New Names & Faces in the Interfaith Center  

Jewish High Holidays Return to RIT  

Ministry of Presence in Deaf Spaces  

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New Names & Faces

A new department name, new leader, and new staff revitalize the Schmitt Interfaith Center

The “Center for Religious Life” is now “Spirituality & Religious Life,” a more inclusive title reflecting the growing diversity of RIT students.

Spirituality & Religious Life (SRL) welcomed three new RIT staff and three new affiliate staff in 2018. Rev. Monica Sanford joined as the new Assistant Director for Spirituality & Religious Life, replacing long-serving leader Jeff Herring, who retired in 2017. Aisha Stephens came on board shortly thereafter to support financial operations as Senior Staff Specialist. Nora Chernov, an RIT alum, transitioned from a very successful Hillel President to her new position as Jewish Student Life Engagement Coordinator. This position is made possible by a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Rochester.

Several affiliate staff have also joined SRL’s robust team in Fall 2018. Kimberly Potter-Winden joined the Newman Catholic Community, replacing the previous director, Alice Miller-Nation. Rev. Laurence Wainwright-Maks joined “The Table” Lutheran-Episcopal Campus Ministry thanks to a special grant from the Episcopal Church to support the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Likewise, Avonna Formajelo joined the Cru staff primarily to serve the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Both Rev. Laurence and Avonna are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).
Jewish High Holidays Return to RIT

After a multi-year absence, Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur were once again celebrated in Allen Chapel

In reflecting on the holidays, students spoke about the comfort of being able to remain in the community that has become their home, in a space that is familiar, and being freed from having to choose between their religious practice and being part of campus life.  

Article by Nora Chernov

For the first time since 2015, RIT Hillel (partnering with Spirituality & Religious Life) was able to hold services for the Jewish High Holidays on campus. Rosh Hashanah celebrates the Jewish New Year and Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement. Together these two holidays mark the holiest part of the Jewish calendar. Holding observance on campus is tremendously important for the RIT Jewish community. Services on campus allow students to follow an observance pattern that is best for them without concern for traveling or adapting to a new space and community. Jewish students were able to remain embedded in RIT while meeting their spiritual needs in a way that had not been possible for the past several years.

In addition to traditional services, SRL hosted a High Holidays 101 Lunch and Learn session for the general RIT community, as well as an “Ask The Rabbi Anything” in which Jewish students could ask the visiting Rabbi what was really on their minds in an informal and comfortable space. Jewish students who were not consistently engaged in Jewish organizations on campus were able to connect with other Jewish students and learn what RIT Hillel has to offer. Overall, RIT Hillel hosted seven services, four meals, and two educational programs. Over 40 students, faculty, staff, and alumni participated, breaking previous attendance records since the last time High Holidays were held on campus.

Without a resident rabbi or kosher dining on campus, High Holiday services is a significant financial commitment. It is made possible by generous support from the Jewish Federation of Rochester, the Farash Foundation, and the Beal Fund (an endowment of RIT SRL).
Ministry of Presence in Deaf Spaces

Serving the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing Christians on campus means going to where they are.

“We try to be available to students almost every weekday and, occasionally, on the weekends. That includes my team, they are on campus as well.” – Dakota Tiger, Cru Hands of Fire staff

The two campus ministries actively meeting at NTID are WOLK (a Jewish outreach of Hillel), and Hands of Fire (a Christian ministry of Cru). The shared goal of our ministries is to establish relationships with the students from NTID, create more opportunities for fellowship, and empower Deaf leadership.

The student president of WOLK, Emily Lederman shares:

Back in 1998, WOLK was established as a subgroup of RIT Hillel. It is named after Rochester’s Wolk family, whose generous contributions allow the club to exist. WOLK established a Jewish space for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students at RIT/NTID. With RIT being composed of over 1,000 deaf students and a sizeable number of Jewish people, WOLK is dedicated to serving the needs of the community where they inevitably intersect.

Today, WOLK operates as an independent student organization. Every year, we host Deaf Jewish awareness week during the spring semester, as well as a myriad of fully accessible Jewish events. By
collaborating with RIT Hillel and Chabad, we hope to make every Jewish deaf student feel included in an inclusive, accessible community at RIT. Furthermore, we host and co-host a variety of cultural events for the Deaf Community to come explore Judaism as a whole! Updates are posted on social media.

If you would like to contact us, we can be reached at WOLKatntid@gmail.com, as well as on Facebook and CampusGroups. We look forward to hearing from you.

The other deaf ministry on campus is Cru, lead by NTID alums Dakota and Heidi Tiger and their team. According to Dakota, Hands of Fire is a Deaf Christian Ministry under Cru, an interdenominational Christian campus ministry. It hosts weekly Bible Studies on Wednesday nights at the Student Development Center (SDC). The average attendance is about 20 students and their favorite activities include game nights and attending the Cru Conferences and Events. Because our ministries require us to develop a relationship with the students from NTID, we maintain a ministry of presence (physically being at NTID) with that side of campus.

Dakota Tiger says “We try to be available to students almost every weekday and, occasionally, on the weekends. That includes my team, they are on campus as well.”

Fr. Laurence is the Missioner to the Deaf in the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester and Campus Chaplain, at The Table (Lutheran Episcopal Campus Ministry), where SRL is continuing to make our ministry more accessible to our students from the NTID side of campus.

