfaith Engagement, Dr. Elliot Wise mentored a student videographer and two music students in producing “Palm Sunday: Hosanna to the Son of David.” This was an educational and devotional video, consisting of interviews, music, art, and readings for the commemoration of Holy Week on BYU campus: April, 2022. Click here.

Dr. Wise explained, “The student videographer was Tyler Webb. He had such a good experience with the project that he wanted to meet with me for lunch after it was over to get advice on sacred sites he should visit on his upcoming study abroad to Spain and also to discuss the possibility of working on a similar project with me for next year’s Holy Week commemoration.”

Keeping with BYU’s emphasis on mentored student learning, we also hired BYU vocal students to record Gregorian chant for Palm Sunday. Ally Christiansen had recently graduated from BYU and Savannah Porter was a current student.

Interviewed in the video were Eric Huntsman (Ancient Scripture), who also provided video footage from BYU students celebrating Palm Sunday in Jerusalem; Ashlee Whitaker, the Roy and Carol Christensen Curator of Religious Art, BYU Museum of Art), who discussed a marvelous bronze statue of the Triumphant Entry in the MOA’s collection; Father Dominic Sternhagen (then assistant rector at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City and now pastor of St. Ann’s Roman Catholic Church, also in Salt Lake City).
Interfaith Leadership and Ethics
(Religious Education, 393 R)
Developed by Mike MacKay and Andy Reed

This course will enable Religious Education to embrace the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Brigham Young University more fully. This course serves as a foundational introduction for students to discover the nature of interfaith work. Students who fully embrace Brigham Young University’s expansive motto “Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve” are vocationally responsible to bring good into reach for themselves, their families, their communities, their Church, and above all and undergirding all, the world. In this endeavor, students must and will engage with individuals who hold deep convictions of religious faith and affiliation, agnosticism, atheism, and much more. Students who leave this university will be well served, regardless of major or profession, by a core set of principles and practices that can be employed to better engage in the world around them. This course is established to instill within students ready means that answer the demand for application of principles in Religious Education courses. Students who participate in this course will develop skills that can be applied now and in the future.

The imperative for skills of negotiation, cooperation, and a generosity of spirit that are noticeably absent from much of society today can be addressed by introducing students to interfaith practices and methods. Students who engage in positive relationships with those of other faiths as undergraduates experience a profound shift in attitude toward other religions and the communities that comprise them. Students who have positive experiences with dialogue, rather than debate, develop more favorable views of the good that other religions offer society. As part of this process, they also see methods and examples of civic cooperation, religious devotion, and faith-filled service that simply is not experienced in other settings. Below you can see examples of course content and course outline.
1. **Leadership, Ethics, and Skills.**

This section is six weeks long and focuses on Leadership, Ethics, and Skills using Eboo Patel's book *Interfaith Leadership: a Primer* as a guide. The following chart includes each lesson and its learning outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is Interfaith?</td>
<td>Articulate the differences between interfaith and interreligious.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What is Pluralism?</td>
<td>Evaluate an interfaith event using principles of pluralism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What is Worldview?</td>
<td>Recognize your worldview and narrate your story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Telling your interfaith story</td>
<td>Tell your story &quot;as a kind intelligent soul&quot; signifying a meaningful life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Interfaith Leadership</td>
<td>Identify interfaith leaders across the world who have made a difference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Identify a model</td>
<td>Identify your ideal interfaith leader and explain why they are your model.</td>
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<tr>
<td>interfaith leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Making Change as an Interfaith leader</td>
<td>Evaluate a case study in which leadership is clearly demonstrated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Qualities of an interfaith leader</td>
<td>Identify how to foster the qualities of an interfaith leader.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Reading Scripture as Dialogue</td>
<td>Understand what it means to dialogue with scripture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Interfaith Leadership Skills</td>
<td>Express the value of the basic skills of an interfaith leader.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Design an interfaith project</td>
<td>Be an interfaith leader by designing an interfaith activity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2. Religious Literacy:
This section will follow Barbara Brown Taylor's life journey. Using vivid expressions and stories found in Barbara's life, students will spend six weeks applying what they learned in the first six weeks with the experiences found in *Holy Envy*. We will read through Barbara's book with guests and possibly even get a visit from her.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Literacy and <em>Holy Envy</em>: Learning Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Explore the basic texts, beliefs, practices, and experiences of modern religions through narrative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Evaluate interfaith experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Evaluate education and experiences with other religions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Hear the voices of educators, priests, authors, students, and religious virtuoso talking about interfaith.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Examine models of interfaith dialogue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Identify religious influence in the human experience across the world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Highlight the value of devotional expressions and individual faith.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Learn about internal diversity in each religion through stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Articulate how religions evolve and change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Study: Swastikas at School

Swastikas at School A Case.docx
Swastikas at School B Case.docx

School and what happens afterward.

Answer the following questions. Come ready to discuss and debate your answers in class.

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### 3. Interfaith Practice:

The third section includes eight case studies covering pluralism and the major religious traditions around the world. The case studies enable students to interact with real cases of interfaith to formulate and practice making leadership decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Case Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and Interfaith</td>
<td>Compare what interfaith looks like at USC with BYU interfaith.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examine a Tri-Faith initiative in Omaha, Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrahamic Traditions</td>
<td>Evaluate how Islamic activities in the United States in an interfaith activity.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Articulate how one community reacts to Swastikas being graffitied on a public school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Traditions</td>
<td>Reflect upon whether a Buddhist monk can also be a Jew.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate how a Buddhist nun reacts to allegations of abuse in her community and its implications for others in Milwaukee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS Interfaith</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Qualities of an Interfaith Leader

Read the Following Chapter:

1. Grit
2. Relatability
3. Leading with Pluralism
4. Craftsperson
BYU Online Course: World Religions (Religious Education 351)

This course will extend religious literacy to more students at BYU making its construction an important goal for the Council for Interfaith Engagement. It focuses on experiential learning within an online learning environment by tailoring its assignments and activities around the Kolb learning cycle for experiential learning.
Assignments fall under five categories:

1. InQuizitives - After completing each module's textbook reading, you will take a computer-graded quiz. You can take this quiz multiple times until you are satisfied with your grade. These should be completed before coming to the live class.

2. Kolb Model Assignments - In each lesson, you will complete a series of short assignments following David Kolb's model of active learning—experience, reflect, conceptualize, and act. These should also be completed before coming to the live class.

3. Class Report Assignments - After each live class, you will submit a brief report of your key take-aways and muddiest points, or alternative submissions as directed.

