

THE HERALD

MEREDITH

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Interfaith Council: Really, All Are Welcome

Rachel Pratl, editorial editor

Before becoming a secular college in 1997, Meredith was traditionally a Baptist college. The Christian Chapel was built to honor a religious tradition that many Meredith students do not believe in. For years, those students have needed a place for fellowship and prayer and haven't found it on campus until now. Enter the Interfaith Council; a campus group founded to promote religious diversity and acceptance.

In hopes of sending the message that all are truly welcome at Meredith, the recently renovated Meditation Room will become a place where all students of all faiths are welcomed to engage in prayer and fellowship opportunities. The room will be free of any religiously affiliated symbols and groups will be welcomed at all times.

In addition to renovating the Meditation Room for students, Interfaith has many other projects going on around campus. Today at The Gathering, held at 10 a.m. in the Chapel Common Room, the Student Government Association and Interfaith are inviting everyone to participate in a discussion about inter-religious respect on campus. Following that meeting, a Student Life Forum will be held next week

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on Nov. 19 at 5:30 p.m. in BDH West (even if you don't have a meal plan, you're invited to sit in). The Forum will focus on creating a respectful, religiously tolerant environment in the Meredith community.

Interfaith is excited to be kicking off a new project called Ravel Unravel. Founded by Project Interfaith, the group which inspired on-campus Interfaith Council. Ravel Unravel involves interviewing people and video recording their answers when asked about their religious identity, their community's perception of their religion, any stereotypes

or misconceptions they feel are associated with that set of beliefs and anything the interviewee would like the world to know about their faith. According to the Ravel Unravel website, the movement is, "designed to foster understanding, conversation, and community;" qualities many would like to see flourish on campus.

Just as Interfaith hopes that Ravel Unravel will open eyes to the religious diversity of Meredith's student body, they also have hopes for an upcoming religious survey. Introduced by Religious and Ethical Studies Professor Dr. Shannon Grimes, the survey will be available for students next spring. This information will help the college and Interfaith Council provide students with what they need to feel truly welcome at Meredith.

"Interfaith is not just for people of certain religions—it's for everyone. We want Christians and Muslims and Atheists and Pagans—everyone—to be involved. We want [Interfaith] to be a place where people can go and not feel like they have to be something that they're not," says President of Interfaith Council, Tammy Shovelton. While Interfaith is growing by leaps and bounds, Shovelton wants to see more students attend meetings, knowing many are seeking a stronger sense of community on campus.

'Tis the Season: Thanksgiving, Jewish Tradition and Thanksgivinukkah

Marlena Brown, staff writer

The holiday season is quickly approaching and many people are already making holiday plans. The usual concerns such as food, festivities and family are at the top of the list, but what about the gifts used to celebrate the eight days of the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem? This happens to be the case for several observers of Jewish tradition since Hanukkah falls on Thanksgiving this year. Traditionally, Hanukkah coincides with Christmas, but rarely does it fall on the same day as Thanksgiving. So how will these two holidays be celebrated with one another?

Not since 1888, has Thanksgiving nor Hanukkah been on the same day. According to the Huffington Post, the term "Thanksgivinukkah" was coined by Boston woman Dana Gitell while on her way to her marketing job at an elderly care facility. Now a fun social label, the convergent holidays are being seen as bringing together of both American and Jewish tradition. Individuals from either spectrum can infuse their traditions to create new and vibrant alterations on each culture. Rabbi Rick Jacobs, who is

the head of the Reform Judaism in North America congregation, commented on the event for the Huffington Post. He claims that both holidays are able to be celebrated together because they are symbolic of a similar goal: attaining religious liberty. Just as the Pilgrims sought freedom to practice religion freely, ancient Jews gained victory over Greek oppressors who originally prohibited Judaism. So perhaps Thanksgiving and Hanukkah are more than just traditional calendar holidays.

Although each holiday is nationally recognized, they certainly are perceived as much more than seasonal celebrations. As explained in the Huffington Post, there have been discussions of how each holiday will be celebrated as well as the potential revenue that stores, restaurants and outlets can generate from the coinciding of holidays. Usually, Hanukkah is in constant competition with Christmas in terms of sales, but this year, that certainly will not be an issue. Aside from terms of revenue and profit though, it appears that the holiday spirit is with many people, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. So go out and enjoy the holiday traditions, and while you're at it, make a menurkah for the road.



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Happy Holidays from The Meredith Herald Staff!

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