



Phillips Academy
ANDOVER

March 5, 2016

TO: Panel of Esteemed Judges
RE: 2016 World Interfaith Harmony Week Report

Overview and Background of Setting and People Involved:

It has been my great privilege to lead and oversee the 2016 World Interfaith Harmony Week at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, USA. In coordination and collaboration with numerous student clubs and organizations, religious, spiritual, and cultural communities, and academic departments and offices of the school, this multiple day, multiple event, and multiple venue interfaith initiative was the first all-school marking of WIHW on the campus.

As noted on the residential high school's website: "Founded in 1778, Phillips Academy is an independent, coeducational secondary school with an expansive worldview and a legacy of academic excellence."¹ With approximately 1100 students from across the United States and from 45 countries around the world, it is an intentionally diverse intellectual community preparing young people to be global citizens and leaders. With the Academy's rich offering of programming that upholds inclusion, equity, and recognition of identities framed by race, ethnicity, class, gender, this initiative provided a space for upholding, informing, and celebrating the aspects of identity of individuals and communities that are framed by religious, spiritual, and belief systems. Those groups that were represented in the collaborations were:

- Andover Atheist Club (AA)
- Andover Christian Fellowship (ACF)
- Catholic Student Fellowship (CSF)
- Culture, Politics, and Religion (CPR)
- Gospel Choir
- Hindu Student Union (HSU)
- Jewish Student Union (JSU)
- KidSpirit magazine
- Muslim Student Association (MSA)
- Out Of The Blue (OOTB)
- Brace Center for Gender Studies
- The Chapel (Catholic, Jewish, Protestant chaplaincies)
- Department of Art
- Department of Music
- Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
- Department of Theatre and Dance
- Office of Community and Multicultural Development (CAMD)
- Student Activities Office

¹ (<http://www.andover.edu>)

The student leaders from these clubs are from around the world, and like most of the Academy's students, are well immersed in the rigorous academic, athletic, and extra-curricular offerings of the school. Many are leaders and/or board members of more than one organization, are in performing groups and varsity sports, are dorm leaders, and maintain multiple responsibilities and are a part of many social circles across the campus. To engage with these students over several months was a humbling and joyful experience, as I saw the commitment and seriousness with which they approached the programmatic planning of these interfaith days for their community of peers, faculty, and staff. I have been the Catholic Chaplain at the Academy since 2009 and draw on over thirty years of experience in ministry in Catholic, ecumenical, and interfaith settings in churches, organizations, schools, and universities. I hold a doctorate in Religion and Society from Harvard Divinity School, a Master of Religion and a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School, and a bachelor degree in music and theology. In addition, I am an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Religious and Theological Studies at neighboring Merrimack College, am also an associate of their Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations, and have served on planning boards for national and international conferences.

My first years at Phillips Academy were more focused on the Catholic Christian programming and creating a cohesive community and support network for students of that faith tradition. Programming with student leaders expanded events around Catholic arts, culture, and music. "Celebrating Catholic Cultural Legacies" was a program that ran for three-years and received the largest grant ever given to a student-led project on the campus, and some of these events brought in Ugandan, Haitian, Filipino, Venezuelan, African American musicians, dancers, and artists from Catholic communities in the region. As a part of this project, Diana Eck, Director of Harvard's Pluralism Project, was invited to be the first All School Meeting speaker to address issues of religion/religious pluralism. The Catholic community on the campus has grown to be a vibrant group of students, faculty, staff, their families, and local families who worship with us regularly.

Some ecumenical Christian programming with the Protestant chaplaincy has included Stations of the Cross, with different artwork from around the world used each year for these Stations, as well as social events, and invited speakers. The worship services, club meetings, and dinners of the various faith and cultural clubs are welcoming events, and have become more and more fluid and involving of students from across traditions. In the past few years, Catholic students and students of other faith traditions have more frequently asked about interfaith programming and planning of joint events across clubs. Christian students regularly attend the campus Passover Seder and Shabbat dinners, and were present at this year's first Eid dinner that welcomed the wider campus community. The Muslim and Catholic student clubs held a meeting this winter around Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to explore and compare her role across their sacred texts. The timing was right to bring these student groups together to consider interfaith programming for the wider school community.

As a religious leader and religion scholar, and specifically as Phillips Academy's Catholic Chaplain, I proposed this interfaith initiative for this particular year as it marks the 50th anniversary of Catholicism's document and declaration promoting interreligious dialogue. I frame my work in core contemporary Catholic teachings that call for dialogue and collaboration with other truths, working to "recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among peoples" (Document of the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* - Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, 1965).