4. Final Exam - The final exam will be a response to a case study in which you apply what you have learned throughout the course.

Module 5: Buddhism, Part 2—Suffering, No Self, and Meditation

Buddhism Lesson 4: Meditation

Time Estimate: 1 minute

In many ways, to understand the purpose and value of meditation is to understand Buddhism itself. "The Buddha was enlightened while meditating. Buddhist art often depicts him in the lotus position, and the last two elements of the Eightfold Path concern techniques for training the mind. Many monks and nuns also engage in meditation of some sort, as do an increasing number of lay Buddhists, especially in Europe and the United States, where meditation is widely seen as the key Buddhist practice."
Experiential Learning

In order to meet the expectations of the BYU initiatives for Experiential and Inspiring Learning, we designed the BYU Online course around a consistent use of the KOLB cycle. This model helped generate a series of guiding questions that led our assignment creation process, our learning outcomes, and the general tenor of the course. We anticipate that the invitation to consistently bring more reflection and active experimentation will enrich the student experience in this class.
Interfaith Leadership Summit--Interfaith America

“The Interfaith Leadership Summit (the Summit) is the largest gathering of students and educators with a commitment to American religious pluralism. Join the hundreds of people who care about the future of our religiously diverse society as they learn to bridge divides and forge friendships across lines of religious and worldview differences. Learn new skills and return to your campus inspired and ready to build.”

Five students attended in August 2022 with Dr. MacKay. Interfaith America, formerly Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) is an organization that has consistently worked to help college students and faculty build interfaith capacities.

University of Chicago, August 2022. Garrett, Friend, Sophia, Sydney, Leah, Mike, Lucy.
Lucky Bahati
Hometown: Purceville, Virginia
College/University & Graduation Year: Brigham Young University, Class of 2024
Major: Civil Engineering

Religious Affiliation/Worldview: I am a Christian, Bible believer, and Christ follower. I am non-denominational, although part of a Baptist congregation currently.

Why did you decide to sign up for the Interfaith Leadership Summit?

I learned about this opportunity through the BYU religion department, more specifically through the Council for Interfaith Engagement, on which I serve as a student fellow. I decided to sign up for the Leadership Summit since it is an opportunity to gain knowledge that I can then bring back on campus and put to use to better serve others.

What are you looking forward to about the Summit?

I am looking forward to learning from other students and faculty that will be part of this Summit. I look at this as an opportunity to listen and take note on how others are making their campuses and places of influence more welcoming to other faiths. Through shared experience, I hope one can gain other skills on how to engage other faiths not only on campuses but in every sphere of life.

What does interfaith look like on your campus?

BYU mainly attracts students affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, so only a small minority of students come from other faiths. However, the BYU religion department offers a platform for other faiths to feel welcome on campus. Our interfaith program includes student Summits, at times inviting students of other faiths from other universities to come and have a religious conversation on different beliefs. We also have a student chapter BYU Interfaith Student Association that helps in creating and fostering an environment where other faiths can feel comfortable.

What do you hope to learn that you can bring back to your campus?

I hope to learn what other people are doing and what has been working as far as interfaith endeavors are concerned. To me, it is an opportunity to not repeat mistakes and instead emulate their successes. I also hope to know more about other opportunities in the areas of interfaith and how I can continue to be a steward for such a cause.

Lucky was interviewed by Interfaith America. This is part of the interview they conducted and have posted on their webpage.

Interview
Leah Marrett:

“I was able to attend the Interfaith America conference in Chicago with the BYU Interfaith Council. I also completed a certificate of Interfaith Foundations through Interfaith America following the conference. Going to Chicago was an encouraging and enlightening experience, as I was able to connect with interfaith leaders from campuses all over the USA and hear their stories. I made friends with people of many different religions, including faith leaders from different religions. I liked that Interfaith America focuses on the idea that you do not have to be a less faithful member of your religion to be dedicated to interfaith work. During the conference, I met some people who were less devout members of their religions, and some who were very devout, yet everyone was devoted to making space for interfaith engagement on their campuses and in their communities. The beauty of interfaith work, which was evident at Interfaith America, is that despite our differences, we can choose to work together, have respectful and interesting discussions about how we disagree, and unite around the places where our values converge.”

Sophia Snyder

“Attending the Interfaith America Conference in Chicago this summer proved to be an intellectually rewarding and religiously stimulating experience. I found it beneficial to interact with students from other colleges who carried an interest in the intersection of religion and public life. Being a BYU student means that my everyday religious exposure is limited, seeing that the vast majority of the population subscribes to the Latter-day Saint tradition; this I’ve found a huge blessing and curse. I enjoyed the discussions and unplanned engagements with people from a variety of faith backgrounds coming from colleges around the US, all with an investment in promoting religious literacy and freedom. Though I felt the sessions to be a bit basic, I came away with a greater understanding of the importance of listening to other worldviews and being able to appreciate diverse perspectives without feeling like such listening diminished my own.”
Garret Maxwell:

“Going to Chicago was an invaluable immersion in interfaith work that can’t be replicated in any other format. Being able to rub shoulders with college students from all walks of life and faith was a jolt to my existential autopilot in all the right ways. I am grateful to have gone with Dr. MacKay, a warm-hearted and wise mentor.”

Lucky Bahati:

“Going to Chicago this summer was a great experience for me because I got to learn from other schools what an interfaith space looks like. We went through a formal training to learn what other students are doing on their campuses to create a more welcoming environment for people of other faiths. From learning the importance of appreciative knowledge to researching the shared values, our training was capped by completing the course Foundations of Interfaith Leadership. Looking at our BYU campus, there are opportunities that I have identified to apply what I learned from the summit. Also, I learned from the other participants about their approach to religious inclusivity. I have seen some of those ideas implemented here on campus, including on the BYU Council for Interfaith Engagement.”
Leah explained, “We attended the Interfaith America conference in Chicago, and completed their INTF 100 course to obtain a certificate. I enjoyed getting to know my fellow students on the BYU Council for Interfaith Engagement, and Dr. Mike MacKay. Interfaith America was a good experience, and it is nice to have some formal training for the council. In 2023, I will be focusing on my project for the council, which I spent the fall semester brainstorming for and setting up to begin. I will also hold a worship night, which will be an interfaith event. As always, I will continue to engage in interfaith dialogue at BYU, with the intent of increasing interfaith relationships on our campus.”
Leah, Lucky, and Dr. MacKay at Interfaith America Leadership Summit in Chicago

Leah with the Gonzaga students who attended the leadership summit
Lucky, Sophie, Dr. MacKay, Sydney, and Garrett in an animated philosophical discussion at the U of Chicago

Leah with Nikki, an LDS student from South Carolina who attended the leadership summit
Interfaith Dialogues and Sacred Site Visits
Rajan Zed Campus Visit and Dialogue:

In April 2022, Rajan Zed visited BYU. He dialogued with students from Dr. MacKay’s World Religions class and several faculty and council members. Rajan read the first Hindu opening prayer in United States Senate in Washington DC and is an interfaith leader around the world. For some of the students this was their first encounter with a leader from another tradition. Rajan also toured the MTC and made quite an impression on many of the missionaries there.

