Tufts UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY

MAY 26, 2021

Reflecting on our Year, 2020-2021

Dear Friend,

Greetings to you as summer begins at Tufts! Our final newsletter of this academic year highlights our year together at the University Chaplaincy. When I survey the sections below, I know this much is true: we are community.

We are community that cares deeply about one another; stands together in times of both mourning and celebration; reveres one another's spiritual and religious identities; delights in sharing stories and wisdom across traditions; employs creative responses to the challenges of connection posed by Covid-19; and believes that compassion, love, and justice are shared values that will lead us into deeper understanding of ourselves and our callings to serve and repair the world.

At the close of this academic year, I am grateful for the ways we re-imagined and sustained community amidst an intensely demanding year. And I am especially thankful for the people who made it all possible: a gifted, innovative team of chaplains, advisors, and staff and a resilient,

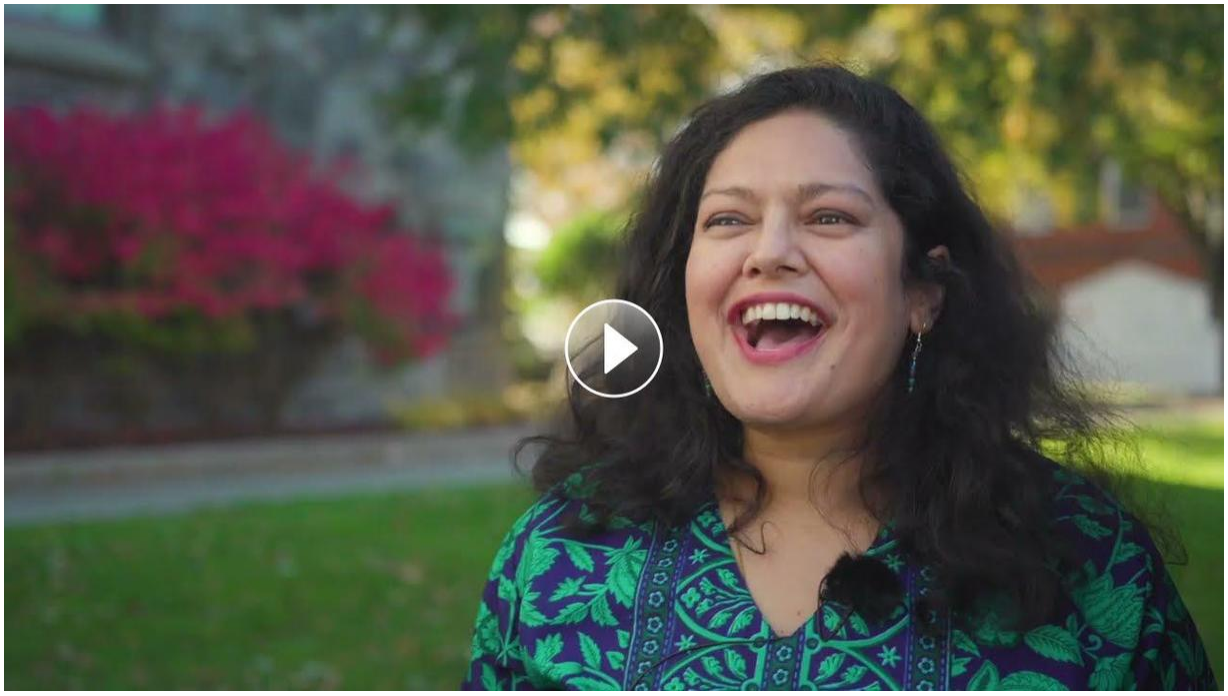
committed cohort of student workers and leaders. You all bring hope and joy to Tufts!

I wish you a summer of renewal and connection.

