FAITH HONORING

Making the Case for Faith-Inclusive Pedagogy

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Introduction

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Jill L. Lindsey, PhD

Imagine a school where every child's faith is recognized as an integral part of their identity, and faith expression is welcomed in the classroom as an integral part of learning. This is the vision of this book, the inclusion of faith in the classroom through a spiritual pedagogy we call "faith honoring." We have chosen to use the term "faith honoring" to describe valuing human religious and spiritual capacities. Faith honoring invites students to share their faith as it relates to learning and welcomes faith as a way of knowing.

Writing a book about the spiritual dimension in learning may seem daring, but the spiritual dimension has long been recognized as an integral aspect of the whole person. Educating the whole person, known as a holistic philosophy of education, has always included the spiritual dimension (see Chapter Four). However, public schools in the United States do not currently strive to recognize and educate the whole person. We are suggesting that they should. One way to embrace the spiritual dimension in education is through faith-honoring practices. Faith-honoring practices enable teachers and students to enhance learning by including the worldviews, expressions of identity, and social practices rooted in their spiritual lives.

We recognize this is not a simple task, especially when the public square is increasingly fraught with division around diversity and secularism. On the one hand, we see factions deeply opposed to diversity and inclusion efforts in

education but deeply supportive of Christian religious expression in the form of laws related to abortion and transgender care. On the other hand, we see factions with strong support for diversity and inclusion focused on race and sexual orientation but opposed to religious influences in government or schools. We recognize that faith honoring sits at the nexus of the divisions in present society. Our intent is not to feed division or engage in the political dimensions of church and state but to combat ignorance and encounter differences with mutual respect and understanding. We see faith honoring as a bridge between those who value diversity but have not included religion as a legitimate aspect of educational identity and those who value religious expression, even as they oppose what they deem as identity politics.

Our founding as a country was based on creating a society that provided religious freedom with a government free from the influence of any specific religion. While Judeo-Christian values have dominated American society, public religious expression of any faith in the form of symbols and clothing is normative. The United States does not have the kind of secular society of France, for example, where the outward expression of religion is forbidden (such as the wearing of a hijab) and the public expectation is that individuals interact without knowing one another's religion. Neither do we have a religious state, like Iran, for example, where the tenets of a particular religion determine for its citizens what is legal and acceptable in behavior and attire.

Under a secular government, secularism has been promoted in US public schools, perhaps due to a misinterpretation of the Separation of Church and State clause in the US Constitution that forbids the promotion of any religion but not the expression of religion. In fact, the US Supreme Court has ruled that students are free to share their faith with peers and express their beliefs about religion in classroom assignments. Even so, religious expression is generally absent in the classrooms of public schools. It is not uncommon, however, for after-school events to include public prayer. These practices were recently challenged by those opposed to religious expressions at public school events. The Supreme Court ruled that individual religious expression is permitted, and a coach, for example, could offer a prayer on the ball field or pray with student athletes as an expression of his faith.

We propose faith-honoring practices in the classroom as a way to invite students to share their faith beliefs as they relate to classroom learning and welcome faith as a way of knowing that informs understandings. Faith-honoring practices give life to the Supreme Court ruling that students are free to share their faith with peers and express their beliefs about religion in classroom assignments.

This book grew out of a collaboration that was envisioned and spearheaded at Shenandoah University with funding from Dr. M. Yaqub Mirza. This collaboration brought together an interfaith team of educators to explore the intersections of faith and pedagogy to meet the needs of teachers and students as whole persons with intellectual, physical, socio-emotional, cultural and *spiritual* dimensions and to conceptualize a pedagogy more inclusive of religion and spirituality. We are a team of educators from the various Abrahamic faiths exploring these intersections and represent Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith backgrounds. The concept of faith honoring grew out of our shared explorations and discussions across a three-year period. In many ways, this book represents our collective journey. In the pages that follow, we invite you to consider ways we can all be more faith honoring in the classroom, in the public square and in daily life.

Part One provides six chapters that describe faith honoring and why it is needed to prevent faith from being silenced or ignored, a pedagogy of faith-honoring practices, a discussion of how the term "faith" was chosen to describe these practices, and three educational philosophies that lend support to faith honoring as a timely educational vision. Chapter One introduces the concept of faith honoring and the serious consequences students of faith encounter in classrooms when their faith is silenced. Chapter Two offers a framework for how to begin conceptualizing teaching and learning that are faith honoring. Chapter Three presents differences in the terms "faith," "religion," and "spirituality," and offers an explanation for why we choose "faith honoring" to describe teaching that honors all three.

Chapter Four grounds faith honoring in the history of educating the whole person—mind, body and spirit—and calls upon educators to adopt faith-honoring practices. Holistic approaches to schooling have been studied and encouraged for centuries in writings about the purpose of education, emphasizing that humans have many ways of knowing and understanding to navigate learning and life. Faith honoring can be seen as a pedagogy that has its roots in holistic education as it enables teachers and students to explore faith as one of the many ways of knowing.

Chapters Five and Six examine two pedagogical approaches that address the moral and cultural aspects of the whole person in schools: character education and culturally relevant pedagogy. Character education's success at the national and international level provides a model for faith-honoring pedagogies to emulate in addressing the increasing challenges brought about by political polarization, globalization, and technology. Chapter Five offers a discussion of how character education's roots in philosophical and religious traditions provide a

basis upon which modern educators can engage in conversations about what it means to be a good citizen and a good person. Similar to character education, faith-honoring pedagogies provide a conduit for conversations about the role of faith in contemporary society and how including faith in classroom conversations could lead to more equitable and peaceful school communities. Chapter Six examines the formative works of Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings using an approach to faith as part of culture and begins to address the practical question of how educators might apply ideas of culturally responsive education in day-to-day school experiences, and what outcomes could result when faith is included in our understanding of culture.

Part two presents a number of personal essays related to experiences of faith honoring and its opposite—faith silencing—within educational settings. These short essays are from the authors, fellow educators, and students representing diverse faiths. They are offered to paint pictures of how faith honoring happens, as well as the harm caused when faith is not honored in schools and the public square.

We hope this collection of chapters and essays will provoke your thinking about the value of including the spiritual dimension in the education of students and that you will be inspired to adopt a spiritual pedagogy that enables you to practice faith honoring in your classroom. We also hope you will be inspired to practice faith honoring in the public square and in daily life.

Part One

WHAT IS FAITH HONORING?

Chapter One

Conceptualizing
Faith Honoring

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Amaarah DeCuir, EdD, and
Jill L. Lindsey, PhD

Imagine schooling that makes room for the inner lives of students and teachers. Imagine classrooms that welcome the worldviews, expressions of identity, and social practices deeply rooted in the spiritual life and faith commitments of students and teachers. We call this kind of schooling "faith honoring." Valuing the spiritual dimension in the lives of students and teachers is about purpose, meaning, belonging, and connectedness. Education generally and schooling specifically is intended to prepare students for life. The deepest life questions—What is our purpose? What gives life meaning? And how should one live?—are inherently spiritual in nature. In seeking answers to these questions students may draw on one or more religions or reject the answers religions offer. Yet they remain essential questions of the human condition. Integrating and addressing the spiritual dimensions of these profound questions can make education more relevant and responsive.

Faith honoring in classrooms and schools represents an intentional commitment to nurture the whole child, including the spiritual dimension. Practicing faith honoring in schools means a student's spirituality and faith identity is honored as integral to who they are as a person, and faith is included as one of the many ways of knowing and understanding. Faith honoring is rooted in a concerted recognition that students are complex individuals who draw spiritual meanings and social understandings from their faith identities, and denotes

appreciation for the ways in which a students' faith shapes their engagement within the school community and society. Faith honoring opens a door to teaching students to recognize and value having a spiritual life regardless of a particular religion or creed. Faith-honoring practices enable students and teachers to share and discuss the many ways faith, spirituality, and religious beliefs inform our understandings and bring meaning to our lives.

Faith honoring is not religious education. It is neither the promotion of religion nor the teaching of religious practices. Faith honoring is a path to recognizing the spiritual influences at work in students' lives by respecting their diverse religious or non-religious convictions and the important ways those convictions contribute to their understandings. Faith honoring does not violate the constitutional principal of separation of church and state which protects against the promotion of any one religion over another and guarantees the right to religious expression. But faith honoring is more than a confirmation of a students' constitutionally guaranteed liberties of religious expression. Wearing religious symbols, religiously sanctioned attire, or other visual expressions of faith is protected under the First Amendment and is part of, but not equivalent to, faith honoring. Students have been guaranteed civil liberties to read privately from their scripture, engage in individual acts of worship, and express faith commitments as protected speech. Faith honoring is more than prohibiting religious bullying in schools. The Supreme Court ruled that students are free to share their faith with peers and express their beliefs about religion in classroom assignments (Haynes et al. 2003). Faith honoring invites students to share their faith and religion beliefs as they relate to classroom learning. Faith honoring moves beyond permitting students' expressions of faith to a commitment to welcoming faith as a way of knowing that informs understandings. Chapter Two offers some examples of how faith honoring can be practiced in classrooms.

Faith is the embodiment of beliefs and values that shape our connection with a higher, divine power. These beliefs and values often structure our engagement with peers, those in authority, and the world around us. Faith can frame our understanding of purpose, truth, justice, life, death, family, self, and others. Our earliest worldviews are framed by the beliefs of those closest to us; home-life molds our faith identities. As such, faith becomes central to our identity, a force that brings deep meaning to how we make sense of the world and our place within it. For many, our faith identity is formed from organized religion or a rejection of religion, but faith is more complex than adherence to or rejection of group practices associated with a religion. Faith, and our relationship to our faith identity, is a significant component of our lives, framing our relationships

and experiences at school and in society. We believe one's faith life is an essential component of the whole child and merits being honored in the classroom.

Honoring is a mutual transaction grounded in respect, validation, and recognition of others. When paired with faith, it becomes an action that communicates honoring another's beliefs, values, and practices emanating from their faith identity. Faith honoring calls us to recognize that while the faith commitments of others may differ from our own, we are able to understand that all faith commitments bring meaning, purpose, and understanding to lived experiences. Honoring is not equivalent to approval or endorsement of another's faith identity, nor is it an encroachment upon objectivity necessary in pluralistic spaces. One can maintain a firm commitment to one's own religion or a commitment to abstain from religion, while still managing to enact faith-honoring practices in public spaces. Educators who practice faith honoring embrace responsibility for ensuring that faith-identified students experience respect, validation, and recognition of their faith practices in classrooms in addition to a sense of belonging. Faith-honoring educators are needed in schools and classrooms to construct safe spaces and cultivate belonging and connections with peers and teachers. All students benefit from learning in faith-honoring schools and classrooms. Just as students with culturally responsive teachers gain a deeper appreciation for inclusion and a better understanding of how to advance equity in diverse classrooms, students gain from experiences affirming the faith identity of students and by learning to honor one another's faith commitments.

The purpose of schooling is to prepare students for life beyond school, to help them learn to think for themselves, to develop their whole selves, to be an informed citizen, and to contribute positively to their community and society. These objectives cannot be achieved through subject matter studies alone, for these are fundamentally spiritual challenges. Many suggest that schools are failing young people and society by not preparing students for life beyond school. Schools have not been addressing the spiritual questions that give life purpose and meaning. Faith honoring acknowledges the spiritual dimension as integral to educating the whole person and offers a path to better prepare students for life.

Faith-honoring practice begins with the understanding that human beings make meaning in many ways, including through faith. This understanding enables teachers and students to explore faith as one of the many ways of knowing to navigate learning and life. Practicing faith honoring in the classroom begins with intention: the intent to educate the whole person; the intent to welcome faith as a way of knowing. Faith-honoring teachers draw upon lived experiences and foundational knowledge in sociology, anthropology, and religion studies

to shape their understandings of the role of faith and spirituality in human development. Faith-honoring teachers embrace responsibility for promoting the holistic development of their students and design lessons that engage the students' spiritual knowledge, experiences, and perspectives. Faith-honoring educators also redesign lessons that subjugate faith or religion and ensure that no biases targeting faith-identified communities are represented in class material. Most importantly, they design lessons and classroom experiences that teach students how to learn about and honor one another's faith commitments.

Some examples of ways faith-honoring teachers might activate the spiritual dimension of learning and engage students' faith identities are through activities that focus on:

- cultivating a sense of wonder;
- exploring the unknown and the not yet understood;
- contemplating students' inner lives through creative writing and autobiography;
- visualizing as a writing prompt;
- celebrating traditions and rituals;
- promoting respect for all;
- learning about self, one's emotions and inner narratives;
- having compassion for others;
- sharing interconnectedness with others;
- connecting with something larger than oneself;
- experiencing nature;
- connecting mind-body-spirit;
- valuing intuition;
- coping with uncertainty;
- truth-telling as a principle and practice;
- testing the authenticity of what one believes and reassessing in light of new experiences;
- discussing integrity/ethical behaviors and relationships;
- practicing justice and equality;
- cultivating a sense of awe and wonder;
- nurturing humility and a willingness to be taught;
- learning about and through the arts;
- reflecting, meditating, praying, or practicing silence;
- describing core commitments in one's life;
- explaining how peoples and nations form enduring worldviews through history;

- using literature that describes how people across faiths engage in the world.