BYU Student Comments:

“I thought this experience was really interesting because I didn't know much about Hinduism before this, aside from the things we had learned in class. It was cool to be able to learn about Hinduism from a prominent member of the Hindu community who had done so much work to advocate for and share the Hindu religion with the Western world. He shared a lot of different statistics about different faiths with us, and even shared.”
“I really loved the chance to interact with people of other faiths especially within the lens of this class. I noticed how I reacted differently than I did in high school with those of other faiths. I also interacted differently than I did while I was on a mission interacting with those of other faiths. I noticed that I was much more open minded and embraced the differences and listened intently to their practices and how I could learn from them to better enhance my own faith.”

“The thing that stuck out to me the most during the event was that he told us to be proud Mormons, but to make sure to learn about other religions. I love that he is very accepting of all religions and that he is encouraging everyone to live their religion proudly, but not ignorantly.”

“That is part of why this class has been so helpful: we get to learn about all sorts of religions so we can live our religion better by loving everyone. Getting to learn from Rajan about his religion was great.”
InterVarsity Evangelical Student Dialogue

The Evangelical Dialogue is the longest running interfaith dialogue at Brigham Young University. It began in the Spring of 2000 in Provo Utah under the leadership of Robert J. Millet and Richard Mouw. After 22 years, this was its final formal year.

To commemorate this massive effort, BYU students and InterVarsity students joined on a number of occasions in Spring term to practice dialogue and learn from one another. These dialogues often lead to increased student religious literacy.

BYU Student Comments:

“My favorite part of the discussion was when we each shared our own journey to our own spiritual discovery. I loved it because, first, it gave me an opportunity to reflect on my own spiritual discovery.”

“They were great conversationalists and it was a very uplifting and inspiring experience. Every member of the group was very respectful and open to the others. I really enjoyed asking questions freely and also expressing what we appreciated about each other’s religions and forms of personal/group worship.”
“One thing that I took a lot of comfort in with regards to the dialogue was my attitude toward it. Before taking [a world religions] class, I would have had no interest in doing a dialogue with people of another faith. And if I was required to, I would have felt it my duty to argue the points for why the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is true. When I heard about the opportunity, however, I felt super excited to practice what we had learned in class to sincerely listen to others with distinct, and sometimes contrary, beliefs while withholding judgment.”

“... we had an interesting discussion about the concept of prophets. In the evangelical church, they believe that Jesus was the last prophet and that there are no living prophets today on the earth.”

“It was an enlightening and honestly rather fun experience, one that I would definitely seek out again.”
Westcoast Interfaith Tour

This trip was organized by Andrew Reed and Mike MacKay through student mentoring grants. It included travel with students from Los Angeles to Seattle in late June 2022. They conducted over twenty interviews, photographed dozens of religious sites, attended numerous services, and dialogued with numerous leaders and laypeople.

One of our students took over the BYU Instagram page for a day. Here's the compilation of his reports on the Westcoast Interfaith Tour.

Hunter at Greek Orthodox service
Bante Chao Chu

BYU Instagram Page (@brighamyounguniversity)
Varun Soni

“Varun Soni serves as the Dean of Religious Life of USC. In this role, he brings together the spiritual and scholarly resources of the university, provides moral and ethical leadership for the USC community, and works closely with the 90 student religious groups and the 40 religious directors on campus. He also oversees interfaith engagement and community service initiatives, organizes interdisciplinary events that explore religion broadly conceived and leads ceremonial and memorial events.

Dean Soni is a University Fellow at USC Annenberg’s Center on Public Diplomacy and is also a regular contributor to the Huffington Post. He is a member of the State Bar of California, the American Academy of Religion, and the Association for College and University Religious Affairs. He is on the advisory board for the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, the Music Preservation Project, CrossCurrents, and the Journal for Interreligious Dialogue. Prior to joining USC, Dean Soni spent four years teaching in the Law and Society Program at UCSB. He also produced and hosted his own radio show on Pacifica/KPFK showcasing music from South Asia and its diaspora. Born in India and raised in Southern California, he has family on five continents and they collectively represent every major religious tradition in the world.

Dean Soni received his B.A. in Religion from Tufts University, where he also earned an Asian Studies minor and completed the Program in Peace and Justice Studies. He subsequently received his M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School and his M.A. through the Department of Religious Studies at UCSB. He went on to receive his J.D. from UCLA School of Law, where he also completed the Critical Race Studies Program and served as an editor for the Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law. He earned his Ph.D. through the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, where his doctoral research focused on religion and popular culture. As an undergraduate student, Dean Soni spent a semester living in a Buddhist monastery in Bodh Gaya, India through Antioch University’s Buddhist Studies Program. As a graduate student, he spent months doing field research in India through UCSB’s Center for Sikh and Punjab Studies.” (From Website)
Dean Soni stated, “I was giving a talk on “burnout” and I was going through the main five or six, whatever criteria for recognizing burnout. And as I was reading this to like 300 people on the Zoom call, I’m supposed to be the so-called wellness expert at the university. I realized I myself am burnt out because I checked every single box. And what I began to realize was that is that went deeper, is that I wasn’t burnt out because I was working too hard, because I can work hard and not feel burnt out. But I was burnt out because I didn’t see my values in my work anymore. And when you’re a mission driven organization or individual, like we all are, if you don’t see the values in your work, you’ll feel burnt out. I can do 200 hours of work on something I love and it doesn’t feel like work. And I can do 20 minutes of answering angry emails about something I didn’t do, and I’m burnt out. I’m done for the day. I don’t wanna do anything else. But it’s not really a timer or labor. It’s a values proposition. And when universities no longer have their values reflected in their work, you’re going to lose trust and you’re going to feel burnt out. And so I think that what I saw was massive burnout among faculty and staff, including myself, because students weren’t here. And once the students weren’t here, we didn’t know what we were doing this for. If it’s just talking to black boxes on screen, then why? Why did I give up my lucrative potential law job to be a professor if I don’t even see students? Right. When the students came back and the mask came off and the sun came out and we ended with the commencement, and the grandparents were there and it felt like a return back to why we do this work. We all felt rejuvenated again. We all felt re-energized again. So that whole process confirmed to me that what gets me up in the morning are the students. What’s my true north? Professionally, the students, the mission. And what does that mean in terms of my own Hindu background? Well, as Hindus, we believe in Siva. I come from a Gandhian family.” (From the interview)
“Dr. Amir Hussain is Chair and Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where he teaches courses on religion. His own particular speciality is the study of Islam, focusing on contemporary Muslim societies in North America. His academic degrees (BSc, MA, PhD) are all from the University of Toronto where he received a number of awards, including the university’s highest award for alumni service. For the Fall semester of 2016, he was on a fellowship to the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at the University of Southern California. From 2011 to 2015, Amir was the editor of the Journal of the American Academy of Religion, the premier scholarly journal for the study of religion. He is President of the American Academy of Religion.