In light of the violence, terrorism, and community unrest around our globe, I join the leaders of the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week, along with many cultural and religious leaders and scholars in supporting work for interreligious and intercultural dialogue as important contributions toward ending misunderstanding and discrimination, fundamentalism and terrorism, which "gravely demean the dignity of every man and woman and exploit religion" (Apostolic Journey of His Holiness

Pope Francis to Turkey, 2014).²

As one of the objectives behind the World Interfaith Harmony Week is “to harness and utilize the collective might of the world’s second-largest infrastructure” (that of places of worship/communities of believers — the largest being that of education) specifically for peace and harmony in the world, this venture is presented as one small, though bold, way to join these two infrastructures towards a more peaceful and harmonious world. In the Spring of 2015, I wrote a formal proposal with broad outlines and ideas for WIHW. This proposal was accepted, and funds were made available from the school’s Palitz Fund.

After my attendance at the World Parliament of Religion in October, I began meeting with student interfaith leaders to plan the specifics of the interfaith initiative. Across these past months, the commitment, candor, respect and care for each other shown by these student leaders has been moving and formational for me as their chaplain and advisor. They were thoughtful conversation partners, listening to the experiences each brought to the table, whether by a devout Muslim student or by an atheist student. They recognized the importance of their work together, their working together being a quiet model of cooperation and understanding for the rest of the school. They also recognized the very full lives and expectations of students at this exceptional academic institution. When students were too busy to follow through with something, another stepped in or found a colleague to help. Adding this full slate of events over several days, in the midst of already full schedules, was an admirable and impressive commitment for these students. I was particularly inspired by the students who were seniors, in their last year at the Academy, juggling a full academic load along with college applications and college visits. They were consistent in their presence and in their voices of leadership for the interfaith planning committee, as well as in their leadership of their particular student clubs. Their roles, clear identities as students of faith, their vision, and their leadership have begun a legacy for the school’s younger students, and the communities of faith/belief on the campus. I am proud of these young people, and the great amount of work they put in, in order to share World Interfaith Harmony Week with their community.

The Audiences/ The Events/Commentary:

- The primary audience of the interfaith initiative was the Phillips Academy community of students, faculty, and staff as they are the day-to-day, week-to-week community that works and/or resides on the campus. Publicity for this primary audience was through the school website’s announcement pages; the student newspaper, *The Phillipian*; the newsletter of the Phillips Academy Community/faculty and staff, *The Gazette*; posters; emails; Facebook pages of various campus organizations and clubs. *(See news links and attached documents.)*

- The extended audience for some of the events was the alumni community; the local and regional communities of Andover, North Andover, the Merrimack Valley, the greater Boston area, the eastern region of Massachusetts, and the southern region of New Hampshire. Publicity was sent through newspapers, interfaith centers and organizations, churches, synagogues, mosques, local and regional college campuses, emails, websites, and Facebook pages of various organizations. *(See news links and attached documents.)*

² https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141128_turchia-incontro-autorita.html

February 1-5, 2016

- Outside art installation projection of symbols across faith, religion, belief systems on a campus walkway and courtyard, during evening hours.

These displays were quite beautiful after a blizzard blew through and gave a sparkling white blanket for their background. (See photos – taken before the blizzard.)

- Displays, information available, interfaith student leaders present and available for conversation and questions in main dining building lobby each day of the week during the midday mealtime.

The lobby space of the dining building, a prime publicity space on the campus, was reserved for this interfaith week. The interfaith student leadership shared and relinquished the space on some of these days when other student leaders on campus asked them if they could use the space to advertise the Chinese New Year. Given the interfaith week's theme and tone of harmony and cooperation amongst and across communities, the student leaders saw it as only appropriate to share the space. I was impressed with the ease, graciousness, and diplomacy these young people showed to their classmates, colleagues, and friends.

- Displays on the following topics: The U.N. Interfaith World Harmony Week; the Golden Rule across religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions; interfaith support of women/gender; care of the environment; work against poverty and hunger.

- Cake on display/served on February 1; stickers designed for the week were available and handed out each day. (See photos.)

Tuesday, February 2

- Screening of documentary “Of Many.”

The 30-minute documentary was set against the backdrop of violence in the Middle East and the tension between Jewish and Muslim students on college campuses. The film focuses on the transformative relationship between an orthodox rabbi and an imam, who serve as university chaplains at New York University. The award-winning documentary highlights young religious Jews and Muslims working together and overcoming longstanding divides. The film was produced by Chelsea Clinton, who with the rabbi and imam of NYU, cofounded “Of Many” Institute for Multifaith Leadership in 2012.

