Tufts UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY

E-NEWS 9.29.21

A Note from our Buddhist Chaplain

Dear Tufts Community,

This month, an Ango period begins at the Zen Center I practice with. The literal meaning of Ango, a Japanese Zen term used to describe the rainy season retreat, is "calm abiding." It is also translated "peaceful dwelling." In the early days of Buddhism in India, monks would gather inside for the rainy season. During the monsoons, it was better not to go out, since the roads were mudded and the tiny plants and creatures, springing up during the rains, might be injured. The monks used this fruitful time to go within.

As part of my personal spiritual practice, I am taking part in an Ango retreat going on this month at Upaya Zen Center in Sante Fe, New Mexico. While the residents go through a traditional temple retreat, meditating many hours each day, I am committing to sit a meditation retreat within the context of everyday life. This means becoming a bit more intentional about the way I spend my time. It is lovely to be able to practice in the country. Yet, wherever we find ourselves—in the dorm, on the bus, engaging in class discussion or in work—our spiritual practice can serve to ground and center, to provide a place of calm abiding.

Here are some ways we can find that calm abiding in the midst of our everyday lives:

1. **Take three deep breaths**, perhaps breathing in for a count of four, breathing out for a count of eight. Watching the breath, the breath becomes deeper. As the breath becomes deeper, the body relaxes. As the body relaxes, the mind relaxes. I have taught mindfulness at hospitals, and health care professionals commonly express doubts regarding

finding time to meditate. I have suggested to them the practice of breathing deeply in the midst of their work. Mindfulness then helps them to be more relaxed and focused in the midst of their activity.

2. **Practice grounding yourself in your body**. In both mindfulness practice and in somatic approaches to trauma work, the body is understood to be a container for the heart and mind. Mindfulness is about coming home to the body, by paying deep attention. We can begin by breathing deeply through the lungs, through the deepest corners of the lungs. Then, breathing through the lower belly. As we are doing so, noticing what physical sensations arise: whether there is warmth or coolness within the breath, pulse, pressure, tingling—noticing any sensation. And noticing whatever emotion arises as well—letting that be as it is. Dropping the storyline and staying with the direct experience. See if you can notice where the in-breath ends and the out-breath begins. Notice if the breath is flowing freely or if it is constricted in any area. Where there is a pattern of constriction, see if you can breathe through this and relax and soften this area of the body. Notice how the emotions associated with this area, as we witness them, also begin to shift. Perhaps these emotions, which seem so solid, are actually interweaving patterns of energy. When we make contact with these patterns through the breath, we free up stored energy for our own becoming.

3. **Acknowledge the emotions that arises**, rather than trying to repress them or, on the other hand, identifying with them. As we strengthen our awareness of our body, we will be more aware of our emotions. We are all experiencing powerful emotions right now. Anxiety, powerlessness, grief, fear. There is no way to escape experiencing these feelings. A great shift happens when we deliberately make contact with these feelings, owning and acknowledging them. By acknowledging our emotions, we then have the capacity to work creatively with the powerful raw dynamic energy they present. I have had several good teachers who have brought this home—including Joanna Macy, a visionary leader, who translated the poet Rilke, with an eye towards our tumultuous times “Let everything happen: beauty and terror/just keep going/no feeling is final.” As we do so, we then come fully to our senses—that is, we feel the vividness of being fully alive. And because we are making real contact with our inner life, and seeing everything that arises there as workable, we gain a kind of inner freedom, so that it becomes possible to see that wholeness in the faces of the people around us.

4. **Pause**. What if, rather than watching television, or scrolling through social media, we were to enter into silence and spaciousness proactively—to use the downtime to go within, to sort things out, to be with our emotions. In that silence and spaciousness, listening deeply, we will then be able to respond to the innermost request of the moment.

And of course, please reach out. The chaplains are all here to offer real connection and hold space, and I welcome a conversation with you any time.