He has a deep commitment to students, and holds the distinction of being the only male to serve as Dean of Women at University College, University of Toronto. Before coming to California in 1997, Amir taught courses in religious studies at several universities in Canada. He is active in academic groups such as the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion and the American Academy of Religion. He is on the editorial boards of four scholarly journals, the Journal of Religion, Conflict and Peace; the Ethiopian Journal of Religious Studies; Religious Studies and Theology; and Comparative Islamic Studies. Amir is also interested in areas such as religion and music, religion and literature, religion and film and religion and popular culture. He was an advisor for the television series The Story of God with Morgan Freeman, and appears regularly on Ancient Aliens and The UnXplained with William Shatner. In 2008, he was appointed a fellow of the Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities.

Prior to his appointment at Loyola Marymount University, Amir taught at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) from 1997 to 2005. Amir won a number of awards at CSUN, both for his teaching and research. In 2001 he was selected for the outstanding faculty award by the National Center on Deafness. For the academic year 2003-04, he was selected as the Jerome Richfield Memorial Scholar. In both 2008 and 2009, Amir was chosen by vote of LMU students as the Professor of the Year. He is the co-editor for the fourth edition of A Concise Introduction to World Religions, published by Oxford University Press in 2019. He is also the co-editor for the fifth editions of World Religions: Western Traditions, and World Religions: Eastern Traditions, textbooks published in 2018 by OUP. In 2016, he wrote Muslims and the Making of America, published by Baylor University Press. Prior to those books, he wrote an introduction to Islam for North Americans entitled Oil and Water: Two Faiths, One God (Kelowna: Copper House, 2006). He has published over 60 book chapters and scholarly articles about religion.” (From Faculty Profile)
Professor Hussain stated, “he other side of it is, even if you’re not in a major center like Los Angeles, typically you’ll have some researchers. You know, even places that you don’t think of as being like huge centers are very diverse. There’s probably a mosque there. There might be a Hindu temple there. There’s probably a Buddhist temple there. There’s certainly a synagogue, maybe even like two synagogues, you know, that are there in the sense of people are involved in each other’s lives. People connect with each other. So you may be a muslim, but there’s a Hindu temple on your street where your boss is is Jewish or, you know, your girlfriend or boyfriend is is an atheist. . . . It leads to the question, is this interfaith or this the reality of interfaith? Actually, the natural position and where we’re sort of unnaturally forcing ourselves into groups and myopic groups, is that is that how you’ve seen it? . . . But I think precisely it’s that sense of, you know, you live your tradition, but you live that tradition knowing that other folks belong to other traditions are just as smart and compassionate. And, you know, well-meaning as you are. But it’s not just, oh, in your tradition, people do good things and that’s it.” (From the interview)
Loyola Marymount University (Photo: Mike MacKay)
Interview with Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Loyola Marymount University, Department of Theological Studies (Photo: Mike MacKay)
Salam Al-Marayati

“Nationally recognized for his commitment to improving the public understanding of Islam and policies impacting American Muslims, Salam is president and co-founder of the Muslim Public Affairs Council. He oversees MPAC’s groundbreaking civic engagement, public policy, and advocacy work.

He is an expert on Islam in the West, Muslim reform movements, human rights, democracy, national security, and Middle East politics. He has spoken at the White House, Capitol Hill and represented the U.S. at international human rights and religious freedom conferences.

His writings have appeared in every major national news publication (including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times). Read his most recent op-ed in the LA Times on why Muslims don’t need Trump to tell them when to report criminal activity.

His interviews have been featured on national and international news outlets (including CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and C-SPAN). Listen to Salam speaking on CNN International this year about Donald Trump’s trip to Saudi Arabia.” (From MPAC website)
“Especially when it involves Muslims or the Middle East. And there's always something missing there. I didn't understand why it always had that negative connotation, negative spin. And even I carried anti-Muslim tropes as a young Muslim, because that's what I was exposed to throughout my lifetime. And if it weren't for my parents, who at least provided the alternative, I wouldn't know any better. And so growing up, I realized that many Americans felt the same way, that there was something wrong with Islam and Muslims because that's what they were exposed to. And so I always wanted to do something to change that, not just for me as a Muslim, but for all Americans to make peace between Islam and the West. You know, there's that lie that the West is at war with Islam or Islam is at war with the West, and that lie is being promoted by extremists. Unfortunately, the extremists are dictating the discourse on Islam in America or Islam in the world. And so I always wanted to do something about that and do something in terms of peacemaking. So at first I thought I'd be a teacher. Then my dad said, No, you have to be either an engineer or a doctor. So I tried both. I, I didn't like either. And I decided on being committed to a full time activist in the Muslim community. So in 1986, we started the Public Relations Committee for the Islamic Center of Southern California. It was the mosque.”
Imam Abdul-Karim Hasan

“Since 1971, Imam Abdul-Karim Hasan has been the religious leader of this Muslim community. Under his leadership, the community purchased its current property in May of 1973, which would help shape the dynamics for Islamic growth in the city.

https://www.masjdbilalonline.com/about-masjid-bilal-islamic-center.html

Imam Hasan explained that Islam was changing the lives of intercity African Americans. “They stopped wasting their money, they started buying homes, buying better clothes. Their lives were better? Was that good? They got better education? They started doing a lot of things for themselves? So the slave mentality that was put in them at that particular time ended.”