Pax et Lux,

Reverend Elyse Nelson Winger
University Chaplain

Reflecting on our Year, 2020-2021



Excerpt from the video, "Celebrating 115 Years with the University Chaplaincy"

Celebrating 115 Years with the University Chaplaincy

Tufts' multifaith University Chaplaincy is a vital place for these emergent times. Our vibrant, multifaith chaplaincy is the result of many years of vision and commitment by our shared Tufts community. Our office provides creative and innovative opportunities for our students to engage in intellectual and ethical exploration, spiritual practices, interfaith leadership, anti-racism work, and service.

Tufts University supports one of the most diverse and talented chaplaincy teams in the country and has expanded its commitment to students and the whole campus community in significant ways this year. On October 1, 2020, the Reverend Elyse Nelson Winger joined the team as University Chaplain following the able and wise leadership of Dr. Jennifer Howe Peace, University Chaplain *ad interim*. This past August, we welcomed two new advisors to our team this year: Azmera Hammouri-Davis, who leads the Africana Spirituality Chaplaincy, and Preeta Banerjee, who leads the new Hindu Chaplaincy. Their work this year has been essential for the students in these communities and our wider multifaith community. Meet the team on our website here to learn more about our chaplains and program staff.

"... the Chaplaincy has been a source of support and comfort through my transition into college and through the Covid-19 pandemic. My peers from interfaith life are some of the closest people in my life, and never before had I met a community of people so loving, open-minded, and compassionate. It has given me the space to connect with people from a variety of walks of life in a space that is always welcoming."

Liam Romaker, A23, COFFEE Interfaith Coalition Vice President

Fall 2020

Illumination Ceremony 2020

The Illumination Ceremony has been a Tufts tradition for decades. Typically the ceremony takes place on the President's Lawn and welcomes about 1600 first-year and transfer students to Tufts with spoken reflections, candle-lighting, and music. Perhaps you remember it yourself, in your first days at Tufts. During Illumination, we reconnect to the words of Charles Tufts, founder of the University, who said about the hill in Medford: "I will put a light it." We have shared the new introduction video, T*he Illumination Ceremony: A Tufts Tradition*, below. The recording of the 2020 ceremony and additional student reflections are on our website.

"When I arrived at the hill [for my Illumination ceremony], I remember feeling a little bit of a sense of apprehension because I did not know how many friends I'd make, I did not know what I'd major in. ... but as soon as I walked in and saw all the candles light up I knew that I belonged here, and

everybody was going through the same things as me, and that we would be making this journey together."

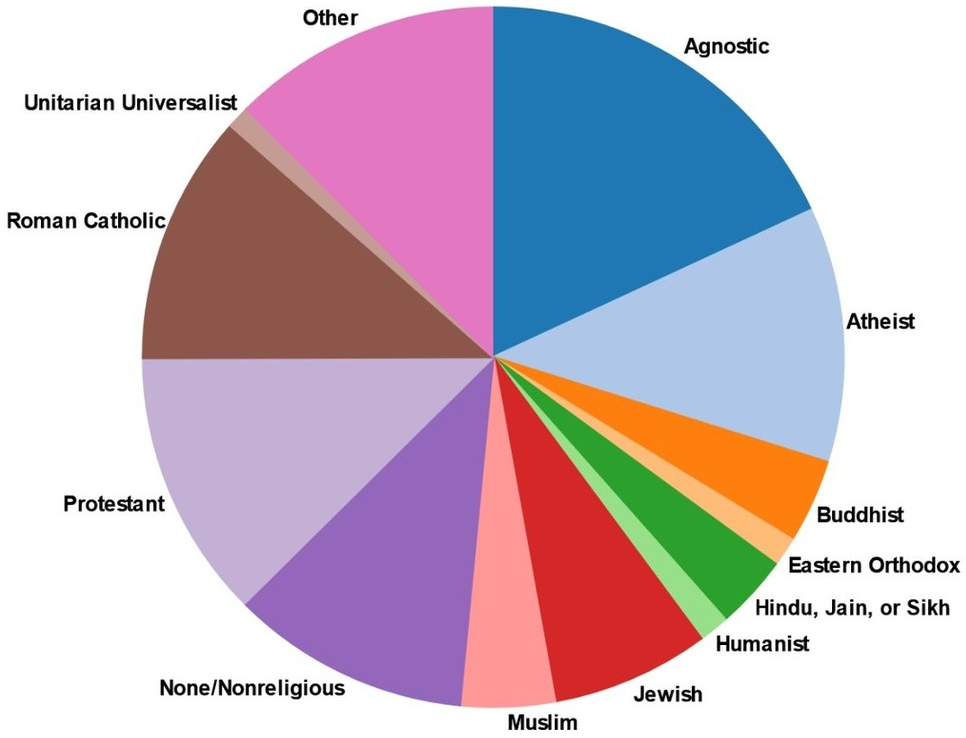
Sidarth Anand A21, Illumination reflection from a graduating senior