We envision school leaders embracing faith honoring by developing their own and their staff's competencies in world religions, faith, and spirituality. They prioritize structuring schools as learning institutions that nurture students' faith identities by attending to policies, practices, and mindsets that support developing the inner life of students.

Faith honoring educators are key to creating classrooms where faith is valued as an essential aspect of human learning. Practicing faith honoring includes bringing awareness to the ways that a purely secular approach to schooling asks students to silence their faith and essentially erases faith through policies, leadership decisions, and pedagogies. This silencing or erasure removes faith from public discourse, ignores faith as an aspect of identity, and treats faith practices as insignificant to modern life and learning. Experiences of faith erasure are active forms of injustice and oppression that are harmful to students and their teachers. Recognition of faith silencing provides an important reason to adopt faith-honoring pedagogies and offers a description of how students and educators experience schools and classrooms that render their respective faiths invisible. Students of faith often experience bullying, social isolation, and violent attempts to erase their faith expressions in school settings. In 2020, ISPU reported that half of Muslim families with a child in K-12 schools stated that their child had been bullied for their faith in the past year (51%). Jewish students report that wearing Jewish religious symbols, like a Star of David pendant, provokes taunts and threats with antisemitic rhetoric. Verma (2006) found that a high number of Sikh adolescents reported various forms of discrimination and immense hardship at school from racialized faith-based profiling and prohibitions on turbans, a faith symbol for Sikh males. Faith silencing operates as an unjust practice that fails to recognize the relevance of diverse faith identities and the validity of faith expressions. Thus, people of faith are deprived of proclaiming their faith-centered views and, as a result, often hide their religious identities and commitments.

Faith silencing in schools happens through ignoring or denying the importance of spirituality for students and educators. Faith erasure is embedded, intentionally or unconsciously, in leadership, policy, curriculum, and pedagogy structures that do not make room for expressions of faith and relating faith to learning. School leaders and teachers enact pedagogies that erase students' faith identities by failing to acknowledge faith as foundational in some students' worldviews and social perspectives. Faith silencing in schools is rooted in secularism,

banning expressions of faith in public discourse. Too often educators ignore the faith-based values and beliefs that shape students' social and emotional realities. This diminshes the student's lived experiences that are shaped by their faith identity. Leaders can help structure systems, policies, and practices that amplify the diversity of expressions within the school community, validating and affirming their significance in the lives of individuals. Faith-honoring classrooms can create environments where students' and teachers' faith identities are welcomed and valued as an important component of learning.

Faith-honoring school leaders seek to embody three core leadership practices consistent with culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa 2020):

1) identify community-based epistemologies that shape multiple ways of knowing and being, including how faith communities represented in their school experience and engage with the world around them;

2) commit to disrupting school-based exclusionary practices that disproportionately impact students of faith and examine how curricula, pedagogies, policies, and school practices inadvertently exclude or silence students of faith;

3) see the diversity in faith expressions of students and teachers as a protected asset within the school community and foster ways to support students as they develop competencies for co-existing in our pluralistic society.

Faith-honoring policies ensure that students, educators, and families across multiple faith identities experience fairness and equity within their schools. Faith-honoring policies mean that all school functions and processes are organized to create equitable teaching and learning contexts for faith-identifying students and teachers. This may be implemented through policies that structure the academic calendar around multiple religious holidays, that provide access to foods and drinks permissible by all various faith groups, as well as curriculum and programming content that fairly and equitably represents faith communities. Faith-honoring policies work to disrupt biases and oppressions that target faith-identified communities within schools. Anti-bullying and workplace discrimination policies are effective tools to protect the safety and wellbeing of faith-identified students and educators. As leaders seek to transform schools and classrooms into sites for faith honoring, they must ensure that the policies that structure the organization and operation of schools are consistent with their goals to advance equity and justice across their school organization.

Faith honoring is a practice that welcomes the worldviews, expressions of identity, and social practices rooted in the faith commitments of students and teachers. Practicing faith honoring in schools means a student's faith identity is respected as integral to who they are as a person, and faith is understood to be one of the many ways of knowing and understanding the world. Practicing faith honoring begins with the intention to include faith in the classroom and to design lessons that incorporate the spiritual dimension of the whole person into learning experiences. Faith-honoring school leadership focuses on creating a learning environment through policies and practices supportive of spiritual development of the whole person. Faith honoring in classrooms and schools is an intentional commitment to nurture the spiritual dimension of the whole child. Chapter Two offers a framework for conceptualizing a pedagogy of practice that is faith honoring.

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Conceptualizing a Spiritual Pedagogy: What Is Faith Honoring in Practice

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Jill L. Lindsey, PhD

We believe the spiritual dimension of our identities is integral to who we are and must be included in schooling if we are to educate the whole person. When a student's faith beliefs and practices are ignored their engagement in learning and sense of belonging suffer. A pedagogy that addresses the spiritual dimension and is faith honoring is needed to enable students to relate to the content and allow them to express their full identity. Such a spiritual pedagogy is predicated on an understanding that human beings make meaning through language, reason, emotion, intuition, sense perception, imagination, memory, and spirituality. Recognizing spirituality as a way of knowing opens the door to students sharing the ways their faith influences their understanding of the world.

Teaching That is Faith Honoring

A spiritual pedagogy is grounded in the belief that the purpose of education is to educate the whole person; body, mind, and spirit. Teaching in ways that are faith honoring places a value on recognizing and nurturing the spiritual dimension of students by engaging them in connecting to something greater than self through learning that includes who they are and what they believe as participants or non-participants of a faith tradition. A spiritual pedagogy that is

faith honoring places as much value in educating for spiritual development as for intellectual and physical development. The aspiration of a spiritual pedagogy is to create classrooms and learning experiences that engage the minds, bodies, and spirits of students.

Much of teacher preparation focuses on curriculum and strategies to develop the mind. Curriculum for early childhood through the pre-teen years will frequently include learning experiences that facilitate the natural maturation and development of the mind and the body. Embracing a spiritual pedagogy creates a focus on integrating the spirit into schools' mind-body curriculum. Practicing a spiritual pedagogy that is faith honoring requires a disposition that values the spiritual life of human beings and sees the spirit as having a valid place in schooling and developing the whole person. We acknowledge that experienced teachers are quite capable of finding ways to include students' faith in classroom discussions. Even so, we offer this framework for conceptualizing how to include the spiritual dimension and faith honoring in teaching and learning as a set of tools to begin to conceptualize faith honoring in a classroom.

This framework conceptualizes each person's spirituality as reflected in daily life through behaviors that embody their faith beliefs. The framework identifies six types of spiritual behavior as the focus of a spiritual pedagogy that is faith honoring: devotional behavior, service to others, enacting justice, stewardship, good deeds, and promoting harmony. These six types of spiritual behaviors can be utilized as organizing principles for learning activities in the classroom. There may be other behaviors, principles, and practices that could be faith honoring, but these six types are offered as a way to begin conceptualizing a spiritual pedagogy that enables faith honoring in the classroom. Learning strategies that can be used to activate the spiritual dimension include journals, rituals, traditions, music, stories, recitation, celebration, service, art activities, working in collaborative small groups or pairs, and teaching others. To assist in envisioning how to practice a spiritual pedagogy, below are brief examples for how each of the six types of spiritual behaviors could be applied in the classroom.

Examples for the Six Types of Spiritual Behavior

Devotional Behavior

Devotional behavior is profound dedication to a value or belief. Devotional behavior often takes the form of ritual or celebration. Many classrooms have simple classroom rituals; specific times each day devoted to periods of silent

reading or journaling. These simple rituals can be used to illustrate the basic concept of devotional behavior. Then one might discuss the reason why we devote time to specific practices and invite students to share rituals and devotional behaviors they practice as expressions of their faith. Another way to explore devotional behavior is by collaboratively creating a calendar that includes national holidays, holy days, and religious festivals for the faiths of the students and others they know. Students could share what some of these celebrations are like, explaining traditions practiced and foods that are typically prepared and eaten. Students could be invited to share devotional behaviors their faith encourages and what their faith tradition has to say about when and why to express devotion. Discussions could revolve around the origin and meaning of devotion, rituals, and celebrations, and expand into why remembering and celebrating is important for culture and society.

Service to Others

Many schools offer or require students to complete community service projects. Writing assignments and class discussions could examine why people provide service to others. Students could share how their faith beliefs inform their understanding of why to engage in service, how to think about serving others, and how service to others might be considered a spiritual act. Assignments or discussions after service has been completed could focus on how it felt providing service and lesson learned about oneself and others. Career exploration discussions could include vocations of service and the spiritual feeling of having "a calling."

Enacting Justice

Current events offer many opportunities to discuss justice and injustice. Students could be invited to share how their faith beliefs and teaching inform their understanding of justice, enacting justice, and what to do when faced with injustice. Class discussions could explore small injustices that happen at home, in the classroom, and on the playground, and what actions students could take to act justly. Enacting justice might take the form of advocating for fair rules or policies, protesting unjust actions, or writing a newspaper article speaking out about unfairness or injustice. Many class assignments could involve enacting justice and discussions about those assignments could be used to invite students to share how their faith informs their understanding of how, when, and why to enact justice.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the overseeing and protecting of something entrusted to us that is worth caring for and preserving. Environmental studies, earth science, and nature walks offer opportunities to include discussions about what it means to be good stewards of the earth, and to share what one's faith tradition teaches about stewardship. Discussions could expand to being good stewards of our classroom, school, home, or community and how good stewardship might be seen as a spiritual act. Taking on responsibilities for running classroom processes, maintaining classroom spaces, and caring for classroom materials, pets, or plants are acts of stewardship that support a healthy community. Students can be invited to share how their faith beliefs inform their understanding about responsibility for protecting and caring for their community, not as a chore but as a calling to be fulfilled.

Good Deeds

Good deeds are acts performed for others without the expectation of reward apart from the inner gratification of having done something good. The social custom "Pay it forward" is one that encourages people to do a helpful or nice thing for someone without thought of recognition or reciprocation. This happens in the Starbucks line from time to time when you pay for the order of the person behind you and then drive away happy in the act of giving. Students could be encouraged to find ways to "Pay it forward" in the classroom, at home, and in their community. Students could be asked to share what their faith tradition teaches about doing good deeds, discuss why to do good deeds, and talk about how it feels when you do something for others without reward or recognition.

Promoting Harmony

Harmony is agreement in feeling, attitude, or action. Working and playing in groups often results in disagreements and arguments. How we manage those situations may be informed by our faith teachings. Promoting harmony can be a spiritual act. Such situations offer opportunities for students to share their faith beliefs and to discuss the reasons to try and bring about compromise in solving disagreements. Promoting harmony may also be promoting friendship by introducing two of one's friends to others they do not know. Bringing people together to enjoy one another, accomplish a task, or work together is promoting harmony. Great joy can be found in creating little islands of joy and harmony.

Helping students experience and promote harmony can be powerful and contribute to a positive learning environment.

Summary

A spiritual pedagogy utilizing the framework of six types of spiritual behavior is one tool for thinking about the ways in which students' faith traditions may intersect with the content taught in class. These brief examples of the six types of spiritual behavior illustrate different ways to begin to include the spiritual dimension and faith honoring in the classroom. It does not require teachers to have expertise about all the world's religions. The framework enables teachers to incorporate the spiritual dimension into learning activities while honoring the faith traditions and faith identities of their students. This framework is not the only path to practicing faith honoring but it is a way to begin conceptualizing a spiritual pedagogy that enables faith honoring in the classroom. The framework of six types of spiritual behavior opens the door to the spiritual dimension of learning. It is a tool to aid students in knowing and understanding how course content relates to their own lives and their relationships.

A spiritual pedagogy that is faith honoring can be enacted using the six types of spiritual behaviors and enhanced through strategies like rituals, music, stories, recitation, art, and celebration to connect with human purpose, support students' lives, and benefit the school, community, and society. A spiritual pedagogy should connect students with something greater than self. It should engage students in exploring their connection to the cosmos, nature, and the divine. A spiritual pedagogy should encourage students to find purpose and meaning in their lives, and to ponder the universal questions about love, life, death, wisdom, and truth. A spiritual pedagogy that is faith honoring invites students to explore and ponder as well as share the ways their faith informs those explorations and ponderings. A spiritual pedagogy that is faith honoring enables students and teachers to share and discuss the many ways faith, spirituality, and religious beliefs inform our understandings and bring meaning to our lives.