(From website)
Imam Abdul-Karim Hasan, Majid Bilal Islamic Center, Los Angeles, June 2022.
Swami Mahayogananda is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, which is part of the Hindu monastic order consolidated by Sri Shankaracharya some 1,200 years ago. He has been serving at the Vedanta Society of Southern California since 2013, and joined the Order in 1997.
“Meditation has become just an essential part of life. And if I miss a morning meditation and feel out of sorts, my practice actually is to rise pretty early, generally around five, maybe four, 30 or five. Have a cup of tea. And while sipping my tea, I’ll study some holy book or scripture. And that’s a way of preparing the mind for meditation also. And then go to the temple and we meditate together in the temple until 7:15. And the meditation we receive instructions from our spiritual teacher, our spiritual guide on how we’re going to meditate. Generally, we also receive a mantra which you may have heard of as a short, a kind of like a prayer of sorts, which is felt to be have a kind of mystical power. And we use that to help focus our mind, because as anyone who has tried knows, if you sit and try to calm your mind, what happens? It starts to run everywhere and how to bring it to one point, how to recall it. That’s what our practices are about. So we take the help of breath for focus-ing attention on the breath, focusing the attention on a sacred sound or a mantra, focusing the at-tention perhaps on a on a prayer. I like to start my meditation with a visualized action, which and with the morning meditation, I do a little differently from the evening meditation, but it ends up that we try to focus our mind on the divine and keep it there without moving about.” (From the interview)
Ven. Bhante Chao Chu is “president of the Los Angeles Buddhist Union, and serves as co-chair of the Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue in Los Angeles. He is also on the executive committee of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, World Buddhist Sangha Council, and the World Chinese Buddhist Sangha Council. He is also an adviser to the International Association of Buddhist Universities, and is the Buddhist representative of the Interreligious Council of Southern California.” (From personal website)
“You can do a work together on any issues that become because we don’t go in to talk about what you call religious philosophies and anything like that. And also, we are not there to debate, you know, just that a dialog and to find some kind of actions, joint actions for for the community. For example, Father Alexy will he will tell you that if you talk to him, most of us did meditation and some program for the Martin Luther King Hospital recuperate or center for the homeless. The people that have selected, I think, 100 people or then they came to our meditation and Father Alexy and myself go there together. We show them together and stand together. And then he read something. And then I do talk about a little meditation and then I read something. We work together as standing like together and the shoe store in front of those people. And it’s kind of maybe strange for them, but it’s also a good experience for them to see that how we collaborate and then try to take care of the community.”
Imam Sayed Hassan Al-Qazwini was “born in the holy city of Karbala, Iraq in 1964. Karbala hosts the sanctified and sublime shrine of Prophet Muhammad's [p] grandson, Imam Hussein. Al-Qazwini’s family is well known in Iraq and the Muslim world at large for people of scholarship, leadership, and dedication to serving their Muslim community. With the advent of the despotic Ba'athist regime in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Al-Qazwini family, along with other prominent scholars, multiplied its efforts by educating the masses to combat the depravity brought forth by the Ba'athists, for they gradually brainwashed the people of Iraq. Al-Qazwini’s father, Ayatollah Sayed Mortadha Al-Qazwini, was among the leading scholars in spreading the word of Islam in Iraq and engaging in Islamic activism. He helped establish several Islamic schools and institutions, and he served as the principal of Imam Assadiq Islamic School in Karbala.” (from website)
“Islam has many articles of faith among them. Beside the prayers, five daily prayers that we perform throughout the day and the night after the prayers, we have supplication. This is also one of the peculiarities of Shia Islam. We don’t just stand and leave after the prayers. We sit and we have certain supplications that we read and we reflect upon after every prayers, which really builds our spirituality and our relationship with God. And it helps us to meditate, to meditate a lot. We have the fasting of Ramadan, and one of the most important articles is Pilgrimage Hut, which people go if they can afford nowadays. Unfortunately, many people cannot afford they cannot afford going to Hajj. That caused an average of $12,000. 20 years ago, 25 years ago, when we took a group from here, our community to Hajj. I think we paid only 20 $500. Now imagine it’s over $12,000. So not many people can go because of many restrictions. I don’t want to go into details, but it is a powerful way of connecting not only with God, but with all other people who come from different parts of the world. When you see them, when you communicate with them, socialize with them, when you listen to their stories, they listen to your own stories.
“Hsi Lai Temple, the North American Regional Headquarters of Fo Guang Shan, was built to serve as a spiritual and cultural center for those interested in learning more about Buddhism and Chinese culture. It is the intention of its founder, Venerable Master Hsing Yun, to propagate Humanistic Buddhism and to create a Pure Land here on earth. Hsi Lai Temple is built to fulfill these goals in the United States.

Situated in Hacienda Heights in the Los Angeles county, Hsi Lai Temple is one of the largest Buddhist temples in North America. The temple’s foundational ideology is Humanistic Buddhism which seeks to propagate Buddhist teachings through education, cultural outreach, community services, and spiritual practice. In this pursuit, Hsi Lai Temple has hosted numerous local and international events, including Chinese Spring Festival which, during its two week period, welcomes an average of 20,000 visitors per day.” (from website)
Rabbi Shapiro is “not only the spiritual leader at Temple Akiba, but has been a source of guidance, support, reflection and a good hug since 2006. A native of Boston, Rabbi Shapiro has lived in Los Angeles since his Ordination from HUC-JIR, Cincinnati in 1997. He met Ron Galperin that same year, and they were married in a religious ceremony in 2002, followed by a legal ceremony in 2008.” From Temple Akiba website)
John Loupa is the “grandson of Finnish immigrants, Jon Luopa grew up in Worcester, Massachusetts with his two younger sisters. The family religion was Lutheran, but by his early teens, Jon began to question those beliefs. He became a Unitarian Universalist in 1978, after hearing the Rev. Dr. Wallace Robbins of the First Unitarian Church in Worcester. Jon went to Clark University, where he majored in philosophy and the classics. Then, at Dr. Robbins’ urging, he went on to the Harvard Divinity School.