(See poster in attached documents.)

The documentary was shown in the dining building right after the dinner hour, and drew students, faculty, staff, and local parents. A discussion, led by interfaith student leaders, followed the screening.

Wednesday, February 3

- Chinese-Cuban-American artist/curator Katarina Wong available for conversations during lunch.
- Public artist talk by acclaimed Chinese-Cuban-American artist/curator Katarina Wong - “Buddhism, Monkey Mind, Chaos, and Connections.”

This talk by Katarina Wong, co-sponsored by the Art Department, was required of students in several art classes. The auditorium was full and students were engaged well past the formal talk during the lengthy Q & A session. Many students still had hands raised with questions when the Q & A session ended. After the talk, students offered an impromptu invitation to Ms. Wong to view their artwork in the adjacent art building. (See attached photo with Ms. Wong, a student, and instructor and chair of the school's Art Department.) Ms. Wong's talk was very well received by students and faculty alike. Desserts and refreshments were served after the talk, courtesy of the Art Department. (See poster and article and background of artist in school newsletter in attached documents; see articles in student newspaper in attached news links.)

Thursday, February 4

- A mindfulness meditation on world harmony was led by instructor and chair of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department.
- Katarina Wong taught in two ceramics classes in the Art Department.
- Fund raiser for area Merrimack Valley food pantries in collaboration with Merrimack College's Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations' project: "Think Globally/Act Locally: Feed Your Neighbor."

This year, this event at Merrimack College drew about 250 volunteers from 21 Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith communities. The groups packed 15,000 meals in just three hours. These meals were donated to the Merrimack Valley Food Bank in Lowell, Massachusetts, a nonprofit that provides food to hungry people across the region. Last year, interfaith student leaders from Phillips Academy took part in this meal-packing event on Merrimack's campus. This year, the interfaith student leaders of Phillips Academy collected funds for this event, and along with a collection taken up at Mass with the Catholic community, enough money was raised to pay for 1257 meals.

- Student Interfaith Panel "Ask Your Neighbor."

This event was held in a comfortable reading room in the school's library. Pizza, dessert, and refreshments were served. Nine student presenters from Argentina, Bahrain, India, Thailand, and the United States spoke of their experiences from their traditions/belief systems of Atheism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. They then fielded a lengthy Q & A session for the student audience. (See photo in attached documents.)

Friday, February 5

- Dinner gathering with Stephen Prothero for interfaith students leaders, students and instructors of classes in the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department.

This dinner and discussion time was energetic with much student involvement. The public talk began a few minutes late as the dinner conversation was lively and the students present wanted to continue the informal forum.

- Public talk by Stephen Prothero, Boston University professor/author/scholar
- "How to Talk (and Think) about the 'R' Word in Public."

This talk by Stephen Prothero had been advertised widely and was drawing classes from Merrimack College, adult religious education forums from local churches and synagogues, and local interfaith organizations. A blizzard that morning cancelled classes in all schools in the area, as well as most evening events of local churches and synagogues. The audience was smaller than anticipated, but for those students and faculty on campus who hiked across the campus that snowy night, it was a provocative and engaging presentation. The students in attendance had many questions, and continued these questions after the formal Q & A time when Dr. Prothero was available for a book signing in the lobby of the auditorium. The planners of the interfaith initiative were greatly appreciative of Dr. Prothero's foresight in coming to a hotel near the school the day before the blizzard, and for the local bookseller who was able to come out that night with Prothero's books for sale. The event was co-sponsored by the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department, and the Student Activities Office, providing dinner and the desserts and hot chocolate served following the event.

(See attached poster and article and background of speaker in school newsletter in attached documents; see photo of Dr. Prothero, Dr. Kantor, and some of the student interfaith leaders in attached photo; see article in student newspaper in attached news links.)

The interfaith days continued on Thursday, February 11. The school had a four-day break from Saturday, February 6 through Tuesday, February 9. No interfaith events were scheduled on Wednesday, February 10, as the Christian community was marking Ash Wednesday.

Thursday, February 11

- Presentation by Native American on Native American Spirituality, co-sponsored by the school's Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archeology.

This event was cancelled due to health issues of the presenter. Preliminary plans are in place for this event for next year.

Friday, February 12

- Makerspace/design/brainstorming activity with student interfaith leaders looking at how to raise interfaith/religious literacy on the campus.