Chapter Three

Choosing Language: Faith, Religion, and Spirituality

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Erica Brown PhD

The terms "faith," "religion," and "spirituality" are often used interchangeably and with good reason. The concepts overlap and interweave, making it difficult to distinguish between them. We have chosen the term "faith honoring" rather than "religion honoring" or "spiritual honoring" because we see it as most representative of the common meaning across these terms. To explicate this thinking, we offer brief descriptions of each term and a discussion of how they intertwine and inform faith-honoring practices.

Faith

Faith is associated with trust—trust in a divine being, creed, dogma—and belief. Faith can be used narrowly, as having faith in God, but we also use the word "faith" to express believing in something or someone. Fowler attempts to disconnect faith from specific or narrow religious beliefs (1995, 10) so that faith is understood more generally as having certain capacities or dispositions:

> We are endowed at birth with nascent capacities for faith. How these capacities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kind

of environments we grow in. Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture. Faith is also shaped by initiatives from beyond us and other people, initiatives of spirit or grace. How these latter initiatives are recognized and imaged, or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives. (Fowler 1995, xiii)

Fowler privileges the term "faith" over "spirituality" in referring to this dimension of human life.

It is Fowler's meaning that we draw upon in the adoption of the term "faith honoring": something interactive, social, spiritual, ritualistic and transcendent. Engaging children and young adults in the kinds of texts, activities, and assignments that might cultivate an inner life has not been regarded as the work of education, certainly not within the American public school system. Navigating larger internal issues of how meaning is made, the role of ritual, or the examination of the dissonance between world as it is and as it should be, are not typically included in the curriculum. Cultivating the capacities of faith is one way of describing what faith honoring can do in the classroom. Curiosity and interest in a student's religious expression is another aspect of faith honoring.

Religion

Religion offers a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe; a moral code; and a system of rules, protocols, and behaviors for worshipping God or gods that may bring meaning and significance to its believers. Religions often involve covenantal commitments to creed or dogma and have a doctrinal orientation that requires the conformity and devotion of its adherents taught, represented, and enforced by religious leaders. Non-conformity can come with consequences, including shame, guilt, punishment, or exclusion. Religion tends to be practiced in groups and are usually informed/guided by sacred texts, prayer services, and ceremonial readings. Educating members and potential adherents about a specific religion usually involves an induction into holy texts, one that can be arduous and demanding if they are in a different language than the vernacular and/or represent ancient ideas and social constructs. Study of a belief system is usually twinned with practices that guide everyday living, such as prayer, good deeds, and the giving of charity. Norms of religious communities are established through role modeling and the guidance of professional clergy and lay leaders.

Religion provides community, membership, and constancy to an individual's life. Religion offers ways to understand one's purpose and duty, helping one make sense of the world and how to live in community with others. Religion offers answers to many of life's deepest questions. In this way, religion becomes part of an individual's identity and world view. That identity and worldview should be welcomed in the classroom and incorporated into learning.

Spirituality

Spirituality is that which affects the human spirit in contrast to that which is material or physical in nature. Spirituality commonly refers to experiences that inspire emotional states of reflection, contemplation, or connection with something larger than the self (Brown 2016).

Spencer offers a sprawling definition:

> Spirituality involves the recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature. Spirituality means knowing that our lives have significance in a context beyond a mundane everyday existence at the level of biological needs that drive selfishness and aggression. It means knowing that we are a significant part of a purposeful unfolding of Life in our universe. Spirituality involves exploring certain universal themes – love, compassion, altruism, life after death, wisdom and truth, with the knowledge that some people such as saints or enlightened individuals have achieved and manifested higher levels of development than the ordinary person. (Spencer 2012, 1)

The term spirituality is also used to describe a religious belief or practice; spirituality and religion are related but not the same.

> Spirituality is not the same as "religion," though the two are related. In essence spirituality is what happens when we open ourselves to something greater than ourselves. Some find it in the beauty of nature, or art, or music. Others find it in prayer, or performing a mitzva [commandment from the Torah], or

learning a sacred text. Yet others find it in helping other people,
or in friendship, or love or ritual. (Sacks 2021, 1)

Brooks draws attention to one way in which spirituality is related to religion; a
force larger than oneself may catalyze a search for ways to extend and nurture
this spark of connectivity that leads a person to an organized religion (2019,
56). But not everyone pursues the spiritual through conventional and nor-
mative religious pathways. The spiritual path is manifest through connection
and meaning.

Tisdell observes that the "complexity of education in a multicultural society"
gives rise to a "deep concern for spirituality as a way of making sense of one's life
experience" (2001, xii).

> . . . spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge
> and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational
> or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains. To
> ignore it, particularly in how it relates to teaching for personal and
> social transformation, is to ignore an important aspect of human
> experience and an avenue of learning and meaning-making.
> (Ibid., 21)

In the words of educator Laurence Scheindlin, spirituality "entails reaching from
inside oneself to something transcendent" (1999, 193). Scheindlin believes that
spirituality is actually essential to all forms of learning and benefits from certain
propaedeutics: "to introduce children to the spiritual world we need to help
them first to cherish their emotions, to value them, to take pleasure in searching
for how to express them" (ibid., 194). To that end, he delineates five characteris-
tics of spiritual preparedness that schools should foster. Education should:

- help children value their inner lives;
- catalyze curiosity and wonder;
- develop with them a language for articulating feelings;
- grow a child's aesthetic sensitivity;
- and stimulate interpersonal sensitivity. (Ibid., 191–192)

Such dispositions help children not only access their inner lives but also encour-
age children to embrace and love a world that can be confusing, disappointing
and is, at the same time, deeply wondrous. As Donaldson points out, we often
refer to emotions within a school context as negative ones to be managed, as

opposed to those that are positive and to be nurtured (1992, 194). Scheindlin posits, however, that even negative emotions are important to examine because this is "fun" for students; emotions like "surprise, confusion, disgust, revulsion, compassion or intrigue" (2002, 189) that may arise, for example, with the dissection of a frog in a biology class, can have positive educational benefits. Disgust could be "a step towards sensitivity. Confusion could be a step toward a sense of mystery or of radical amazement" (ibid., 189).

> Spirituality in education is an awareness of the inner narratives of our lives and the inherent connectedness to the larger narratives of life. It is a recognition, or perhaps remembrance, of the origins of our humanity, that special connection that we share with each other and with nature itself. It is a deep awareness of the questions that cannot be explained by material philosophies and that go beyond our neat answers and concise explanations. (Crowell 2002, 14)

Questions about our relationship to the inexplicable or ineffable feelings of connection to that which seems larger than ourselves are not generally included in school curriculum. What is lost when there is little within conventional schooling that addresses the inner life? For many children, the failure to examine life's deepest questions and emotions can make the experience of schooling for many students an arid, irrelevant, and uninspiring experience.

Synthesis

"Faith," "religion," and "spirituality" are terms that are inter-related and describe the value of the inner life, the capacity to believe and trust, and the sense of connection to something greater than self. We have chosen "faith honoring" as the term to describe practices that nurture these dimensions of the whole person. We believe that faith is a critical and necessary subject for exploration to help students access the richness of another prism by which to gain not only factual knowledge but also to provide a way to help name and organize their emotions, insights, and life questions.

Faith as an animating, human force is vibrant and alive in relationships and conveyed in the pursuit of the sacred and in rituals that span a lifetime. In modern society, however, it has few platforms for dignified expression and exploration outside of organized religion and houses of worship where religion

is thought to "live." For those without formal membership in a faith community, there are insufficient avenues where spirituality is taken seriously as a worldview and guide, and regarded as one of many ways in which people shape their lives. Per William James (1988), the interior world can inform a strong moral core, a sense of vision, mission, and community, sensitivity to the other, marvel at the world inside and outside the self, a means of impulse control, and inspiration for good deeds and social justice. This, too, should be a feature of education today.

Parker Palmer in "Evoking the Spirit in Public Education" asks that educators challenge their negative views of religion as folkloristic, tribal or superstitious: "We need to shake off the narrow notion that 'spiritual' questions are always about angels or ethers or must include the word *God*. Spiritual questions are the kind that we, and our students, ask every day of our lives as we yearn to connect with the largeness of life" (1998–1999, 6). In that spirit, he offers some questions that ask students—and their teachers—to go far beyond what is on the next test:

- Does my life have meaning and purpose?
- Do I have gifts that the world wants and needs?
- Whom and what can I trust?
- How can I rise above my fears?
- How do I deal with suffering, my own and that of my family and friends?
- How does one maintain hope?
- What about death? (Ibid., 8)

Bringing issues of belief into wider focus honors the background of many students and many educators. The self-silencing of students who come from a faith-based home environment negates a crucial framework by which they see the world. Faith honoring invites them to stop self-silencing and share the ways their faith informs their views.

Tisdell offers observations about spirituality in education that can guide our conversation about how to create a spiritual pedagogy we call "faith honoring":

- it is an awareness of unity and the interconnectedness of all things;
- it is about meaning-making;
- it is always present in the learning environment;
- it involves becoming a more authentic self;
- it is a way people construct knowledge through unconscious and symbolic processes;
- these experiences "often happen by surprise." (2003, 28–29)

While we cannot create surprise because, by their very nature, surprises happen spontaneously, we can, in classrooms everywhere, prepare students to appreciate and honor human life, nature, and the interconnectedness of all things, and attune them to wonder. This cultivation of faith capacities may become one of education's greatest gifts to human development.

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Chapter Four

Educating the Whole Person Includes the Spiritual Dimension

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Jill L. Lindsey, PhD

What does it mean to be a whole person? Human beings have many dimensions. We are social, emotional, intellectual, artistic, and spiritual. Whether we practice a particular religion, we have a part of us that longs to connect to something larger than ourselves. Being a whole person means we recognize and value the many dimensions of humanness in ourselves and in others. Wholeness enables us to move beyond a self-focused view of life to a place of interdependence and interconnectedness.

Spirituality is recognized by health professions as an important dimension in human wellness. Schools must also be places that value the spiritual dimension and invite students to share their faith as an integral part of their identity as it relates to the curriculum. In this book, we have chosen to label welcoming the spiritual in the classroom as "faith honoring," and we submit that faith-honoring practices are essential if we are to educate the whole person. Practicing faith honoring in schools means a student's spirituality and faith identity are honored as integral to who they are as a person, and faith is included as one of the many ways of knowing and understanding. Faith honoring in classrooms and schools is an intentional commitment to nurture the whole child, including the spiritual dimension.

The concept of educating the whole person, including their spirituality, is not new. Holistic education has always welcomed the many dimensions of

humanness into the classroom. The philosophy of holistic education is predicated upon the principal that the purpose of schooling is to develop the whole person; with the "whole" being a product of biological, psychological, social/environmental, and spiritual dimensions. A holistic approach to schooling has been present for centuries in writings about the purpose of education.

A Brief History of the Spiritual in Education

Before the Common Era, humankind was believed to be both spiritual and physical (Duval 1998). Plato wrote that the body was an instrument of the spirit (Lodge 1923). This spiritual-physical duality of the human condition persisted though the Common Era until the Enlightenment, when the human body began to be viewed as a dynamic and sensitive organ without a spirit or soul (Moravia, 1983). In the nineteenth century, phenomenological psychologists, Lotze, James, and Merleau-Ponty struggled to find middle ground between rejection of a spiritual dimension and acceptance of body-spirit dualism (Kugelman 1988).

During the Progressive Era (1876–1957), the ideas of Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel directed schooling to develop the whole person, though not explicitly the spirit (Cremin 1961). Dewey subscribed to a holistic view of schooling, stating "education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform . . . the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life . . . [and] in this way is the prophet of the true God and usherer in of the true kingdom of God" (Dewey 1899/2008, 100). This implies that Dewey believed schooling to be an instrument of God for human formation, which would naturally include the spiritual dimension.

Holistic models of schooling explicitly based on a view of humans as spiritual and physical beings were developed in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries by Maria Montessori in Montessori schools, Rudolph Steiner in Waldorf schools, Father Chaminade in Catholic Marianist schools, and Aurobindo Ghose in Ashram schools; and these models persist as private school options today. Montessori designed schools to provide an environment that reveals the natural spiritual essence and love of learning in all children (Kilpatrick 1914). Steiner's Waldorf schools were based on theosophy (religious thought based on mystical insight into the divine nature of man) and provide an environment that cultivates imagination through art, music, movement and myth (Brull 1997). Father Chaminade established communities of Christians and accompanying schools to develop loving communities of learning (*Education in the Marianist Tradition* 1998). Aurobindo Ghose and Mirra Alfassa founded the Ashram

school in Auroville, India to implement "integral education," the purpose of which was to help children develop their potential as conveyed through the spirit, inner unfoldment and the relationship between the child's inner life and actions (Marshak and Litfin 2002). All of these models of education are designed to teach the whole person and cultivate their intellectual, artistic, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.