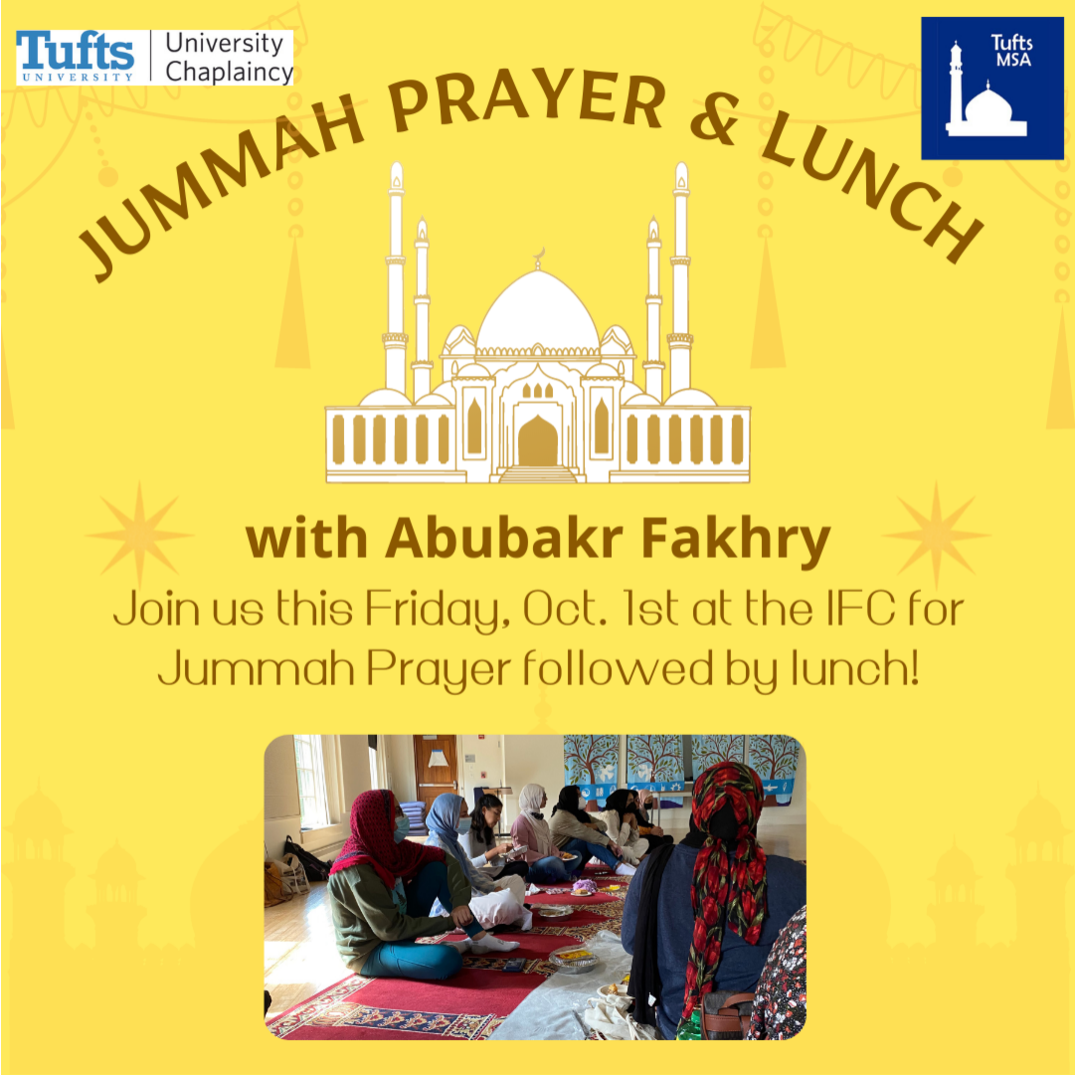
With mettā (lovingkindness),
Ji Hyang Padma, Ph.D.
Buddhist Chaplain

Religious and Philosophical Life Programs

Regular weekly programming has begun for Fall 2021. You can find more information on our website. If you have an idea for how the Tufts University Chaplaincy can better serve you, please connect with program manager Nora Bond.

BE-FRIEND

This semester-long interfaith friendship project is designed for participants to go deep and to talk about the things that matter: our values, our sense of purpose, and our questions about life. You will learn the skill of active listening while experimenting with shared spiritual practices from different religious and philosophical traditions. Participating undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, faculty, and alumni will be paired in dyads and will commit to spending an hour together each week as well as an extra half hour in private reflection (virtual options are available). Students will be placed with other students, and the same for staff and faculty. Several of our multifaith chaplains have contributed to the program by offering a diverse array of spiritual practices, including nature walks, meditation exercises, listening to music, and deep reading—of poetry, art, the world, our lives and one another. Contact Catholic Chaplain Lynn Cooper if you are interested or have any questions. The program will begin the first week of October.