At Harvard, Jon met Annie, and they were married in 1981. She had come to Cambridge from Denison University, after growing up in a Baptist minister’s home in Ohio. After their graduation, Annie worked at Harvard for a few years, while Jon served churches in the greater Boston area. Over those years, Jon had the privilege of working closely with both the Rev. Dr. Dana McLean Greeley, first president of the UUA, and Professor James Luther Adams, renowned Unitarian social ethicist. 1986 brought many changes to their lives. Their first daughter, Laila, was born in Boston. At 29 years of age, Jon was called to follow the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Lauriat, and the family moved to Hartford, Connecticut. Jon and Annie’s younger daughter, Julika, was born there in 1989. The family enjoyed a rich and rewarding thirteen years in Hartford.

The Luopas moved to Seattle in 1999 when Jon began his ministry at UUC.” (From UUC website)
“Everywhere I’ve served, the church has been close enough to either a university or several universities and colleges, and often seminaries. The seminaries have been important all the way from Boston to Hartford to Seattle, because I’ve talked to the church history class for the Unitarian students in those seminaries. So for the last 15 years or more, I’ve done that at Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry, where we have about ten students. And I thought those are the three components, I think, of very religious life with integrity. Likewise, the congregations I’ve served have had a lot of academic in them, which is really wonderful. In Hartford, we had capital campaign consultants who were not Unitarians. And they came to me about a month after working with us and said, Well, how do you do it on Sunday?” (From the interview with John)
“Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Alexei Smith was born and raised in the Hyde Park area of Los Angeles, CA, and attended local Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Awarded a Master of Divinity Degree, with High Distinction, in 1987, he was ordained a Greek Catholic Priest of the Eparchy of Newton, MA, that same year, and assigned as Pastor of Saint Andrew Russian Greek Catholic Church in El Segundo, CA, and also Administrator of Saint Paul Melkite Greek Catholic Mission in the same city.

Fr. Alexei served as an elected member of the Council of Priests of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for six years, serving as Vice President of the Council and Chair of the Priestly Life and Ministry Committee for the last two years of his service on the Council. He is currently a member of the Spirituality Commission of the Archdiocese, and has been invested as a Knight Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Fr. Alexei served as president of the Interreligious Council of Southern California for five years and is the recipient of numerous commendations and awards: in 2007 he was awarded the prestigious Religious Leadership Award of the Valley Interfaith Council. In 2011, Fr. Alexei was elected President of the Southern California Ecumenical Council, the first Catholic to hold that position.” (From Los Angeles Diocese website)
“We have been less successful, to be honest with you there, about partnering with other faiths. When it comes to this. I mean, I’ve often wondered, for example, why do we have Catholic Charities and Lutheran charities and Jewish charities and LDS charities? I’ve been to your center here. Why don’t we just have a charitable center and let all of us be working together on that? But I think we’re too still clinging to our own identities here. We do some of those things together. Especially around Thanksgiving, a lot of our parishes will partner with other churches and other faith communities in their area, have food drives and things like this. I myself am in where I live in El Segundo have been president of a citywide group called Case Community Alliance to support and empower El Segundo to deal with people who are in need. And that’s really that is more of an ecumenical endeavor meeting with our fellow Christians, because I know non-Christian entities, those structures in El Segundo, at least as of yet. So we have a we’re given a space in a former Baptist church, now a Presbyterian church, where we have a food pantry. Most of the volunteer people who distribute the food and arrange the food and all that, they come from the Methodist church. I’m a Greek Catholic and I am president of it. We get donations from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are wonderful with us when it comes to making the food baskets and things for Thanksgiving and also for Easter.” (From the interview with Alexei)
Homeboy Industries:

“A native Angeleno and Jesuit priest, from 1986 to 1992 Father Boyle served as pastor of Dolores Mission Church in Boyle Heights, then the poorest Catholic parish in Los Angeles that also had the highest concentration of gang activity in the city.

Father Boyle witnessed the devastating impact of gang violence on his community during the so-called “decade of death” that began in the late 1980s and peaked at 1,000 gang-related killings in 1992. In the face of law enforcement tactics and criminal justice policies of suppression and mass incarceration as the means to end gang violence, he and parish and community members adopted what was a radical approach at the time: treat gang members as human beings.” (From website)
Christ Cathedral, Garden Grove, California

Students and faculty participated in Communion services at Christ Cathedral (formerly Crystal Cathedral) in Garden Grove, California and also participated in a very moving processional that culminated at Our Lady of La Vang Shrine which commemorates the 1798 appearance of the Blessed Mother to Vietnamese Catholics.
Islamic Center of Southern California:

Three BYU students and two council members spent a Saturday at the Islamic Center of Southern California. We worked with local Muslims to fill food orders for the homeless on Skid Row in Los Angeles. After working side-by-side with them we spent the afternoon near their prayer room learning and listening from young Muslims about their faith and their struggles. This proved to be one of the most significant experiences that we experienced during our trip to the West Coast and has prompted ideas for future engagement with local organizations.
Restoration Faiths Dialogue Annual History - 2022

2022 was a landmark year for the interfaith team in Religious Education working with other Restoration faiths. We began this year by sponsoring a session at the Global Mormon Studies conference held in Coventry, United Kingdom on March 20-24, 2022. Casey Paul Griffiths along with Taunalyn Ford from the BYU team presented in a session, along with Andrew and Jewell Bolton from Community of Christ. The session was well-received at the conference and several important connections were forged to further the dialogue.

After the conference, members of the dialogue visited several vital Church history sites in the United Kingdom, including Benbow Farm, the Gadfield Elm Chapel, and the Ribble Valley, guided by Andrew Bolton. Several ideas were filmed to help acquaint students in classes with the history of the Church in the British Isles. The sacred nature of creation and the divine stewardship given to the children of God. For the first time, we held a session of the dialogue that involved students from Brigham Young University and Graceland University to discuss the issues and listen to perspectives on Creation and Stewardship from both faiths. The meeting, which was held via video conference, involved hundreds of students.

Taunalyn Ford with Andrew and Jewell Bolton at the Coventry Cathedral.
Katherine Hill, Maclane E. Heward, and David J. Howlett. A general history of the dialogue was written by Richard G. Moore, a founding member of the dialogue team.

The book features a number of fascinating conversations on how each church views these topics. Chapter authors were asked to summarize their own perspectives, then write a response to their partner’s essays, and then collaborate together on a concluding statement. This international team of authors worked together, using videoconferencing and electronic communication to collaborate. The resulting volume is an unprecedented collaborative work, one of the first produced in cooperation between scholars from the two churches. The book was a joint publication of the Religious Studies Center, Deseret Book, and John Whitmer Books. The members of both teams are hopeful this is only the first of many projects we can create working together to increase the communication and love between member churches in the Restoration family. To celebrate the publication of the book, members of the dialogue teams participated in a panel discussion held at the conference of the John Whitmer Historical Association held in Independence Missouri, September 15-18, 2022.
After the conference another dialogue was held in the Community of Christ Independence Temple. The topic of our dialogue was Joseph Smith and a lively discussion ensued. The meeting took place in the council room of the temple, and featured participants who use video conferencing to contribute to the discussion from Chicago, Illinois and Leicester, United Kingdom.