In 1944, the United Kingdom included the development of the spiritual aspect of children's lives as a legal requirement for schools (McCreery 1994). The 1977 *UK Supplement to Curriculum* defined spiritual development as "concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs; they affect the way they see themselves and throw light for them on the purpose and meaning of life itself . . . to glimpse the transcendent . . . always they are concerned with matters of the heart and root of existence" (94). These actions articulated a dominant view that schooling should include developing the spiritual dimension of the whole person.

In the 1980s, the holistic education movement in the United States began its own journal, *Holistic Education Review*. A decade later, a call for educational reform was issued, "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective" (Flake 1991). In the 1990s, the Charis Project in Nottingham, England produced resources to help teachers promote moral and spiritual development through innovative teaching methods for English, Modern Languages, and Maths. These methods included selecting fundamental human issues as the context for subject matter, reflecting on how we come to see things as true, and linking learning to the world to develop and increase a sense of wonder (Smith 1999). In 1991, Russian Federation teachers called for theory and practice oriented to the "spiritual development and upbringing of the individual" through art, construction, horticulture, and literature "as a means of spiritual and intellectual development (Kviatkovskii 1991, 44). In 1999, *Educational Leadership*, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, devoted an entire issue to "The Spirit in Education" (54, no. 6) with articles focused on the role of spirituality in education and making connections through holistic learning.

Barriers to Including Spirituality and Faith in Schools

Despite these calls to nurture the spirit in schools, the trend in the United States during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been to emphasize academic achievement exclusively, to focus on standardized test performance, and to

prepare students for their respective careers. Public schools in the United States have neither explicitly nor implicitly, included the spiritual dimension in their articulation or conceptualization of human development and schooling. Yet, US society is full of people of various faiths; faiths that shape their world views and their ways of knowing.

A major perceived barrier to including spirituality in schooling is that public education cannot include a spiritual dimension to learning due to concerns about separation of church and state (Hayes 1998). The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the US Bill of Rights states that the government *may not establish* religion, and the Supreme Court has emphasized the importance of neutrality toward religions in public schools. This prohibition against a designated and promoted religion has often been misconstrued as a prohibition against the discussion of all religious traditions and their influences on how individuals understand their world. Often neglected in this discussion is the Free Exercise Clause under the First Amendment which states "the government shall make no law . . . prohibiting the free exercise of religion." The Supreme Court has actually ruled that students are free to share their faith with peers and express their beliefs about religion in classroom assignments (Haynes 1998). Yet, this exercise of freedom is not practiced in the vast majority of public schools.

The study of world religions, as a curricular topic, is included in many high school textbooks and state learning standards, but learning about world religions is generally disconnected from the ways religious beliefs are practiced in the lived experiences of students and how an adherent to that tradition makes meaning. Welcoming a person's religious, spiritual understandings in the classroom is essential to teaching the whole person because ". . . spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning" (Tisdell 2003, 21).

Models of Educating that Include the Spiritual

Today, models of holistic learning that nurture the spirit and welcome religious understandings are most readily found in private, religiously affiliated schools (Miller and Nakagawa 2002). Examining the curriculum in these schools reveals common underlying principles that could be applied to a public school conceptualization of nurturing the spirit that does not promote the adoption of any particular religion but invites students to share their faith and beliefs as they relate to classroom assignments. This "faith honoring" could be practiced in any school. The curriculum in Montessori and Waldorf schools do not teach religion, but are designed to foster spiritual growth through interdisciplinary studies

that include history, literature, science, the arts, and socio-cultural-religious traditions from a variety of cultures so as to highlight universal cycles of life reflected in nature and cultures, and the different ways religions and cultures have attempted to answer essential questions about the meaning of life (Rivers 1992). Education should enable a person to wrestle with life's most challenging questions, and religion/faith is one important way humans have attempted to answer life's essential questions.

Schools that practice holistic education believe developing wisdom and compassion should be at the center of education rather than meeting standards and preparing for competition in the global market. A variety of authors have described different approaches to holistic education with an emphasis on practices from the East and West to nurture the spirit (Miller and Nakagawa 2002). These authors offer examples of how teachers in public schools can adopt a pedagogy that includes ways of spiritual knowing. They suggest that by drawing on world religions and wisdom traditions, a holistic faith-honoring pedagogy can be mapped to aid teachers in providing a spiritually inclusive education. However, a faith-honoring pedagogy ultimately begins with understanding that human beings make meaning in many ways: through language, reason, emotion, intuition, sense perception, imagination, memory, and faith. This understanding enables teachers and students to explore the many ways of knowing as tools to navigate learning and life. Practicing faith honoring in the classroom begins with intention; the intent to educate the whole person; the intent to welcome faith as a way of knowing. There are many ways to incorporate opportunities to discuss ways of knowing in the classroom. To include faith as a way of knowing in the classroom is the essence of "faith honoring." Faith honoring is a pedagogy with roots in holistic education and enables students to explore faith as one of the many ways of knowing. We call on educators and communities to build on the historical foundation holistic education provides and practice faith honoring in schools.

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Chapter Five

Character Education and Its Implications for Faith-Honoring Pedagogies

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Rehenuma Asmi, PhD

Character education can be considered a prelude and stepping stone to faith-honoring practices, which advocate viewing faith as a welcome aspect of a student's identity and integral to learning. Character education has many variations and approaches that can serve as a model for faith-honoring practices, as we seek to articulate this holistic educational framework. To that end, this chapter looks at the emergence of character education in the United States, how it has come to be a bridging point between secular and religious interests and its rising popularity in countries across the globe.

Character education's ability to integrate religious concepts with civic engagement has made it an increasingly popular approach in schools across the globe. Its rising popularity can also be credited to the fact that there is a growing interest among researchers in studying how character education can improve student outcomes in social and academic areas (Berkowitz and Bier 2005). It is this combination of historical roots, contemporary citizenship education and research focus that allows character education to hold interest, despite its simple framing. The words "character education" are often traced to Aristotle's views on virtue and ethics, which appeal to secular and progressive educators, while religious groups connect the terms to religious teachings (Arthur 2022; Lapsley and Narvaez 2006). For the purposes of this volume, character education is defined as "understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values.

A holistic approach to character development therefore seeks to develop the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of moral life" (Lickona et al. 2007).

History of Character Education in the United States

In the United States, character education has a historical connection to religious groups seeking influence over publicly funded education, but it has also evolved to encompass a wide range of political and philosophical ideas about the need to teach morality and ethical behavior in schools. In the *Politics of Character Education*, Howard et al. (2004) argue that religious groups such as the Puritans, Protestants and eventually Catholics rallied around traditional character education as a way to influence the public school curriculum. Character education in schools took the form of primers teaching moral lessons and in programs outside the school such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. By the early twentieth century, "in public schools, the traditional character education approach and the religious approach have largely become one and the same and embrace the traditional character education model. The direct instruction of virtues and the socialization of young are a point of common ground between Protestants and Catholics" (Howard et al. 2005, 193). As we will see later in this chapter, this convergence of religious groups around character education continues into the twenty-first century where, for example, many Muslim majority countries are exploring the possible benefits of character education in developing moral citizens.

In the 1900s, a progressive movement emerged that was distinctive from the traditional character education advanced by religious communities such as the Protestants and Catholics. This school of thought wanted character education to be a way to encourage citizenship and civic engagement via social justice. John Dewey and Lawrence Kohlberg, pioneers of this way of thinking, went on to develop the Just Communities initiative in which students practiced democratic citizenship and discussed ethical issues. The progressive approach to character education focused more on moral and ethical behavior, over the traditional emphasis on conduct and comportment. Howard et al. suggests that, despite these differences, there is a point of convergence between traditional and progressive approaches: "Perhaps the most fundamental is the general agreement that (at minimum) character involves making and acting on ethical judgments in a social context" (2005, 493).

In the modern period, character education was a way for both progressives and traditionalists to counteract a sense of fragmentation and moral decay.

McClellen's (1999) work suggests that character education often emerged in times of social change where there was a need to stabilize common codes of conduct. The popularity of the progressive or traditional approach often hinged on whether the source of moral decay was perceived to be an issue of internal control or external factors. On the one hand, the progressive approach, such as the Just Community schools, sought to focus on the child's connection to others and taught how to make ethical decisions and to work with others democratically in order to create communities that were equitable and just. On the other hand, the traditional approach, as found in Lickona's Character Education Partnership, emphasized individual characteristics that would encourage pro-social behaviors and encourage different partners such as parents, teachers and community leaders to work together in promoting these values. Whether the historical roots are in religious, progressive or traditional beliefs, character education has spawned a wide variety of programs that seek to develop more moral and ethical students.

Character Education Programs

Character education programming spans a wide range of styles and approaches, some of which focus on individual outcomes while others on political efficacy. Character education programs are often designed to impact student learning and growth and to increase their sense of belonging to a community. Today, programs such as the Character Education Partnership, Just Community Schools, Social Emotional Learning and Integrative Ethical Education are all considered outgrowths of Character Education. Lickona's (2007) Character Education Partnership (CEP), which outlines eleven principles of effective character education, is focused on principles and core ethical values. These principles are considered to bridge the divide between progressive and traditional approaches to character and moral education effectively. The CEP's eleven principles begin with core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others, as well as performance values such as diligence, a strong work ethic and perseverance. The program outlines a detailed framework of how schools and communities can help students think about, create, and integrate these core values using school curriculum, staff and parents as models and mentors and has become a popular way to implement character education throughout the United States and globally.

Another popular way to implement character education is through citizenship education. Althof and Berkowitz (2006), in their review of character education

and citizenship education, pinpoint ways that citizenship education can support character education:

> As much as the literatures for character (and moral) education and citizenship education tend to be separate, in actual educational practice, there is a clear trend in character and citizenship education combine or even integrate the two. In fact, school mission statements often cite the goal of promoting responsible future citizens and then list character traits as aspects of this. (498)

They give examples from several school districts where character education is embedded in the description of what makes a good citizen of the school. One example is the *civic mission of schools* which "defines citizenship as being comprised of knowledge, skills and dispositions, strikingly similar to the tripartite definition of character from the Character Education Partnership (Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis 2003, 2): understanding, caring about and acting on core ethical values" (509).

In addition to citizenship education, psychological and developmental approaches to character education gave rise to programs that encourage social and emotional development to achieve positive outcomes in measures of personal well-being and academic success. Lapsley and Narvaez (2006) detail a myriad of programs that fall under this umbrella, including, but not limited to Social Emotional Learning, Caring School Communities, Character Education Partnership, Positive Youth Development and their own case study of Integrative Ethical Education. These programs focus on the potential for education to increase empathy, emotional and situational awareness, and ethical decision-making.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has grown in popularity in recent years because of its attention to the developmental needs of children and their emotional growth in the school environment. While not explicitly focused on character, Social Emotional Learning stands out for its connection and grounding in the field of psychology with a focus on self-other awareness, self-management and responsible decision-making. These character traits and behaviors are becoming increasingly important for children whose social interactions in person are largely being replaced by virtual interactions. SEL's popularity also stems from a more empirical approach that measures children's aptitude in these areas and has had a more demonstrative effect on students' academic performance.

Another model that has emerged out of the field of psychology is Lapsley and Narvaez's (2006) Integrative Ethical Education model, which "addresses character education by integrating the findings from developmental psychology, prevention science, and positive psychology. In proposing the best approach to instruction, IEE addresses character education by integrating contemporary findings from research in learning and cognition" (32). In piloting their approach through the Community Voices and Character Education Project (CVCE) in Minnesota, Lapsley and Vasquez discovered some of the limitations of creating integrative programs that demonstrate strong outcomes (35). Schools and classrooms were able to follow the curriculum because researchers allowed teachers to have local control of the curriculum. Some schools, however, did not follow through on reporting; consequently, the pre- and post- student tests only had strong effects on skill measures of ethical sensitivity. As a result of these outcomes, Lapsley and Narvaez suggest a developmental framework for character education as a way to integrate the social emotional and positive youth development frameworks.

The challenge for character education is that it is often difficult to measure when promoted in the form of virtues and individual characteristics, where programs that focus on behavior and developmental needs offer more opportunities for empirical study. Pattaro's (2016) review of over 261 articles about character education looks at both definitional challenges as well as practical processes. He asks how scholars define character education, how they put it into practice and how they measure outcomes. In a cluster analysis of the term character education, four major questions emerged:

1) Does character education work?
2) What are the differences between religious, secular and citizenship approaches to character education?
3) How does character education work?
4) How does character education intersect and inform moral issues?

After an analysis of these four major questions, Pattaro (2016) concludes:

> Finally, an emphasis on learning as a process and participative experience also emerges. It highlights a trend toward a holistic approach that connects the moral dimension of education to the social and civic realms of students' lives. In this framework, part of the analyzed literature seems to share (even if in different ways and with different degrees) the idea that to foster the

> development of moral citizens in democratic societies, it is necessary to overlap and cut across the fields of character, moral and citizenship education. (26)

Despite the challenges of measurement that Pattaro identifies, there is a growing interest in combining character, moral and citizenship education to develop moral citizens. The relevance and wide-ranging nature of the field of character education has seen a steady increase in international education circles.