Annual Spiritual Interests Survey 2020

Each summer, the University Chaplaincy conducts the Spiritual Interests Survey for all incoming Tufts undergraduates and graduate students. The survey elicits the religious and spiritual identities and interests of students, as well as the spiritual and ethical questions they bring to Tufts. It provides us with valuable information that we use to guide our programs and better understand the our community. We publish the demographic information online. You can find the most updated version of our spiritual demographics infographic below, and find the interactive version on our website.

This visualization is based on data derived from surveys of all incoming undergraduate and graduate/professional students given in Fall 2014 – 2020.

Year: 2020 Academic Level: All



Data based on a 2020 survey of all incoming undergraduate and graduate/professional students (response rate = 48.1%). 1,718 respondents selected 2,457 religious, spiritual, and philosophical identities. Percentages are based on total number of identities selected (not total number of respondents).

"'Your spiritual life doesn't have to be only at special moments,' Cooper said. 'It can be right now, built into the day.' That expansive take on spiritual life is part of the program. 'The spiritual practices in Be-Friend remind people that their lives are already holy,' Cooper said."

Dr. Lynn Cooper on Be-Friend, TuftsNow

Be-Friend: Interfaith Friendship Program

In this acute moment, building and nourishing relationships is vital to good health and wellbeing. Be-Friend is a 9-week interfaith friendship project, offered both semesters, designed to help participants talk about their values, sense of purpose, and questions about life. Participants learned the skill of active listening while experimenting with shared spiritual practices from different religious and philosophical traditions. Several of our chaplains contributed to the program, offering a diverse array of spiritual practices. Participants committed to spending an hour together each week with their Be-Friend partner, as well as another half-hour in private reflection. Be-Friend was featured in an article on TuftsNow, which also included some photos of the pairs created by Tufts photographer Alonso Nichols.

Olivia Talbert, A24, and Ryan Botsaris, A24 (Alonso Nichols/Tufts)

"Botsaris: '...I've relied so much on Tufts Chaplaincy and Be-Friend specifically; it makes me feel less alone and helps my outlook.'"

"Talbert: 'When I first arrived at Tufts, ... it did feel a little lonely and was a little isolating but establishing my comfort through my faith helped.'"

Olivia Talbert, A24, and Ryan Botsaris, A24, on Be-Friend, TuftsNow

Spring 2021

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium 2021

Professor Jelani Cobb

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium is hosted every year by the University Chaplaincy and campus partners to recommit the Tufts community to Rev. Dr. King's legacy of justice and beloved community. The 2021 symposium was themed "Cashing Our Promissory Note: Race, Justice, and Reparation," inspired by a powerful excerpt from the Rev. Dr. King's speech at the March on Washington in 1963. Author, historian, and journalist Jelani Cobb gave the keynote address at this year's symposium.