Andrew Bolton and Casey Paul Griffiths edited a volume for the Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, Brigham Young University. (see cover opposite)
“This book contains reflections from two groups of scholars who trace their beginnings to the early Saints who built the Kirtland Temple. These scholars come from the two largest branches of the Restoration movement, Community of Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who have often found themselves on the opposite sides of many issues. This book is filled with honest, frank conversations between people of the two faiths but also collegiality and friendship. Centered on twelve themes, this dialogue is about bringing together informed scholars from the two churches working together, with goodwill, to accurately understand each other.” Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University.
Nazarene and Latter-day Saint Dialogue - By Rachel Cope

The LDS/Nazarene Dialogue Group met in April 2022 at Point Loma Nazarene University to discuss eschatology. J.B. Haws was a guest speaker in a theology class, and Rachel Cope guest spoke in a Christian practice course. We also participated in a public discussion/Q&A session one of the evenings. A number of students and faculty attended, as well as several members of the community. The lecture hall was filled beyond capacity. Difficult questions were handled with grace, and everyone seemed moved by the discussion. Respect and understanding resulted that evening. The group spent the following day discussing the topic, as well as initiating plans for a book the group will write together.

We met again in November 2022 at BYU to discuss the topic of race in our traditions, both historically and theologically. We spent one afternoon and another full day discussing the topic. The discussions were powerful and moving. The Nazarene group was deeply moved by Stanley Kimball's article about race and priesthood, and a powerful discussion about revelation and change resulted. They commented, multiple times, about how much this discussion changed their perceptions (in a positive way) about how the revelation came about. We also further detailed our plans for a book and assigned chapter topics to each member of the group.

Our meetings this past year have been among our best. Understanding, friendship, love, and respect have developed, and students at Point Loma Nazarene University had the opportunity to witness that and participate in it.
Mary Lou Shea and Rachel Cope visiting with Point Loma Nazarene students
Chaplaincy and Dialogue

Religious Education at Brigham Young University offers a Masters of Chaplaincy. Two of the masters students (Mitchell West and Stina Plomgren) organized and carried out three interfaith visits and dialogues with the Hindu, Islamic, and Jewish communities in Utah. They attended Dr. MacKay’s world religions course and helped develop the curriculum for our Interfaith Leadership and Ethics course.

We visited Rabbi Sam Spector at Kol Ami in Holladay, the Krishna Lotus Temple, and Dr Salman Masud at the Kadeeja Islamic Center in Salt Lake City.

Mitchell reflected:

“This class’s two additional portions—offsite visits and interfaith curriculum development—were hugely impactful and definitely enhanced my experience. Speaking with an Imam, a Rabbi, and a representative of the local Krishna temple was extremely informative and gave much better insight into their religious beliefs and practices—insight that I couldn't have gotten from a class, but also information that was reinforced and bolstered by classroom education. (Honestly, I wish that other courses had done this kind of thing for me—it would have given me a much better education.) Interfaith curriculum was also helpful here, as it provided a bond between much of the main course material. I probably reviewed about a third of the course and met several times with Mike to formulate additions, changes, and altogether new material, and working with him at that level gave me a perspective that was helpful beyond what being a student allowed.”
Stina, Leah, Mike, and Mitchell at Kol Ami in Holladay, Utah.

Stina, Mitchell, and Mike, Krishna Lotus Temple, Spanish Fork, Utah.
“Loving, liberating, and Loving life!” Students from IFSA and Dr. MacKay’s World Religion classes teamed up twice this year for Easter and Advent to sing in St. Mary’s Episcopal choir. Other attended the services and worshiped with local Episcopalians.
Photo credit: Andy Reed
Co-Sponsored event with Richard L. Evans
Chair of Religious Understanding

Marilynne Robinson
BYU’s Fifth Annual World Interfaith
Harmony Week Lecture
“The Harmony of Religions.”
Holy Envy: Living Faithfully With Religious Difference

Fifty years ago, you had to be an international explorer, missionary, or soldier deployed overseas to encounter people of vastly different faiths. Now anyone with a computer can go on a virtual Hajj to Mecca or learn meditation from a Zen master online. Spirituality has become as global as trade, raising lively questions for people of faith about religious difference close to home. Join Barbara Brown Taylor for an introduction to “holy envy” and a few other rules of religious understanding.

Barbara Brown Taylor is a New York Times bestselling author and Episcopal minister who taught world religions to undergraduates at Piedmont University for twenty years. She wrote a book about that experience called Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others, which won a Golden Nautilus Award in 2019, a place on Library Journal's list of Best Religion & Spirituality books, and a Georgia Author of the Year award in 2020.

Barabara Brown Taylor also led a discussion with our Council for Interfaith Engagement. She also graciously attended a dinner with the council members along with her husband. The council was deeply affected by her graciousness and kindness, leaving us enlightened and grateful for our new friend in interfaith.

3rd Annual Richard L. Evans Memorial Lecture

On Thursday, Sept 15, 2022, Dr. Yolanda Pierce, Dean of the Howard University Divinity School, will deliver her lecture titled “Cradle and Cauldron: Early Black American Religion and Interfaith Possibilities.” In addition to providing a vital Black American perspective on interfaith relations both historically and at present, Dr. Pierce’s campus visit was planned in connection with BYU’s “Race, Equity, and Belonging” vision and initiatives.

Dr. Pierce is a scholar, writer, and public theologian. She currently serves as Professor and Dean of the Howard University School of Divinity in Washington, DC. In 2016, Pierce was appointed as the Founding Director of the Center for African American Religious Life at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). Previously, she served as the Founding Director of the Center for Black Church Studies and Associate Professor of Religion and Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary.
“While the discovery of new knowledge must increase, there must always be a heavy and primary emphasis on transmitting knowledge - on the quality of teaching at BYU. Quality teaching is a tradition never to be abandoned. It includes a quality relationship between faculty and students.”