International Approaches to Character Education

Character education has seen an uptick in interest among scholars outside the United States interested in globalization, national development programs and moral issues that have developed as a result of technology. Concerns about the growing interconnectedness of societies and the increasing use of technology have resulted in an interest in the value of character education as a stabilizing force in societies undergoing rapid change or in communities suffering from a decline in positive behavior among children, their peers and adults. Scholars in Colombia, Indonesia, and Turkey, for example, have approached character education as a potential curricular addition to implement in schools that is easily aligned with national and local interests in improving outcomes among students in behavior as well as development economics, which looks at improving economic outcomes through developing the population. Although mostly theoretical, these studies show that character education's reputation as an approach that improves society is becoming more and more widespread.

In Columbia, Berkowitz and Bustamente (2013) explore the PRIME model developed by Berkowitz in a program called National Program of Citizenship Competencies (NPCC). The PRIME model suggests that the most effective character education programs prioritize the development of character in students, create positive relationships among stakeholders, foster internalization through intrinsic values, model behavior by school members and have a focus on empowerment. NPCC in Colombia followed many of the principals of PRIME and showed that a national program focused on citizenship could be implemented on a wide scale. Berkowitz and Bustamente (2013) suggest that "Colombia offers one example of how character (social-emotional, citizenship) education research and theory (and experts in those areas) can join with policy and other political forces to broadly influence the nature and effectiveness of educational efforts" (17).

In Indonesia, a focus on globalization has led to an interest in character education among education scholars who see the idea as aligning with national development goals. Istiharoh and Indartono (2019) write:

> The imperative of character education in Indonesia was begun in 2000s when the government set National Long-Term Development Plan (RJPN) in 2005–2025. In the Plan, character education is places as the base of national development vision manifestation. In 2010, The Ministry of National Education launched three guides, namely: 1) Guide of Character Education in Junior High School, 2) Main Design of National Education Ministry's Character Education, and 3) Reference Framework of National Education Ministry Character Education. (275)

The development of several departments to manage character education shows how significant this idea became to the Indonesian government in promoting curricula about character education. Istiharoh and Indartono suggest that certain capacities be developed through technological methods, such as conversation and storytelling, and through assessments such as observation, portfolio and interview, in order to stay up to date with the digital times. Rokhman, Hum, and Syaifudin (2014) have a similar interest in character education and its connection to Indonesia's development goals with a focus on an integrative version of programming that implements the lessons throughout different subject areas. Sutomo (2014) takes a slightly different angle, suggesting that character education provides a way for the Indonesia Islamic formation of *akhlaq* (character in Arabic) to be more generally practiced in a globalizing society. Sutomo critiques the tendency of Indonesia's local character education to limit *akhlaq* education to Muslim communities and suggests that character education is a needed in addition to the curriculum to enhance the existing religiously based curriculum for a globalizing world. Similarly, Taufik (2020) combines the need for character education in Indonesia with the existing Islamic education curriculum, suggesting this will be a way to balance the wave of technological advancements sweeping the nation. The Indonesian national government's emphasis on character education as a mechanism to develop a strong political and social agenda has led to an increasing interest among Indonesian scholars to study character education's connection to Islamic religious teachings and national development priorities.

In Turkey, character education has been a growing interest of researchers. Gundugdo et al. (2017) write that, "Values education has been implemented

consciously and in different intensities in National Education system of Turkey since 2003. These implementations have gained new momentum from 2010 onwards." Cafo and Sumoncao (2000) look at the value of character education in a global society and its implementation in one school in Turkey, which showed positive effects after teachers and students were surveyed at the beginning and end of the program. They write:

> Interaction between individuals plays the significant role in the process of character education. Therefore, in a globalized world it has gained importance that values which have an influence on the orientation of the behavior of the individuals toward each other and that are given through character education should be systematically identified. Whatever the religion, race and language of the individuals are, common basic values should be established upon the basis of "being a human." (5)

Similar to Indonesia, Turkey is a Muslim-majority country where character education is perceived to connect religious ideals, civic needs, and an increasingly global society.

How does Character Education Benefit Our Work in Faith-Honoring Practices?

Character education has been successful internationally and can dovetail well with civic objectives. There seems to be a general overlap and interest between these three camps—moral education, citizenship education, and religiously based education—that has led to the implementation of Character Education in different countries with the objective of increasing all three approaches. For faith-honoring practices, Character Education offers an example of how school systems, national objectives and religious beliefs can complement one another in developing more moral, ethical and kind students who contribute to society and take action through social and civic projects. Faith-honoring practices can draw from Character Education's history of working with schools to create programming that enhances a child's character while developing a stronger spiritual and faith identity.

One drawback that emerges in the study of character education is the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of a conceptual framework as people in different parts of the world with different objectives will draw on Character Education

and its terms variably, creating a wide spectrum of possible approaches. The benefits to this variability are that there are lots of possibilities for collaboration under the umbrella of character education for religious organizations, state institutions and academic researchers. We can respond to definitional challenges when developing faith-honoring practices and raise awareness of them when implementing new programs and curricula.

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Chapter Six

Culturally Responsive Teaching as Prelude to Faith Honoring

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Douglas Stump, EdD

Culturally responsive teaching is another lens with which to consider and cultivate a faith-honoring approach to education. The Culturally Response Teaching movement served to bring awareness to the important role culture and ethnic identity play in learning. This focus on including all aspects of a student's identity into learning experiences is at the heart of the argument for faith-honoring practices as well.

The Culturally Responsive Teaching movement offered research on the beliefs and practices of teaching ethnically diverse student groups in response to the desegregation of schools (Aronson and Laughter 2016). The works of Geneva Gay (1975, 1980, 2002, 2010, 2013) formed the foundation of research that addressed culturally responsive teaching, "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay 2010, 31). Gay makes the case that culturally responsive teaching improves the academic success of students who are ethnically diverse, and her scholarship focused on supporting the assertion that when academic content is framed by the experiences of the students, the learning process becomes more engaging and more meaningful. This idea of addressing cultural diversity within a classroom—taking into account who a student is and what they have

experienced in order to understand how a student may interact with curriculum and teaching methods—is, like faith honoring, anchored in the philosophy of holistic education. If teaching the whole child is the most effective pathway to learning, then becoming a more culturally responsive educator is part of inter-acting with the whole child. Educating the whole person is at the heart of both culturally responsive teaching and faith honoring.

Culturally responsive teaching requires educators to develop a cultural diversity knowledge base in addition to a mastery of content knowledge and pedagogy to transform this collective knowledge into relevant instructional designs (Gay, 2002). Gay summarized this process by defining the following six foundational ideas regarding culturally responsive teaching:

- culturally responsive teachers are socially and academically empow-ering by setting high expectations for students with a commitment to every student's success;
- culturally responsive teachers are multidimensional because they engage cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives;
- culturally responsive teachers validate every student's culture, bridging gaps between school and home through diversified instructional strate-gies and multicultural curricula;
- culturally responsive teachers are transformative of schools and societies by using students' existing strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design;
- culturally responsive teachers are emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies as they lift "the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools." (Gay 2010, 38)

Gay also stated that to implement culturally responsive teaching, four actions were necessary:

- replace deficit perspectives in students and communities;
- understand resistance to culturally responsive teaching in order to bolster confidence and competence in implementation;
- understand how and why culture and difference are essential ideologies for responsive teaching as they are essential to humanity;
- make pedagogical connections within the context of what they are teaching. (Gay 2013).

Gay summarized her own scholarship by stating that effective implementation of culturally responsive teaching requires a high degree of scholarship on behalf of the instructor to know about the specific cultures of different ethnic groups and how these cultures may impact classroom interactions and learning. Ultimately, educators must know how instruction can be adapted to embrace differences. When schools review performance data and ask why are certain groups within the school underperforming, the next set of questions should focus not on student deficiencies but instead on *student identities.* The more meaningful question may be, "Are the ways we are delivering instruction creating barriers for certain groups of students?" As one way to address problems of underachievement, teacher preparation programs should embrace knowledge and classroom applications of cultural competencies (Gay 2002).

Gay's cultural competencies are now incorporated in teacher and school leader education programs. Several organizations provide standards for school leadership preparation. Three prominent sets of standards, the National Educational Leader Preparation (NELP), the Professional Standards for Education Leaders (PSEL), and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) all provide cultural competency standards as part of their requirements. All graduates from school leadership programs are required to demonstrate mastery in this area prior to graduation and state licensure as a school leader.

While the language varies from group to group, there are the following consistencies:

- from NELP: candidates understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive and inclusive school culture;
- from PSEL: strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being. Cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student;
- from ELCC: apply knowledge that promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources on behalf of the school by collecting and analyzing information pertinent to improvement of the school's educational environment; promoting an understanding, appreciation, and use of

the diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources within the school community; building and sustaining positive school relationships with families and caregivers; and cultivating productive school relationships with community.

For educators who are passionate about their craft and who desire to be highly effective in the classroom, Gloria Ladson-Billings provided a framework for how to teach that "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes," and that culturally responsive pedagogy is about empowering the whole, not just the individual. This framework has three elements.

- The aim of culturally relevant practitioners is to think in terms of long-term academic achievement, not year-end assessments.
- Culturally relevant practitioners focus on cultural competence, which refers to "helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead." Cultural competence is a concept to aid students in making connections and navigating home and school.
- Culturally relevant practitioners seek to develop sociopolitical consciousness within students, which includes issues of race, class, and gender. (Ladson-Billings 2006, 36)

Later in Ladson-Billing's scholarship, a new term emerged—culturally sustaining pedagogy—which addresses the need to move beyond race and ethnicity to encompass global identities, including arts, literature, music, athletics, and film (Ladson-Billings 2014). The progression of culture as part of holistic learning environments demonstrates that this is an evolving concept in practice. Religion, spirituality, or faith expression, however, were not included in this expanding definition of culture.

There is extensive research built on the works of both Gay and Ladson-Billings under the widely used term "culturally relevant education" (CRE), and in general these applications identify the following as primary for CRE teaching:

- social and academic empowerment;
- multidimensionality;
- cultural validation;

- social, emotional, and political comprehensiveness;
- school and societal transformation;
- liberation from oppressive educational practices and ideologies. (Aronson and Laughter 2016)

As the work of Gay, Ladson-Billings, and others have contributed to our understanding of cultural relevance in education, literature has emerged that applies these principles to specific curricula. Research continues to contribute to how culturally relevant education is applied in the areas of mathematics, science, social studies, English (language arts), and English as a second language (Aronson and Laughter 2016). Scholars such as Django Paris and H. Samy Alim are refining and expanding these ideas as culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris and Salim 2017). The idea of what constitutes CRE is also expanding in terms of what is included in "cultural knowledge." Ladson-Billing's emphasized moving beyond race and ethnicity to encompass broader aspects of identity (Ladson-Billings 2014), but failed to specifically include faith, religion, or spirituality.

In thinking about framing faith-honoring practices, the work around cultural relevance in teaching offers possible avenues for understanding faith as a dimension of cultural expression. The first step is a commitment to creating an inclusive school culture that includes a commitment to creating a faith-honoring culture. Once a school district commits, classroom teachers must commit to understanding the composition of the classroom and be willing to evolve and grow professionally. This, perhaps, is the hardest part.

Lindsay et al provide questions for educators to ask themselves in preparation for cultivating a culturally inclusive community. One can easily apply these questions to faith honoring by substituting faith for culture in each of the questions.

1) *To what extent do you honor culture (faith) as a natural and normal part of the community you serve?*
2) *To what extent do you recognize and understand the differential and historical treatment according to those least well served in our schools?*
3) *When working with people whose culture (faith) is different from you, to what extent do you see the person as both an individual and as a member of a cultural (faith) group?*
4) *To what extent do you recognize and value the differences within the cultural (faith) communities you serve?*
5) *To what extent do you know and respect the unique needs of cultural (faith) groups in the community you serve?*

6) *To what extent do you know how cultural (faith) groups in your community define family and the manner in which family serves as the primary system of support for students?*

7) *To what extent do you recognize and understand the bicultural reality for cultural (faith) groups historically not well served in our schools?*

8) *To what extent do you recognize your role in acknowledging, adjusting to, and accepting cross-cultural (inter-faith) interactions as necessary social and communications dynamics?*

9) *To what extent do you incorporate cultural (faith) knowledge into educational practices and policymaking?* (Lindsay et al. 2018)

Teachers and school leaders understand the importance of effective learning. Schools are in the learning business, but they are also in the relationship business. Part of what highly effective schools do is build good relationships— between students and teachers, teachers and parents, educational leaders and community members—and understanding the various faiths present within any school environment is key to relationship building. One way to begin is through reflection on these questions that can provide a starting point for more effective learning.