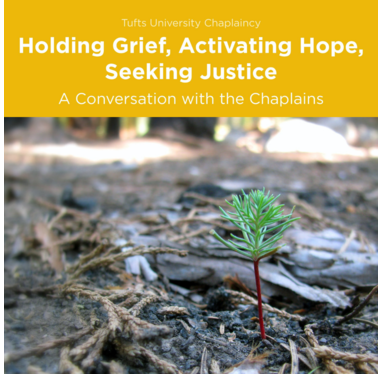
This event was also part of the Africana Studies Distinguished Lecture Series and co-sponsored by the Africana Center, Tisch College of Civic Life, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and others. You can view the recorded event here.

Holding Grief, Activating Hope, Seeking Justice: A Conversation with the Chaplains

This spring, the University Chaplaincy's multifaith team hosted a panel and small-group discussions on grief, hope, and justice. As religious and philosophical leaders, chaplains spoke to the ways genuine hope emerges out of honest lament. We then took time in small group discussions to reflect on how this process connects to the work of justice and to building resiliency. This event was hosted by the Interfaith Student Council and University Chaplaincy.

The Interfaith Student Council also hosted two interfaith community-building programs this year: Interfaith Open Mic Night via Zoom in December 2020 and Sowing and Growing: An Interfaith Celebration in April 2021.

Interfaith Open Mic Night



Holding Grief, Activating Hope, and Seeking Justice: A Conversation with the Chaplains

Sowing and Growing: An Interfaith Celebration

"I want us all to set a precedent for the remarkable cooperation and collaboration between faculty, staff, and students across all campuses that we saw this past year. I want us all to set a precedent for the care, comfort, and support we have provided each other this past year, as standard for every academic year."

President Anthony P. Monaco, A Time to Grieve, Hope, and Act

Many Voices: A Community Display of Grief, Hope, and Action

Marking the one-year anniversary of our campus's closure, the Tufts community was invited to come together for the gathering A Time to Grieve, Hope, and Act on March 7, 2020. Through music, candle-lighting, and reflections by students and chaplains, this program offered the opportunity to name losses, uplift our hopes, and renew our commitments. This multifaith, intergenerational community gathering was hosted by the University Chaplaincy and Hillel, with welcoming words by President Anthony P. Monaco.

A public art project was launched during our March 7 gathering to provide a visual and experiential offering to the campus. Participants decorated a paper square with reflections, quotes, drawings, and images of any kind that spoke to one of the project's themes: grief, hope, and action. On Wednesday, April 21, we celebrated the opening of Many Voices: A Community Display of Grief, Hope, and Action, which remained on the Medford campus through the end of the semester. You can find more information on our website, and see pictures of the installation below.

"Every time I breathe, I know billions of people around me and in the past are breathing with me. Every time I dance, I have millions dancing with me. I feel strong and connected in these moments, and it gives me hope because I know I'm not ever alone."

Neha Ratnapuri A23, A Time to Grieve, Hope, and Act

Russell Lecture on Spiritual Life 2021

Reverend Adam Russell Taylor

The University Chaplaincy hosted Reverend Adam Russell Taylor, President of Sojourners, a non-profit organization committed to "faith in action for social justice," for the annual Russell Lecture on Spiritual Life. Every year, the University Chaplaincy hosts this lecture to welcome a speaker to illuminate the spiritual truths of the historical moment. Rev. Taylor's address was entitled *The Work Ahead: Building a Just, Beloved Community*. He spoke of how the dual pandemics of Covid-19 and systemic racism have created an inflection moment in which we must both rigorously ask what kind of nation we want to be and rededicate ourselves to the work of building a more just and inclusive nation. The event included a Q&A session moderated by students and University Chaplain Elyse Nelson Winger. You can experience the full lecture here.

Launching Interfaith Leadership Workshops

This spring, four student Interfaith Leadership Training Assistants worked together to host two workshops for students. The first, *Meet Me Where I Am: Creating Inclusive Community through Listening and Dialogue* was a weekend experience designed to combat the disconnection and lack of community many have felt this past year. Leaders and participants focused on empathetic listening and conflict resolution, providing strategies to better understand ourselves and others. The second workshop, *Upholding Home: An Interfaith Exploration of Housing (In)justice within our Community* was guided by the tenants of interfaith activism and the experiences of

different expert voices in order to engage students around the intersectional issues of housing justice in the Somerville and Medford communities. It held space to reflect on our relationships to land, faith, environment, and feelings of belonging. These workshops have laid the foundation for the emerging Interfaith Ambassador program, launching this fall.