Kevin Worthen, “This is a Student,” University Conference 2022.
Publications and Media Productions
Interfaith Media and Publications
Faith and Imagination:
A BYU Humanities Center Podcast

Prof. Matthew Wickman is the host of the Faith and Imagination podcast, an ecumenical podcast whose guests discuss the convergence of the life of the Spirit with the life of the mind. The podcast helps make good friends for BYU, which seems especially important across a Christian world that remains suspicious of Latter-day Saints. It also makes for meaningful listening and learning for those who tune in from across the US and around the world. Student fellow Sophia Snyder has been helping with this project during the Fall 2022 semester. A list of Faith & Imagination episodes is included below.

Sophia Snyder, a student fellow, reflected on her experience working on this podcast:

“Having the privileged opportunity to work with Dr. Wickman as the Faith and Imagination intern this year and producing the ecumenical podcast hosted in the Institute has deeply enriched my appreciation of other Christian traditions and certainly given me a taste of holy envy. Dr. Wickman searches for potential guests by combing through journals of theology, etc., and I love hearing the quotes he pulls from the beautiful works of our guests and the insightful comments/perspective they offer on what they’ve written. Dr. Wickman himself has taught me much about interfaith work through example—how he interacts with the guests, and following recordings through the conversations we’ve had about what was said, much of which I hurry home to write down so as not to forget. His example has taught me to be authentically curious and ask good questions. The answers to his questions have often inspired me to be a better Christian and more thoughtful disciple. I’ve gained more than an appreciation, but a recognition of the need to engage with and learn from others who believe differently than I do. Dr. Wickman’s own academic mentoring has been nothing short of exceptional and his life experiences with religion have opened my mind in many respects to what it truly looks like to claim Christianity as a creed more than nominally.”
Faith and Imagination Episode List

Episode 61 (2022): “Some Favorite Books We Read in 2022”: conversation with George Handley, BYU
Episode 59 (2022): “Christian Poetry in America since 1940”: Micah Mattix, Redeemer University, and Sally Thomas, poetry editor of The New York Sun
Episode 57 (2022): Highlighted Episode: “Art as a Window onto the Divine”: Katie Kresser, Seattle Pacific University
Episode 56 (2022): “The Religious Turn of One of America's Finest Poets, Denise Levertov”: Cristina Gámez-Fernández, University of Córdoba
Episode 55 (2022): “Life to the Whole Being: The Spiritual Memoir of a Literature Professor”: Matthew Wickman and George Handley, BYU
Episode 54 (2022): “The Mysticism of Ordinary Life”: Andrew Prevot, Boston College
Episode 53 (2022): “Environmental Lamentation and Hope in American Cultural History”: John Gatta, Sewanee: The University of the South
Episode 52 (2022): “The Scandal of Holiness”: Jessica Hooten Wilson, Pepperdine University
Episode 51 (2022): “The Hunger for Home”: Matthew Croasmun, Yale Divinity School
Episode 50 (2022): “Season 2 Recap: Reflecting Back, Looking Forward”: conversation with Faith and Imagination producers Abby Thatcher and Bobbe May
Episode 49 (2022): “On Writing of Spiritual Things”: Charles Inouye (Tufts University) and Matthew Wickman (BYU)
Episode 47 (2022): “Permeable Selfhood, or, The Persons within Persons We Are”: Barbara Newman, Northwestern University
Episode 46 (2022): “God’s Peaceful Presence in Seasons of War”: Irena Dragaš Jansen, artist and freelance writer
Episode 45 (2022): Highlighted Episode: “Art + Faith”: Makoto Fujimura, acclaimed visual artist
Episode 44 (2022): “Perhaps: Reclaiming the Space between Doubt and Dogmatism”: Joshua M. McNall, Oklahoma Wesleyan University
Episode 43 (2022): “Aging Faithfully”: Alice Fryling, popular writer and spiritual director
Episode 42 (2022): “Christian Spirituality Today”: Glen Scorgie, Bethel Seminary
Episode 40 (2022): “A Theology of Life with Depression”: Jessica Coblentz, St. Mary's College
Episode 39 (2022): “Black Women, Faith, and the Stories We Inherit”: Yolanda Pierce, Dean of the School of Divinity, Howard University
Episode 38 (2022): “Disability, Grace, and Life Beyond the Meritocracy”: Amy Julia Becker, Christian writer and speaker
Episode 37 (2022): “This Sacred Life: Hope in an Era of Climate Crisis”: Norman Wirzba, Duke Divinity School
Episode 36 (2022): “Highlighted Episode: Experiencing God in a Time of Crisis”: Sarah Bachelard, founder of the Benedictus Contemplative Church, Canberra, Australia
Noteworthy Faculty Fellow Publications


Council for Interfaith Engagement Faculty Fellow - John Hilton Receives University Award.

John Hilton III joined the Council in Fall 2022 and was awarded the 2022-2023 Loretta C. Gledhill Teaching and Learning Faculty Fellowship by Brigham Young University. The award summary noted that “Hilton exemplifies devoted, attentive teaching. His classes demonstrate a balanced approach to helping students understand the history and context of the scriptures as well as training them in ways that lead to spiritual edification and lifelong discipleship. Hilton used class time purposefully, and his course contains a healthy blend of teaching and learning approaches.”
“Individual faculty members’ efforts to guide students through the portal of discovery can be made more seamless, more effective, and more profound through personal revelation. Student-centered scholarship enlivened by revelation is also likely to lead to superior outcomes.”

C. Shane Reese, “Becoming New Creatures” University Conference 2022
UPCOMING INTERFAITH EVENTS

6th Annual World Interfaith Harmony Week Lecture

BYU’s 6th Annual World Interfaith Harmony Week Lecture on Thursday, Feb 2 at 7:30. Our guest lecturer this year will be Dr. Thomas Albert (Tal) Howard, Professor of History and Phyllis and Richard Duesenberg Chair in Christian Ethics at Valparaiso University. He will deliver a lecture titled “The Rise of Interfaith Dialogue: Historical Highlights & Future Prospects.” Since the first Annual World Interfaith Harmony Week lecture, the Council for Interfaith Engagement has co-sponsored this event and it remains one of the great university lectures during the academic year.
Wheatley Institute 2023 SCRIPS Conference Keynote Speaker
Tuesday, February 21, 2023

Barbara Brown Taylor visited the Council for Interfaith Engagement in October 2022 and is returning to campus to give the keynote address on February 21 as part of the Wheatley student symposium that is focused on religious literacy this year. Barbara Brown Taylor is a best-selling author, teacher, and Episcopal priest. The topic of her address will be “Holy Envy and the Common Good.”