The work around culturally relevant education provides a framework for approaching faith honoring in schools. The intersection of religion and culture, how religion is part of culture, and how religion both shapes culture and transcends culture, is integral to human experience and history. Faith expression, like cultural expression, is part of who we are as whole persons. When we embrace a holistic approach to education, then just as culturally relevant education is a pathway to becoming a highly effective school, faith-honoring practices offer opportunities for students to express their faith identities as a part of who they are as learners.

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Part Two

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HOW MIGHT FAITH HONORING BE PRACTICED?

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Stories of Faith Honoring

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How might classrooms look if teachers embraced faith expressions and faith identities as a way to create more holistic learning experiences and further fulfill the aspirations of culturally relevant education? This book offers a rationale for "faith honoring" in schools and initiates a conversation about how classrooms can be places where students find opportunities to connect and express their faiths. This book does not attempt to address the examinations of curriculum, lesson plans, policy, or routines. We offer instead a framework for conceptualizing faith-honoring practices along with personal stories from a variety of contributors to aid in envisioning how schools could be faith honoring and why faith honoring should be practiced.

What follows is a collection of essays illustrating reasons we need to adopt faith-honoring practices and examples of what faith honoring looks like when practiced. These essays serve to nourish an appreciation of the power of faith expressions within the learning and teaching world, while deepening our understanding of the realities learners and teachers face when classrooms require hiding one's faith. Taken together, these essays tell the story of the power of faith honoring, the corrosiveness of silencing faith, the power of love within schools, and the hope for what love and nurturing the whole person can do for us on a grand scale. We hear stories of the power of institutions that practice faith honoring as part of their mission as places of learning, as well as stories of the

power of eliminating faith from learning, where students or faculty feel a loss of community or belonging. In these stories we hear from many voices: Hindu, Mormon, Muslim, Christian, Jewish. Within this context of faith, several narratives explore vocation—a term that evokes religious connections—describing our work choices as not just careers where we dedicate ourselves to a secular professional choice, but rather where we embrace a divine calling for work as a reflection of beliefs. This collection of essays captures intersections of work, faith, learning, and values through a mosaic of voices—each contributing to a mural illustrating the importance of faith expression as integral to learning and teaching.

Love

Amaarah DeCuir, EdD

Whoever of you sees an evil must then change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his heart. And that is the slightest [effect of] faith.
—Narrated by Muslim, 49.

I remember the first day I fell in love. It was Wednesday, August 30, 1995. I was a first-year teacher, with a classfull of fifth graders at Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School in Washington, DC. I remember the butterflies deep inside of me that tingled with excitement upon meeting my students for our first day of our year together. I was nervous but eager for the relationship to start. I had prepared for this responsibility, I spent years practicing my skills and developing my craft. I thought I was ready for love.

My feelings only intensified after that first week. I quickly learned how my students were subjected to inequities in the school and in their surrounding community. I mobilized my love for them to advocate for the justice they deserved. I tried to clean up the playground. I pushed to get books and learning resources to expand their worldviews. And I wrote units and lessons on our shared culture, identity, and heritage to empower them. I still remember the bulletin board I made about the Harlem Renaissance, and the jazz that played while

we practiced silent reading. My love gave me the energy to work incessantly for their success and achievement.

Love has never meant fleeting affection in my life. It has always meant a lifelong dedication to others, to a community, or to self. It is a deeply rooted commitment to humanization, even when society around us minimizes the power of love, the potential of life. It is a firmly held belief to create an existence of belonging, acceptance, and wellbeing for the ones you love. And it is an obligation to fight against any threat that your loved ones may encounter. My faith taught me how to love and my faith sustains my commitment to love each day that I enter a classroom. I want to embody a teacher who loves.

Every new academic year, I recognize the first look my students make when they lay their eyes upon their new Muslim teacher. They size me up, trying not to stare at my colorful headscarf, trying to catch a glimpse of my hair underneath, trying to figure out if I will be able to love them when I appear so different. Many of them are unfamiliar with Islam, and few have ever seen someone who is 'visibly Muslim' in charge of a classroom. But when they come to realize that my headscarf doesn't change my ability to teach pre-Algebra, or that I am passionate about read-aloud after recess, my headscarf becomes less relevant to their needs as fifth graders.

But what they don't know, what I can't often express, is that I love them because I am a Muslim teacher. It is my faith that grounds my love for every student I've ever been gifted to teach. And it's my faith that demands that I continue to love, continue to teach, in spite of the pain and exhilaration so familiar to those who fall in love in an elementary school classroom.

There is a saying in Islam that functions as a call to action when confronted with injustice. It demands that every Muslim work towards its disruption, even in the presence of evil itself. It demands our physical, emotional, and spiritual attention to strive for change. We are required to find our place to act, either through direct engagement, by calling out for justice, or by desiring the change we seek to see. This is not an option. Action is required of those who proclaim faith.

So, I choose love. After countless numbers of our nation's students are tormented with the traumatic realities of fearing the next mass school shooting, I choose love. After Columbine, after Sandy Hook, after Parkland, and, God willing, ending in Uvalde, I choose love. I am satisfied that I have many colleagues engaged in the political system to bring about sensible gun policies. And I am in awe of my associates who expertly support people through mental illnesses. There are leaders, activists, and scholars around us providing the intellectual direction we need to move forward. Because of them, I can choose to love.

My love is an act of resistance. I choose to love the students whom our systems have oppressed. My love, this act of resistance, calls me to act in ways that change teaching and learning to benefit all students. I speak to my students in ways that honor their rights to know their world, their community. I challenge school leaders to disrupt policies and practices that reproduce inequities. My love for my students calls me to fight against any forces that seek to harm them, I harness the power of love in my classroom.

My love is transformative. I am imaginative, I am bold, and I believe that there is another way that we can find togetherness if we only loved a bit harder. In my classroom, I seek to lead students to embody a transformative experience rooted in equity and justice for everyone. We make agreements, we demonstrate empathy, we work collectively. We transform our classroom into a place of healing, growth, and learning so that each of us can experience the love that is our right. It is the dream of the futurist that calls me to this work.

It is my faith that teaches me how to love, and it is my faith that demands that I pray for the capacity to love. Prayer is an act of resistance. Prayer is a call for transformation. Prayer calls upon a Higher Power to disrupt the injustices that persist around us. And prayer is a demonstration of faith. I will continue to pray for my students, and I will pray for the capacity to love them.

I no longer teach fifth grade. Today, my students are undergraduates aspiring towards a career in education or doctoral students deepening their expertise in education leadership. Although older and seemingly more mature than my former fifth graders, my postsecondary students still silently seek to understand how my headscarf will influence my pedagogy in my classroom. Some question my expertise, trying to uphold social stereotypes that Muslim women are uneducated. Others suspect I will use the classroom to proselytize, or that I will limit instruction to concepts ordained by my faith. Adult learners continue to hold biases against those whose faith identities appear visible, particularly those whose faith is in Islam.

I cannot and should not be called to erase the faith that teaches me how to love. If I cower into silence, yielding to widespread cultural biases against people of faith, particularly Muslims, then I become complicit in the secularization of this society. So, when someone asks me how I find hope when our nation is suffering under the trauma of mass shootings, I will reply by sharing that my faith gives me hope—my faith in God and my faith in humanity. When someone questions why I start each class by checking on the wellness of my students, I will name that loving people requires knowing people, and that my faith demands that I continue to love. And when colleagues are invited to observe my teaching, I will explain that I seek to teach in the manner of the prophets. I teach to transform lives, I teach so that others may be understood, I teach to love.

Our nation is in pain. Bullets are piercing the serenity of classrooms. Teachers and students are bleeding out in agony. There are those who will lead us out of this pain towards common sense legislation, policy changes, and healing resources. Many will try to envision not only what's possible, but what is necessary. But our imaginations will remain stunted if they are limited to secular ideas. Our range of possibilities will be restricted if we only consider what we have seen and experienced. This is the time for ingenuity, this is the moment for innovation. We need a solution that has yet to be fully realized in this nation. We need people of faith to help forge a path out of this darkness.

I will answer this call to action as a Muslim and as an educator. And I will bring the light of love as faith into this darkness.

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Faith Honoring and the Private Christian School Experience

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Douglas Stump, EdD

While teaching at a non-denominational Christian school, I once had a Catholic parent sit down with me and say, "the Bible teacher is calling Meg out on her Catholic practices. She came home in tears because she was afraid praying to saints was ruining her chances at salvation. We attend here because it's a Christian school, but Meg doesn't want to participate in class because she feels exposed and picked on. What do we do?" While I listened to Meg's mom lament, I realized that even though I had spent my entire career in Christian schools where I expected every child to experience the freedom of full faith expression, clearly this wasn't the case for all students. Why?

I will return to Meg's story toward the end of this chapter, but before we encounter her struggles, I want to first provide a framework for my journey within Christian schools. Nearly all of my working years have been spent in faith institutions. I have worked eighteen years as a teacher, mid-level administrator, and head of school in several private Christian schools, and I have worked an additional seven years for four universities, three of them with faith affiliations. The lens through which I view faith honoring in learning spaces is from the perspective of being part of such places—both as one who executed the mission and one who helped shape it. I view my vocation—whether it has been as a teacher, administrator or faculty member—as an expression of my faith—a calling. No single school has ever fully aligned with my own beliefs, but

I have sought ways to embody the values of the institution and look for places where the institutional mission and my own sense of faith expression overlap or complement one another.

When we consider what faith honoring as part of holistic learning can be, I think it is natural to first consider public schools, in part because the public school arena seems to many to be where comment and discussion regarding the inclusion or the absence of faith has occurred, but do private schools offer lessons on faith honoring? The history of independent schools in America demonstrate an established tradition of providing a rich culture of faith expressions within schools, even where there is no religious affiliation. Some independent schools lean into multiculturalism—including a multi-faith approach. Rather than eliminating faith or ignoring faith, the independent school model in some forms has seemed to embrace faith as part of a student's expression. But what about faith-based schools? Christian schools have experienced steady growth over the past half-century or so, and the demand for private schools seems to be driven by religion. Catholics and evangelical Protestants are the two groups significantly more likely to send their children to private schools. Christians who attend church weekly are also highly likely to choose the private Christian school experience (Sander 2005).

The most compelling case for choosing a private Christian education seems to be the high degree of importance of shared norms and values that families electing private school place on the school experience (Lunneblad et al. 2017). One study examined the reasons why parents may choose a faith-based education, and they found that parents articulated the desire to align their own faith values with the foundational values of the school. Parents want what is modeled at home and church to be mirrored at school. This alignment has led to parents placing a high value on several key elements of a private Christian school, including finding a school where faculty and staff openly confess and practice their faith and are held to a faith standard (as evidenced in a lifestyle statement or requirements for employment). Parents also highly scrutinized foundational statements such as mission, vision and educational philosophy statements and the curriculum (Francis 2005). As a teacher and administrator, I have spent nearly all of my K-12 experience within non-denominational (or inner-denominational) schools. My story has been defined by navigating within schools where parents choose to send their children specifically because faith is part of the education process, yet faith expression is not guaranteed, and faith silencing can and does still happen.

When I first started working in Christian education, it was at a school that identified as non-denominational but which was housed in a Baptist church.

The concept of inner or non-denominational teaching was one of the things that drew me to this new school. Up to that point in my life, I had attended churches from five separate Christian denominations: Methodist, Southern Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Community (or non-denominational). During my childhood my family bounced back and forth between Methodist and Southern Baptist. I had come to find some things I enjoyed in each—which had more to do with the community of believers than it did with doctrine. I selected a Baptist college in east Tennessee for my undergraduate experience but spent all four years attending the quiet, thoughtful intellectual Presbyterian church two blocks from campus. After college I attended a Presbyterian church, moved, then attended an Episcopal church, a Community church, a Methodist church, and another non-denominational church.

When I entered the world of teaching in a non-denominational school, I felt particularly called to non-denominational work. I preferred the term inner-denominational, as it spoke to the ways the school could support the variety of student faith experiences. I developed core guiding principles while in my first few years of teaching, which can be framed as follows.

In the essentials of faith we have unity, in the non-essentials freedom, with charity to all. This isn't mine. When I first began using it as a framework for my job, I thought it was accredited to St. Augustine and was Catholic in origin, but that turned out to be untrue, or at least there is no evidence that St. Augustine first said this. I had read somewhere that in fact it was Protestant and had originated with Meiderlin, which also may be false. Best I can tell we may have gotten this from Marco Antonio de Dormis, who seems to have written this while making the case to avoid torture at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition, but because I haven't ever found definitive scholarly research on the origins of this phrase, I won't offer a reference. Whoever said it, I liked this framework, and it seemed useful as a way of expressing peaceful unity among believers, and that made it very useful to me, a new teacher in a non-denominational school.

