



JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

CONCORDIA'S LUTHERAN VISION FOR FAITHFUL INCLUSION: Love and Grace in Practice

The newly established Office of Mission and Inclusion represents the convergence of our deepest values and boldest aspirations. At its heart lies a vital truth captured in our strategic plan: "The Lutheran tradition of Concordia understands faith to be a liberating thing: one that frees us to do boldly what is good, including teaching, learning, and loving our neighbor." At Concordia College, we do these things not despite our tradition, but because of it.

Rooted in a Lutheran tradition infused with grace and truth, our work extends far beyond mere inclusion. We are called to ask not just how we create diverse and welcoming spaces, but why this work stands central to our purpose. Our commitment, as articulated in "Concordia Leads: The Plan for 2030," compels us "to work collectively for the greater good of neighbors and the planet," ensuring that "all may flourish." This vision drives us to continuously expand our table, creating spaces where every voice can be heard and every person can thrive.

The work of the Office of Mission and Inclusion is brought to life through the dedicated efforts of its leaders: Dr. Kelly LaFramboise (director for inclusion, IDEO Office), Pastors Kim and Dave Adams (Campus Ministry), Dr. Anne Mocko (Center for Interfaith Engagement), and Dr. Tess Varner (The Dove Center for Faith and Learning).

These individuals curate innovative initiatives that encourage the exploration of faith and spirituality, spark meaningful reflection, foster open dialogue, and inspire purposeful action, creating a tapestry of initiatives that weave together the diverse threads of our community.

This dynamic team partners across the institution to cultivate an ecosystem where belonging and purpose flourish. Their collaborative efforts empower every member of the Concordia community to embrace their unique potential, forge connections across differences, and contribute to a future in which all members of the Concordia community can flourish.

— Dr. Michael Chan, Vice President for Mission and Inclusion



DOVRE CENTER FOR FAITH AND LEARNING: Nurturing Vocation, Reflecting Together

The purpose of the Dove Center for Faith and Learning is to promote dialogue on how the dynamic interplay of faith and learning shapes not only the identity of Concordia College but ultimately the sense of vocation experienced by students, faculty, staff and alumni.

Over the last several years, one of the ways the Dove Center has embodied this goal has been through faculty and staff programming, including monthly mentoring dinners, discussion groups, shared book reads, and guest speakers.

This year, Dr. Michael Chan, Pastor Kim Adams, and I reconceived the faculty and staff mentoring program as a local two-day retreat, immersing participants in shared inquiry about the mission and history of the college.

We invited participants to spend time to reflecting on their own role in that mission and their understanding of vocation, and we worked to build a sense of belonging and community.

Other opportunities to continue these discussions and nurture and expand these relationships will take place throughout the year in an effort to contribute to the wholeness and health of the community while honoring participants' busy schedules and myriad commitments.

This first iteration of the retreat took place in October with 10 participants, including faculty and staff. We look forward to seeing what lasting connections were built through this time of fellowship and collaborative reflection on Concordia College's commitment to faith and learning.

— Dr. Tess Varner, tvarner@cord.edu



CAMPUS MINISTRY: Creating Wholeness and Health in Community

Campus Ministry plays a vital role in fostering wholeness and health at Concordia College, offering spaces of belonging, spiritual growth, and emotional support. Through faith-based activities, one-on-one care, and hospitality, we provide the entire campus community with opportunities to form meaningful connections, build supportive friendships, and engage in purposeful living.

Campus Pastors Kim and Dave Adams are eager to connect with you. Join them at campus ministry events or invite them to **your** events. Stop by their office to say hello, or schedule time to grab lunch or a cup of coffee. You might even get to meet Moses, their miniature golden doodle.

Kim and Dave have five children: Jensen, Kylie, Caleb, Yonas and Nati. They love to travel, rewatch their favorite TV shows, and enjoy a good cup of coffee (decaf for Kim). Their office is located in KCC, upstairs from the Korn Crib, just off the Centrum balcony.

You can connect with Campus Ministry weekly:

- **Tuesday Coffee Break: 9:40 a.m. in the KCC Atrium**
A weekly time to connect with each other over free coffee, tea, and treats.
- **Thursday Morning Worship: 9:50 a.m. in the Centrum**
A weekly chapel service with different themes, music, and preachers each week.
- **Sundays at Crossroads: 5:30 p.m. at Crossroads at NDSU (1201 13th Ave. N, Fargo)**
A weekly worship service and **free meal** with Crossroads Lutheran Campus Ministry at North Dakota State University. This shared ministry opportunity involves student-led music, student sermons, and an opportunity for college students in the area to come together in solidarity and fellowship.