Baccalaureate Ceremony 2021

Since 1864, the Tufts senior class has gathered during Commencement Weekend for the Baccalaureate Ceremony to uplift the achievements of its students and send them forward in celebration. This year's virtual ceremony included traditional elements, including addresses by the Wendell Phillips Speaker, Atrey Bhargava, A21, and the University President, as well as new offerings, including senior interviews and multifaith blessings from our chaplains. The ceremony also included footage of the senior Illumination. We were so glad to host this annual celebration and welcome family and friends virtually to Commencement Weekend. You can find the full video on our YouTube channel.

Atrey Bhargava A21, Wendell Phillips Speaker

Rev. Elyse Nelson Winger, University Chaplain

Looking Forward to Summer 2021

See No Stranger at Tufts: A Reading and Learning Series for Faculty

and Staff

This summer, the University Chaplaincy is convening a reading and learning series for faculty and staff. The book *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* by civil rights activist, lawyer, filmmaker, and educator Valarie Kaur will guide this series. Revolutionary love is a "radical and joyful practice to heal ourselves and transform the world around us." *See No Stranger* details personal and social transformation through loving self, loving opponents, and loving others, and is woven throughout with the author's own personal stories of activism, reckoning, and growth. This group will meet biweekly for two months this summer, building relationships across campus and deepening our commitments to making a brighter world at Tufts and beyond.

Supporting the University Chaplaincy

Giving Tuesday 2020

The University Chaplaincy sincerely thanks all of the students, faculty, staff, alumni, families, and friends who supported our multifaith community on Giving Tuesday 2020. For our second campaign, we received over $4,100 in donations from more than 50 gifts. These generous gifts are a sign of the deep and meaningful impact of our spiritual life programs and communities. We are heartened and grateful for all those who could help us celebrate 115 years of the University Chaplaincy's mission in supporting student life at Tufts during this year's Giving Tuesday.

Alumni Engagement

Would you like to stay connected with other Tufts alumni and friends who are interested in spiritual and interfaith life and the work of the University Chaplaincy? If so, please contact the University Chaplaincy. We are looking to connect alumni from religious and philosophical communities supported by this office.

Please send us your news: Are you a University Chaplaincy alum or friend who has news related to spiritual or ethical life? An update from our alumni is always welcome!

Connecting with our Office

Summer/Fall Chaplaincy Newsletters

Each of our associated chaplaincies composed an impressive summer/fall newsletter that also serves as an annual report of their activities over the past academic year. We encourage you to read them and to learn about the vibrancy of our programs and communities for spiritual and ethical life: Buddhist, Catholic, Humanist, Muslim, and Protestant.

Chaplains Interview Series

This spring, student staff members conducted conversational interviews with each of the associated chaplaincies. The Chaplains Interview Series shares our chaplains' stories, beliefs, hopes, and fun facts in their own voices. We are proud to include chaplains from so many

traditions on our team and are excited to introduce them more distinctively through this series. You can find all of the interviews on our YouTube channel.

University Chaplaincy E-newsletter

You are welcome to sign up for the University Chaplaincy newsletter for more information about religious and philosophical programs on campus. We send this newsletter to some 8,000 subscribers every other week. While some of our weekly spiritual gatherings are student-focused, many programs are open to alumni and friends. Please contact contact the University Chaplaincy with any questions.

Find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or check out our website.

ABOUT US

The University Chaplaincy is a dynamic hub supporting religious, spiritual, ethical, and cultural life for all members of the Tufts community. We provide pastoral care, support religious and philosophical communities, educate about spiritual and ethical issues in society and the world, and promote multifaith engagement.

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