However, staff need to spend more time meeting with students at NTID. A future goal in Deaf Ministry is to raise up and encourage the students to take charge and lead. That means getting to know them, creating opportunities to teach, and then letting them lead. Students must share their stories and be heard. That requires more time physically spent on the NTID side of campus. Since there isn’t an office or a place to regularly meet with students, that requires staff to be more visible and present for the students there. Already, staff have begun to meet with some of the students and a member of the faculty on Fridays in The Commons for biblical reflection and study. SRL staff like Dakota, Heidi, and Fr. Laurence will work to create more opportunities like this and eventually hope to hold a regular service in American Sign Language that meets at NTID.

Sister Jean Rodman, one of RIT/NTID’s many interpreters, provides American Sign Language interpretation at a recent Sunday morning Catholic Mass in Allen Chapel, Schmitt Interfaith Center.
The Table Adds Staff, Service, & Swag

Lutheran-Episcopal Campus Ministry, aka The Table, makes a place for itself in the community

“One thing that is nice about the service is that it’s all young people which is not the case at all in my home parish. It’s laid back and welcoming. You just walk in before the service and chat with people after the service. That’s another good part is food is provided.” -Jon Brennan, (Class of 2021).

Article by Craig Swanson

The big news at The Table is our new outreach to the deaf community at RIT. Rev. Laurence Wainwright-Maks has joined our ministry because of two grants through the Episcopal Church USA (one for deaf ministry, the other for young adults). Father Laurence is fluent in American Sign Language and has been focusing much of his time on the National Technical Institutes for the Deaf (NTID) campus. This position is fully funded by ECUSA.

Our ministry is support by Rochester area Lutheran and Episcopal congregations through the gifts of their time, talents, and a free weekly meal provided by local congregations. We have been adding “SWAG” for the students, including T-Shirts, water bottles, pens and cell phone “wallets” (small pouches that adhere to cell phones which hold business cards, photo IDs, drivers’ license, etc). It’s great to see our new logo around campus.

Our students continue to volunteer at the “Mustard Seed” Community Dinners. Several of our students help serve the meal on the last Saturday of the month at Incarnate Word Lutheran Church. These dinners are provided, free of charge, by several downtown congregations. They are held on the last Saturday of every month in order to help people who receive public assistance at the beginning of every month.

Please join us for Worship every Sunday at 6:30 PM in the Allen Chapel. Dinner follows at 7:30 PM downstairs in the Skalny Room.

Contact Pastor Craig Swanson at: cbscpm@rit.edu, or Rev. Laurence Wainwright-Maks at: lwmccl@rit.edu.
Supporting Spirituality & Religious Life

Spirituality & Religious Life is critical for student success, academically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

We depend on the support of alumni, donors, and partner organizations to enhance the quality of programs and resources for the religious, secular, and spiritual needs of RIT’s diverse campus community.

With the help of generous supporters, Spirituality & Religious Life can continue to provide engaging and vibrant religious, secular, and spiritual communities on campus. You can support us by donating to the general fund or to one of our initiatives below:

Capital Campaign for the Schmitt Interfaith Center:

The Schmitt Interfaith Center was constructed in 1985 through the generous support of Kilian J. and Caroline F. Schmitt and other donors. Many of the spaces in the Schmitt Center are named after significant donors, such as Allen and Jones Chapels. The center was renovated in 2013 through the support of the Schmitt Family Foundation.

The Schmitt Center has both short-term and long-term needs. Several maintenance projects await funding, including the renovation of the exterior patio, a women’s ablution station and updates to the lower kitchen and prayer rooms. You can help by supporting a particular project.

If you drop by on a Friday or Sunday, you’ll find the Schmitt Interfaith Center lively – and fully booked! Our religious communities have outgrown our spaces. Several are forced to go elsewhere on campus, from auditorium lecture halls to classrooms to lounges, which are less than ideal for spiritual and religious life. You can help by contributing to our capital campaign for an addition to the Schmitt Interfaith Center. This addition will add a second multipurpose room, renovate the remaining lower-level spaces, refresh the landscaping, and improve our ability to support our diverse communities.
Contribute to a Particular Community or Club

Spirituality & Religious Life currently supports eight recognized religious communities and ten spiritual/religious student clubs. These campus faith communities and clubs offer opportunities for the RIT students to connect with others who share a familiar religious and spiritual identity. These communities and clubs offer a wide variety of activities from religious services to social gatherings to community services initiatives.

To learn more about these initiatives or opportunities to contribute, please contact Liam Welsh, Director of Development for Student Affairs and Parents, at lpwdar@rit.edu or (585) 475-6465.

Upcoming Events

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<tr>
<td>“In Loving Memory…” Interfaith Dialogue</td>
<td>Thursday, November 1st</td>
<td>5:00 – 7:00 PM</td>
<td>Schmitt Interfaith Center, Allen Chapel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newman Catholic Christmas Party</td>
<td>Sunday, December 2nd</td>
<td>11:00 am – 2:00 PM</td>
<td>Schmitt Interfaith Center, Skalny Room (lower level)</td>
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Join us to share stories about love, life, and loss. Reception follows. ASL interpreters requested.

Email mlscccl@rit.edu for more information.

Christmas comes early for students just completing finals before heading home for winter break. All students welcome.

Email kpwcccl@rit.edu for more information.