In addition, we offer different events throughout the year such as Pizza with the Pastors, Bible studies, keynote speakers, retreats, Justice Journeys, and local service projects. Detailed information about our events, including our calendar, can be found on our CobberNet page.

We also love to connect with different offices, student groups, sports teams, music ensembles, and classes, and we delight in providing meals or treats. If you would like to have us join you, let us know.

— Pastor Kim, kadams4@cord.edu

— Pastor Dave, dadams6@cord.edu

CENTER FOR INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT: Understanding Religious Diversity

In late August, I got on a bus with 22 brand-new Cobbers for an afternoon of volunteer service.

It was Hands for Change — one of the most distinctive features of new student orientation. Our campus is unusual in expecting our newest students to immediately head out into the community, to become “responsibly engaged in the world” by learning about their neighbors and help meet their needs.

Because my seminar is themed around interfaith studies, I had requested that our group be sent to the Fargo mosque.

The mosque was delighted to host us. They asked us for our service project to make an art project — a moon surrounded by stars — that they could hang in the women’s section of the mosque in a few months during Ramadan.

But by far the more important service that we were able to offer was simply to show up, to pay attention to what mattered to them, as they wanted to show it to us. Our hosts proudly took us on a tour of the space, they encouraged us to watch people who had come to pray, and they talked to us about their traditions.

This is what interfaith work can look like at its best. My students went into the experience respectfully, curiously, and appreciatively. Most of them had never been in a mosque before; most knew little about Islam. But all of them were shyly eager to learn more about neighbors in their community, and all of them worked hard to demonstrate interest and care.

And our hosts in turn were curious, warm, and hospitable — plying us with questions and with an entire table of snacks. What we each gave was our openness to one another — our willingness to see and encounter each other.

By sending my student group to the mosque, Concordia was telling the mosque that we see them as our neighbors. We witness them, we honor them, we wish to know them and create a more whole community together with them. There is nothing more Lutheran than a quiet, vulnerable desire to be in relationship with our neighbor.

Which in turn is to say that there is nothing more Lutheran than interfaith work. Concordia remains an institution that is “rooted and open” — Lutheran in an intentional and curious way, reaching outward into a complex and diverse world.

I begin this new academic year steeped in that commitment. I look forward to helping Concordia understand the religious diversity of the world (on campus and beyond), and facilitating curious, empathetic relationships across diversity.

I look forward to helping more Cobbers find neighbors where they did not yet know them.

This year, I would like to create more opportunities for members of the Concordia community to visit their religious neighbors.

If you would be interested in visiting a local religious community — or if you would be interested in helping bring a small group of Concordia folks to visit your place of worship — please reach out to me by email: amocko@cord.edu.

— Dr. Anne Mocko, amocko@cord.edu



IDEO OFFICE: Celebrating Community

Rooted in Concordia College’s robust Lutheran intellectual tradition and identity, which is courageously open to insights from other cultural and spiritual practices around the globe, the purpose of our newly created Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Opportunity Office is primarily to work collaboratively across campus and our community to equip students, faculty, and staff as we are inspired and called to serve every neighbor, as they are, so that all may flourish.

Now, more than ever, the world requires graduates who are intellectually thoughtful, genuinely receptive to the complexities of the diverse world, vocationally discerning, morally perceptive, and religiously cooperative.

As such, the IDEO Office embraces our unique curriculum, anchored in the liberal arts, which provides abundant opportunities for engagement with people, ideas, and practices from a multitude of perspectives.

My office plays a crucial role in living out Concordia’s Lutheran identity by raising awareness of important issues and working with campus leaders who aspire to create a more just and equitable world.

I do this by focusing on these objectives:

1. Recognize and celebrate our diverse community of past, present, and future students, staff, and faculty.
2. Develop a holistic campus environment that embraces everyone’s full selves and supports diverse, inclusive learning and living experiences.
3. Provide exceptional opportunities for free and open inquiry, civil discourse, interfaith cooperation, and learning across difference.

As Concordia’s director for inclusion, I strive to realize these objectives through partnerships and shared efforts, spanning all divisions of the college, to lead the shaping of our campus culture. It is important to me that my plans and ideas to promote neighbor justice and equitable access for all align with the overall mission of the college.

As I embrace the deeply rooted Lutheran vocation of Concordia and its partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as well as fulfill my personal calling to lead with radical hospitality, I hope to create an all-encompassing warm, inclusive, and equitable experience for all.

If I had to boil it down, I would say that in this important role at Concordia, my work is to help everyone find their sense of belonging in this place. It is most important to me that all Cobbers — past, present, and future — feel seen, heard, valued, supported, and that they know they are important to Concordia’s identity. I want everyone who enters our community to feel like they are Concordia, and that Concordia is them.

— Dr. Kelly LaFramboise, klaframb@cord.edu