- "Hacking Religious and Spiritual Misunderstandings and Stereotypes."

This brainstorming event, with dinner and dessert served, was an energized, cooperative, and fruitful creative discussion time with students in three groups working together. The materials gathered and ideas raised from this event are being given careful consideration by the Associate Head of School for Equity and Inclusion, the chaplains, and the student interfaith leaders as they look towards next year and future programming.

(See photos and materials from the events in attached documents.)

Saturday, February 13

- Playwright/actress Rohina Malik available for conversations over lunch.

- Public performance of “Unveiled” by playwright/actress Rohina Malik.

This event Rohina Malik was well advertised in the area, and despite record breaking cold temperatures the evening of the performance, it drew a good crowd almost filling the main floor of the performance venue. Students made up half the audience, and the rest were people from around the area, some driving over an hour for the performance. There was a Q & A in the theater after the performance, and Ms. Malik was also available for book signing during the tea and desserts reception following the event. The play, which examines myths, stereotypes, and intolerances around Islam, women, and cultures prompted many questions, and post-performance conversations. Considerations are being made for her return visit to campus. This event was co-sponsored by the Brace Center for Gender Studies, and the Department of Theater and Dance. The teas served after the performance were from recipes from the play “Unveiled” and were well received. The interfaith planners were appreciative of the extra effort of the school’s catering staff in making the beautiful tea cookies, hand making the teas, and providing fresh flowers for the tables on that bitter cold winter’s night.

Sunday, February 14

- “Love Your Neighbor” Interfaith Festival with Arts, Music, Books, Foods.

During the brunch hours, the interfaith student leaders hosted a small festival. With the bitter cold temperatures, the day/commuting students were not able to be in attendance that morning. Those students who ventured out of their dorms to the dining building greatly enjoyed the pastries from around the world and from different cultural and religious traditions. Posters and artwork were placed around the dining building. Recorded music was playing, and a large book display, with books from across religious and spiritual traditions, was available for browsing. The attendance was light but enthusiastic! The interfaith leaders were pleased with the accomplishments and offerings of the last days.

(See attached photos of food and posters.)

- Sunday Mass of the Catholic community, 6: 45 p.m.

The Catholic community has Mass on Sunday evenings each week, and Mass on this particular Sunday was the final event of the interfaith initiative. Art, books, and posters from the interfaith festival were on display. International desserts were served at the reception following the Mass. A special music offering during Mass was performed by an interfaith trio of two singers and a violinist. The song, specially arranged for the trio by the school’s organist, who is also one of the choral instructors at the school, was Al Shlosha D’varim. The song, sung in Hebrew, with a soaring violin counterpart, was exquisitely beautiful. (One of our Catholic cantors, and an Orthodox Jewish student, both in the school’s elite a cappella choir were the singers. The student violinist won this year’s concerto concert and recently performed this virtuosic Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto in D Major with the school orchestra. Each of these young people is an exceptionally talented musician, as well as a person of great integrity of faith and character.)

The interfaith events, conversations, performances, artwork, music, and relationships amongst students and across student groups, as well as amongst faculty and staff, have energized the campus, students of faith, and some students of no faith tradition. The campus life is full and weekly marks many events, festivals, and celebrations of cultural groups. While World Interfaith Harmony Week is now an event gone by on the calendar, the hearts and spirits of young people and adults were moved by these days. Conversations continue, hearts and minds have been prompted. Future plans are

beginning to be formulated amongst students and faculty. (See email inquiry from a student with no religious background in attached documents; see recent email between Catholic and Jewish student leaders in attached documents.) The interfaith days were followed by the final days of winter term and exams week. The school is now on a three-week Spring Break. I look forward to continuing the conversations and planning for next year's events when the school begins Spring Term at the end of March.

Final Remarks:

The lyrics of the song, Al Shlosa D'varim, in translation are: "The world is sustained by three things: by truth, by justice, and by peace." The beauty of the song, the student musicians, and the sincerity and passion of the work by the interfaith student leaders throughout World Interfaith Harmony Week moved me to tears on that final evening.

I have witnessed the love, the compassion, and commitment to a better world of these young interfaith leaders. Joy and hope have been renewed within me. With a humbled and grateful heart, I offer this report of World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016 at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, USA.

I offer my gratitude and deep respect for the leadership and work of the esteemed judges, and all who oversee the United Nations WIHW.

Sincerely and with best wishes of peace to you,



Dr. Mary T. Kantor
Catholic Chaplain
Phillips Academy