In the non-essentials we defer to each child's church and home experience. This takes some practice, but I learned over time that carefully phrased responses were a good way to support students and their different faith practices. A student asks, "Do you have to be dunked all the way into the water for your baptism?" I learned to say something like, "Well, some Christians practice emersion in water for Baptism, and other churches sprinkle water on your head. Some churches baptize you when you're an infant, others wait for you to decide that on your own. We have many churches and many different forms of baptism." In an inner-denominational setting, I felt it was important for the faculty to not

steer the students in any particular denominational direction or create conflict at home over what is practiced.

Armed with my multi-denominational background and with my core values of Christian school teaching, I felt particularly prepared to fully invest and thrive in the world of non-denominational Christian education. This was a world where full faith expression could happen—where holistic education was practiced at the highest level because a child's faith was integrated into every aspect of the school day. Students could and did pray at school, teachers led morning devotions and prayers, classrooms of students prayed before snacks and lunches, students attended weekly chapels, Bible was a course taught at every grade level, faith-minded field trips and local mission work were incorporated into student life, biblical worldview was the official perspective from which all subjects were taught and scripture anchored all curriculum, and every student packed an Operation Christmas Child shoebox every Christmas! Of course the non-denominational Christian school was the place where faith honoring could happen for all students. What could go wrong?

Within this private Christian education world, I have found that in the very place we expect full faith honoring to happen, it does not happen for all students for two critical reasons: there is no one-kind of Christian, and it seems within most Christian schools a dominant faith culture prevails.

There is no one kind of Christian

This is the paradox of Christian institutions in my opinion. I view participants within the Christian school (or any school) as individuals who experience faith firsthand—the realities of faith and faith expression are multiple and relative. In order to make meaning of the school experience and faith expression as part of that experience, students and parents rely on aspects of culture and their own believes to define reality. There are aspects of faith integration that are subjective—and yet—Christians know that all truth is God's truth, and we worship the same God and read the same scripture (sort of). The practice of faith is on the one hand *claiming the singular and shared belief in God* while on the other hand *existing in a world where everyone experiences faith differently*. Faith is socially constructed. There is no one kind of Christian, so is it even possible to find a school where what is taught, what the teachers believe and what your child is told all align?

I began to see this rich diversity of expression when I got to know parents well at that first small Christian school—and the diversity in expression and beliefs

was much more evident when I moved into the head of school role and began interviewing parents as part of the application process for admission to my school. Some parents were seeking the non-denominational school because of a better academic experience—smaller class sizes do make a difference in learning, and teachers unburdened by state standards can focus more attention on the students. Some parents expressed a desire for a counter-culture experience to avoid what they perceived as permissive behavioral attitudes at other schools or progressive cultural shifts. Some parents expressed a desire for not just faith expression but a very specific kind of faith expression that lined up precisely with where the family was on a multitude of ideas. Other parents just liked that their child could pray at school, had teachers who would pray with them, and they'd read the Bible. Beyond that, they didn't much care.

Every family who came to this school was different. Differences such as, how to read scripture, which version of scripture to read, how to pray, how salvation is defined, how should conflicts be reconciled—this fairly broad set of believes that never represented one way of thinking or practicing faith made up this small Christian school, and demonstrated with certainty that there is no one kind of Christian.

At Every Christian School a Dominant Faith Culture Prevails

When we think about what it means for a child to have a faith-honoring experience within schools, it seems reasonable to think that for a Christian family, sending your child to a Christian school is a sure-fire way to provide this experience. Having unity in the essentials of the faith—as de Dormis maybe wrote—is the easy part. Christians (for the most part) can at least without strife read and agree with the Apostle's Creed—*there is one God, creator of heaven and earth. His son Jesus is our Lord, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, was crucified, then after three days he rose from the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.* That second part from maybe de Dormis—*in the non-essentials we have freedom*—is the sticky part. But if you want faith honoring, freedom in the non-essentials of faith is critically important to the school experience, even the Christian school experience. Christians just disagree on so many, many things. By the numbers it's astounding. Just in the United States alone by some accounts we have over 200 denominations. Just in English there are about 100 full translations of the Bible and over 20 modern

English translations in use. The differences in translations is substantial, not merely semantic. So how do we express freedom in the non-essentials of our faith within a Christian school where even the text students are using for scripture is different than what they read at home? And who is prepared to explain the differences in a way that honors the faith of each student in the classroom?

I was standing in the work room at my first Christian school. I was going about my business—making copies and preparing for the classes I was teaching—when another faculty member walked in. She began a conversation with me about the Bible, and she asked me directly, "Do you believe the earth is 6000 years old?"

"No," I said. "Lots of good science tells us otherwise, in fact the earth is about 4.5 billion years old."

Her face tightened, and she said, "So you don't believe in every word of scripture, I cannot believe you are allowed to work here," and she walked out. She walked out angry with me for my belief about the age of the earth, but she was more angry about what she perceived as my biblical understanding. How could we have engaged in discussion in a way for her to understand my perspective? Where was the opportunity in the freedom to explore the deeply rooted ideas she expressed in such a short conversation? What was clear to me in this brief exchange was how many differences we had with each other—in substantial ways—yet both of us fully invested in the same faith.

First, we seemed to experience difference with regard to how we view scripture. She seemed to be saying that every word in the Bible should be read literally, but we have twenty-some English translations of the Bible, they are all different, so what does it mean to define scripture as literal, or even inerrant? How do we approach the English translations differently than the original texts in Hebrew and Greek? She mentioned the young earth theory, and I wondered how we could talk through that difference. From my perspective the young earth theory isn't biblical but rather man-made. A man (Henry Morris) did some math based on information in scriptures and declared the earth to be about 6000 years old. How could we have engaged science in such a way as to help each other understand our perspectives? We are unified in our belief that all truth is God's truth, but the reality is many Christians believe that the scientists who worked with iron and uranium and did some math and figured out the age of the earth is part of God's revelation to us. In this one example, the other faculty member and I did not enter into a place where we could hold each other up within those freedoms of thought while exploring our obvious differences. What was revealed was an expectation from this faculty member that all faculty at the school should hold the same beliefs with regard to these broad ideas of

scripture and science, and anyone outside of these beliefs was unqualified to lead. There was no opportunity for unity.

During my first head of school experience, my fifth grade daughter who attended my school came home one day and shared that Noah's flood happened because of plate tectonics. "What's that?" I asked. She said, "You know the flood, with Noah."

"Yes," I said.

"That happened because under the sea plates shifted and pushed all the ocean water over all the land, so it happened because of plate tectonics." She said.

I felt the need to investigate further for two reasons: first, as a place of learning we are obligated to provide the very best in science learning to our students, and second, it seemed like perhaps this teacher has strayed into taking a belief held by some Christians and was teaching it as if it were science. In the conversation with the teacher, I asked why she felt the need to provide a scientific explanation for Noah's flood, using information for which there was no scientific evidence. We sifted through what the scripture said and what we were inferring from that passage. "Do you think that the ancient Hebrew author of the book of Genesis had an understanding that the earth was a sphere?" I asked the teacher. We agreed that perhaps not, perhaps the Hebrew author was not aware of the Western hemisphere or even hemispheres, and that perhaps, when the author wrote that flood waters came upon the earth, the entire known region could have been flooded, but perhaps our modern concept of the earth was not what was intended. It was an interesting discussion, and as a result the teacher agreed she had some re-teaching to do, but the lasting takeaway for me was how there are multiple perspectives on something as so unifying to all Christians as the story of Noah's flood. The ark is a story retold in picture books, captured in animation and toys, and even represented in scale projects. The story of Noah unifies Christians as a shared story, and yet, within the faith, Christians can see this story in different ways. At a school where faith honoring is designed to be part of the mission and purpose of a school, something as commonplace as this Genesis story can mean that some students feel honored and supported by what they hear in school, where other students may feel they do not belong specifically because of how this story about Noah and the flood is told differently at church than what they hear in school.

What teachers say in classrooms—and the learning materials a school chooses—creates a dominant culture within a school. Even within a Christian school you have some students who feel very much a part of the dominant culture and the rest of the students are trying to navigate life on the outside of that culture. I was once at a professional association conference that provided

sales booths for Christian textbook publishers. I was at the social studies table flipping through a world history textbook when I ran across an illustration that depicted human beings alongside dinosaurs. In the picture, prehistoric humans clothed in animal skins were going about the work of the day—cleaning, herding, and farming. The farmer was tilling his soil, using what seemed to be a stegosaurus yoked to the plow. I assumed that that writer of this textbook was a young earther, and since that bound the author to the belief that that earth is only 6000 years old, humans and dinosaurs had to coexist, despite the scientific evidence that these two species were separated by about sixty-five million years. This text illustrated more than the conundrum of teaching history outside of factual evidence. It demonstrated the power of the dominant culture. Imagine your child attending a school that used this material, and as a parent you do not hold such beliefs but your child is being taught that humans and dinosaurs coexisted. What do you do? What does the child do? What are the consequences to challenging the teacher in the classroom? More importantly, what does this separation in culture do to a child's faith expression? It seems to me that the extent to which a child feels welcome to fully express who they are is a direct response to whether or not they align with the dominant culture.

There are current political or socio-political topics that can become part of the dominant culture within Christian schools: abortion, taxation, gun rights, scientific inquiry, race, party affiliation, social justice, welfare, global warming, stewardship of natural resources and so on. No one side of any of these issues are claimed within the Christian community as an exclusive position in a shared, essential way. Christians argue over these things all the time. However, institutions do develop a dominant culture, which is how we get to the place where the paradox of Christian schools exist: *in places designed for full faith expression where students can learn and follow Christ and observe faith openly, some students will feel that they have to hide who they are or deny their beliefs in some ways.*

This paradox creates an interesting question: is it better to learn in the public schools where it may feel as if faith is erased, or is it better to learn in a Christian school where at least some of your beliefs are represented? Many students within private Christian schools find ways to mask their faith so as not to be singled out. Remember Meg from the opening paragraph? Meg was one of two sisters from a Catholic family enrolled in the middle school. Meg was in the eighth grade and her sister (we will call her Alice) was in the sixth grade. Meg and Alice's mother had come to me to ask my advice on how to navigate a tricky situation. It seemed that in Bible class the teacher had started to pick apart the habits of faith as practiced by Catholics. At first, Meg began sharing parts of her faith as it fit in with the discussion in class. When she mentioned she was

Catholic, the teacher immediately challenged her worshipping of saints instead of only worshipping Christ, at one point challenging the child, "Isn't prayer to saints idolatry and a sin?" This was devastating to Meg, and she went home confused about why what she did at church was a sin. She went home concerned about her faith. Another time, the teacher called out Meg for worshiping Mary, and another time challenged Meg on her adherence to statements by the Pope. Meg and her mother had tried to navigate the growing conflict but nothing seemed to help, and Meg wanted less attention in class, not more. What this Bible teacher was doing was way outside the boundaries of the school's mission, but she had filled in gaps in curriculum and pedagogy with her own bias. I listened to Meg's mother's lamenting and advised her to talk with the school head. I was heartbroken for Meg, as no student should feel challenged in such a way. Meg's parents wanted a Christian education, and they knew coming into the school that they were outside the faith-dominant culture of the school, but this family invested a lot in the idea that the school was truly non-denominational. Their experience did not feel non-denominational, and as a result, Meg and her sister were hesitant to express their faith at school. They worked hard to quietly navigate getting through the eighth grade and on to high school somewhere else, hiding their faith in order to fly under the radar of pesky Bible teachers.

My experiences in private Christian schools confirmed for me that there is no way to create that perfect Christian school experience when it comes to our faith values. Even in places where full faith expression is the mission, some students are left out. My experiences have left me particularly curious about how full faith expression and faith honoring can be achieved in public schools. I find the following critical questions are issues every school should address as foundational work in achieving truly holistic teaching.

- What is the dominant religious culture of the community where our school resides? Is the prevailing culture around the school primarily Christian? Jewish? Muslim? Mormon? Is the community primarily protestant or Catholic? Is weekly church attendance prevalent within the community?
- What are other cultural and political indicators of the community? Does the community tend to vote red or blue, or is it fairly evenly split? Who are the major employers?
- What social/political topics tend to drive discussion within the community? Is there a primary industry that drives local politics?
- How are races and ethnicities represented within the community?

Once a school can begin to define the dominant forces within the surrounding community, the school can better define the makeup of the dominant forces of culture within the school. This level of awareness provides schools opportunities to both honor outlets for expression by the dominant culture but also define ways those outside of the dominant culture need space for expression, too. School board members, superintendents, school building leaders and teachers within these schools can then begin to understand at a deeper level how to create a vibrant, culturally responsive education for all students.