Jummah Prayer and Lunch
Friday, October 1, 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

Join the Muslim Student Association this Friday for Jummah prayer at the Interfaith Center with Abubakr Fakhry. Lunch will follow the event, and you can contact the Muslim Student Association with more questions.

Join Tufts Challah for Hunger

The Tufts Chapter of Challah for Hunger (C4H) gathers on a regular basis to continue the centuries-old tradition of baking challah together and practicing tikkun olam (repair of the world) in an inclusive environment. For all the volunteers and many of the customers, C4H provides opportunities to be involved in a fun and dedicated community, address humanitarian problems, develop and practice new skills, gain business and leadership experience, and engage in traditions of challah and tzedakah (charitable giving). Sign up for the C4H newsletter to learn more and get involved.

Partner Programs

Division of Student Diversity and Inclusion Block Party
Friday, October 1, 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 pm

Join the Division of Student Diversity and Inclusion (DSDI) for their first division-wide event. They will be hosting a block party at Fletcher Field this Friday, with snacks and games. DSDI invites you warmly, hopes you can come by and celebrate their communities.

Tufts Table: Cross-Race Talk: What is Required of Us?
Thursday, September 30, 4:30 p.m. - 6:00 pm, held virtually

Join S. Rae Peoples, Associate Director of Diversity and Inclusion Education, and Deborah Donahue-Keegan, Associate Director of the Generous Listening and Dialogue Center at Tisch College, and student leaders for Tufts Table. This session's topic will consider conversations across race, and include facilitated breakout sessions.
Tufts Table is about establishing connections, sharing perspectives, and discussing significant issues. It is an opportunity for students, faculty and staff to gather to talk, think and reflect with one another, and you are invited to register for the event here.

Resources, Scholarships and Opportunities

Women's Center Graduate Assistant Job Opportunity
Priority application deadline: Friday, October 8

Founded in 1972, the Tufts Women's Center is a community and educational space open to people of all genders and identities. They are currently seeking a part-time (10-15 hours/week) Graduate Assistant for the 2021-2022 academic year. The Graduate Assistant at the Women's Center will play an integral role in contributing to the Center's programs and resources, student engagement, and graduate student outreach. Currently enrolled graduate students in the Boston area of all genders and identities are welcome to apply. The Graduate Assistant will report to and work directly with the Assistant Director of the Women's Center. The position is currently planned to be in-person on the Medford/Somerville campus, with some space for remote work options. Learn more about the position here. To apply for this position, please send your resume and cover letter to Jessica Mitzner Scully (she/her), the Assistant Director of the Women's Center. The priority deadline for applications is Friday, October 8, 2021.

Love. Earth. Justice.: A Multifaith Service of Prayer, Celebration, and Resolve.
Sunday, October 3, 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light is convening Love. Earth. Justice: A Multifaith Service of Prayer, Celebration, and Resolve on Sunday, October 3 at Old South Church at 645 Boylston Street in Boston. Participants will gather to celebrate creation and community, mourn all we have lost, and call each other to faithful action. The service will include prayer, readings, and uplifting music, with an inspiring sermon from Reverend Traci Blackmon, national justice minister for the United Church of Christ. If you prefer, you can join by livestream after registering here. More details on the event can be found here.

Upcoming Religious Celebrations and Observances

These events are drawn from the multifaith calendar maintained by the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at Harvard Divinity School. To see more upcoming religious holidays and festivals, please follow the link to the Harvard Divinity School calendar.

Shemini Atzeret
Mon., Sep. 27 – Wed., Sep. 29, 2021
Tradition: Judaism
The Eighth Day (Shemini 'Atzeret) is considered both the end of Sukkot and a distinct festival.

Simchat Torah
Tue., Sep. 28, 2021
Tradition: Judaism
(Rejoicing of the Law) Joyous festival in which the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah in the synagogue is completed and its first book begun again. The celebration typically includes singing, dancing, and marching with Torah scrolls.

Navaratri
Thu., Oct. 7 – Fri., Oct. 15, 2021
Tradition: Hinduism
A nine-night (nav-rat) celebration of nine auspicious forms of Shakti/Devi (feminine divine power/the Goddess).

Ghambar Ayathrem
Tue., Oct. 12 – Sat., Oct. 16, 2021
Tradition: Zoroastrianism
Celebrates the creation of plants, the sowing of the winter crop, and the return of herds from pasture.

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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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