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A Refuge for the Faithful in Academia

Rehenuma Asmi, PhD

When I became a socio-cultural anthropologist, I realized that my life had been shaped by forces beyond my understanding. As a Muslim, I had always believed this to be the case, yet I had a different vocabulary for it, words like *qadr Allah* (the will of God) or *maktub* (already written/destined). Religion gave me one language for the unknown and intangible, and academia gave me another language for describing these same phenomena. Both create new worlds of possibility and shape and define the prisms within which new understandings can be developed and meaning can be made of phenomena. And both have their limits. Religion struggles with people's determination to develop unique and varied ways of creating meaning that are often contradictory, while science struggles with stabilizing phenomena that are inherently unstable—faith and belief in worlds invisible to the human eye. There are spaces of overlapping interest between religion and the science-based world of the academia, such as the scientific study of religion or the more abstract disciplines of literature, art, music, and even history. But there are also tensions because it is easy to turn and run into the comforting embrace of the certainty each side promises, disavowing the role that other plays in the world.

So, how can we find spaces in between that promise some refuge for those of us fascinated by both science and religion? Where do we go to ponder the meaning of the universe, while also studying its parameters and definitions? I

wish there were a roadmap for the faithful navigating the academia because I found so few spaces where the two could meet in mutual respect and understanding. This volume comes out of a dialogue with others who have similarly struggled to find these bridges (as Brown writes at the end of this book) and to create more possibilities for faith inclusion and faith honoring within the academia. To make the case for faith honoring, I would like to share why it was personally challenging to navigate the academia as a woman of faith and why I had to leave in order to find a place to be wholly myself.

My story of becoming an academic goes back to the development of my curiosity about cultures and the shifting world around me. I grew up in Bangladesh, after the war for independence led to the creation of a new state. Bangladesh's democracy represented its people, dreamy and fluid, like the many rivers that flow through the small country. My mother and father's families were both politically involved loyalists who wanted to stay under the occupying power of Great Britain. Their families were a part of the *Jaami* league, the group that wanted to stay with Pakistan, despite the country's lack of respect for the language and political aspirations of the Muslim Bengali population of what was at that time East Pakistan.

The war led to devastating physical and psychological tolls on my father's side of the family, where my father's many brothers were recruited in one way or another to help with the war efforts. Strangely enough though, at the same time as the war ravaged and remade the land in what would come to be known as Bangladesh, America was opening its borders to family reconciliation and lottery entry to the country that was in need of workers and interested in expanding its international reach. My father migrated to the United States, following his older sister, brother, and younger sister. While working jobs as a gas station attendant and dealing with depression at leaving his family and homeland behind, he struggled with the question of where his family should live. My mother traveled back and forth with me and my brother, five and two years old, respectively, for over two years, waiting for my father's decision about where they would live. In 1988, only two and a half years after immigrating to the United States, my father passed away suddenly of a heart attack. My mom was shocked. She didn't know what to do. People were telling her so many different things. Yet, she eventually decided to stay in the United States, because she wanted to fulfill the dream of a better life, and she thought it might be harder to be a widow dependent on her family for support. Culture, religion, gender, and family custom each played a role in her decisions, unwittingly.

Why is the story of my family's migration important to a conversation about faith and the academia? For many years, my mother and I relied heavily on our

faith traditions to explain the series of events that led to her decision to stay in America. She believed it was divine will and that she must accept God's plan for her, whether it was my father's death or her responsibility to do the right thing for her children. She told us often that having trust that God has a plan for us is just as significant as doing the right thing and being responsible to those around you. My mom navigated her extended family, which consisted of my father's two mentally ill siblings, one suffering from what we now know is bipolar disorder and another from alcoholism and schizophrenia, with her faith and her wits. She was very careful to be respectful of their role in our lives as surrogates of my father, but she strictly adhered to religious prescripts around prayer, fasting, tithing and following certain norms around etiquette. So, I watched my mom use the sword of her intellect and the shield of her faith to navigate and create a new life for herself—composed of close friends, good food and trying to do what she believed was the right thing. She was zealous in her scruples and morals and made sure to remind us of them regularly. But it was not until I entered the academia that I realized how my family story intersected with history, and I began to put pieces together of my childhood.

I found myself between the effects of trauma and war on my dad's side of the family and the purity and politics of my mom's family. Her father was a local judge, regional representative, and a deeply pious man, who didn't allow his daughters to leave the home without full *purdah* (face and body covering). The family reconciliation policy allowed so many of us to come to the United States at once. The burgeoning community of Bengalis and Muslims that would form social and economic networks to support one another. Through an academic's lens, my life could be explained as a result of social, political, economic, and religious forces that shaped my mother and father and eventually my brother and I to be raised as second-generation Americans.

Yet, academic explanations couldn't help diminish the intensity of xenophobic backlash that occurred in 2016, in my fourth year on the academic tenure track. As much as my mind understood the demographic and social changes sweeping the American landscape, my heart was broken by the individual choices made by Americans and fellow colleagues to stay silent while a large swath of the population chose a demagogue over a strong, talented, yet deeply disliked woman. I was shocked. Was this the country I grew up believing was a place of refuge and prosperity? And were those tasked with the role of upholding the intellectual integrity of this society actually acquiescing quietly to bigotry, sexism and xenophobia? Academic explanations were not enough.

It was during this time that I turned to my faith to help me understand why logic fails us sometimes, why no matter how much we think we know, the world

will always surprise us with new anomalies, inequities and injustices to resolve. Academic explanations could explain why things were happening, but it was more difficult to understand why they were happening *to me*. When it came down to it, faith helped me heal from the trauma of feeling alienated by the political realities of my society. And it wasn't through intellectual exploration, but rather embracing that matters of the heart that are often so hard to explain. I could expand my heart more easily than I could open my mind to a world in which someone was equating Syrian refugees to bags of poisoned skittles (Horowitz 2016). My faith gave me the capacity to forgive people who feared and hated people who looked like me.

This is not to say that academia was an unsafe place, but rather a disappointing one. It was difficult to find spaces to express the frustration I felt at the lack of political engagement, understanding and openness. People were in their silos, working in their departments, on their projects. The liberal arts college environment failed to create a faith-honoring climate, like the one described by Lindsey in this volume. It's true that I could have spoken up, but I was afraid to do so in a town that had Trump signs plastered on almost every yard. Fear won over expressions of solidarity with people of faith, and I continue to hold academia responsible for being unable to honor people of faith during those painful times.

Where then is the refuge for the faithful in academia? Can we make more spaces like the one this volume seeks to create; perhaps non-denominational, collaborative spaces for expressions of faith? Meditation and prayer halls? Open spaces that are designed for prayer and reflection, open call and response, tai chi, yoga, and Quaker circles? There are challenges to making such spaces, the most rampant being the tendency that religious faiths have to exclude others and the second the tendency to diminish or silence the role of faith in people's lives. But if there were intentional documents guiding such spaces and the forms of expression that are possible within them, could we see not just a refuge, but an oasis of calm, peace, and tranquility created for people who want to express their spiritual selves within secular enclaves? I think and hope so for a new generation of students who need our support as they grapple with greater tensions over political and social definitions of belonging and identity making.

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Suspending Belief and Disbelief

Robert A. Rees, PhD

> Belief is both prize & battlefield, within the mind & in the mind's mirror, the world.
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> —David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

When I was at UCLA in the eighties, I had the privilege of organizing four high-level exchanges between writers from China and the United States, two of which took place in each country. At one of these conferences, I was engaged in a conversation with Kurt Vonnegut and Allen Ginsburg (two writers whose works I had taught in my literature courses) in which Vonnegut, on learning that I was a Mormon (Latter-day Saint), inquired as to my belief about the Book of Mormon, a text purporting to be the record of a group of Israelites who emigrated to the New World in the sixth century BCE. Having been a serious student of the book, including of the scholarship by both apologists and critics, I responded that I considered it an authentic scriptural history. Ginsburg asked incredulously, "This is believed?" which I interpreted as, "How could anyone seriously believe such a thing?"

I did my undergraduate work at Brigham Young University, one of the most religiously conservative universities in the United States, where my faith was seldom challenged. I then did my graduate work at the University of Wisconsin, one of the most liberal, secular universities in the country, where I found I often

had to defend my religious convictions. In some ways that was helpful because it forced me to examine my beliefs and, therefore, to develop a more mature and rational faith, one based on spiritual experience as well as vigorous inquiry, reason, and thoughtful dialogue. It also led me to become a scholar of religion, both of my own and others. After teaching at several public universities, I now teach at a religious university, Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, where my colleagues and students represent the religions of the world.

We live in a skeptical secular world, one in which religion is under constant siege. There are reasons for this, of course, some resulting from people of faith doing and saying things in the name of religion that alienate even the most open-minded seeker of truth. When faith is used as a weapon or when it leads to violence, exclusion, exceptionalism, or pride, reasonable people can be excused for questioning its virtue and value. There are many things claimed in the name of faith that cannot be justified by a thoughtful heart or honest ponderings of the mind. This does not, however, justify the hostility to religion that one often encounters in the world, including in schools and universities.

It is common for students and teachers/professors of religious persuasion to experience skepticism, discrimination and even hostility regarding their religious beliefs and devotional practices. Although such attitudes are often subtle or veiled, they are, nevertheless, real. In a class on Modern Moral Problems I taught at UC Santa Cruz, I discovered that, unbeknownst to me, some students who discovered that I was a Mormon made false assumptions about me based on stereotypes about what Mormons believe. I took the occasion in a subsequent class both to explain why I did not fit such a stereotype and to discuss the moral implications of stereotyping. In the same class, one student confessed to me that she was considering becoming a Catholic nun but didn't feel safe disclosing such information to her classmates.

As Fulbright Professor of American Studies in Lithuania in the 1990s immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, I found myself among faculty and students who had grown up in a culture that was very hostile to religion, one in which the Soviets suppressed and even punished those who openly practiced their religion. The Soviets also turned some churches into museums of atheism.

During the times I spent in the Baltics, I was not surprised to find that at times I was the subject of gossip based on my religion, some of which was likely influenced by stereotypes about Mormons published in the *Lithuanian Encyclopedia*. For example, on a visit to Estonia, I read an article in the newspaper that claimed Mormon missionaries laboring in the country were trying to seduce young women to go to Utah and become their polygamous wives! I met with the editor of the newspaper in which this article had been published to

point out to him the slanderous nature of this article and to give him my contact information as a resource for any further coverage of the Church in Estonia.

The world is filled with an abundance of things that are believable and unbelievable, of things that are provable and unprovable, of things that seemingly are too true to be doubted and yet are doubted by millions and too false to be believed and yet are believed by millions. For some, "seeing is believing," and for others, "believing is seeing." There are those whom we tend to label "gullible" because they seem too willing to believe and those we call skeptics because they seem unwilling to believe anything. And yet, most of us have the illusion that the things we believe, whether provable or not, are true and that many of the things other people believe are not. I say all of this as an illustration of a persistent problem in education, including in higher education—the propensity of many (teachers, professors, and fellow students) in schools and in the academia to dismiss and diminish people of faith, to judge them as somehow not being as educated or as enlightened as those who drink exclusively from secular and rational fountains.

The fact is, everyone believes something, even if it is nothing! By that I mean that disbelief is as much a choice as belief. Some look at the universe and all we know of it strictly through the lens of science and conclude that it can be explained solely as the result of natural evolutionary processes, which we do not completely understand but nevertheless accept as real. Others looking at the same evidence, conclude that a world of such beauty, complexity, and mystery must be due, at least in part, to some superior intelligence which they call God or some other name. Some, seeing disorder and chaos, a world in which, to use Yeats's words, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold [and] / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world," conclude that we are subjects of irrational and random forces. Others, believing in the possibility of divine influence and even intervention, have confidence that there is a moral order to the universe. Which is true? It depends on what one believes and decides to take as evidence.

A dramatic example comes from an experience I had with a student in one of my literature courses in Lithuania where I was serving as Fulbright Professor. We were walking across campus one day having a conversation about religion in which she claimed to be a confirmed atheist who gave no credence to anything supernatural. A few minutes later, a black cat dashed in front of us. She jumped back, reached out her hand to hold me back, apparently in an effort to save me from some misfortune, and made some gesture, ostensibly to invalidate or limit the force of such a bad omen. As one commentator observes, "A country with a long pagan history and rich folklife, Lithuania has a wealth of age-old superstitions that are still in practice today" (Van Reed n.d.). The irony is that

the student saw no discrepancy or contradiction between what she claimed to believe and her actions.

Part of the challenge is that since the Enlightenment, which rejected the superstitions, supernatural experiences, and emotional excesses of religion, we have had a tendency, at least in the West, to privilege our logical and intellectual capabilities over those of our emotional and intuitive capabilities. Yet, both are at the same time fallible and indispensable to being fully human. Another way to put this is that modern epistemology tends to focus much more on the brain than the heart, more on our cognitive than on our limbic processes. Nevertheless, as Pascal famously said, "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know . . . We know truth, not only by reason, but also by the heart" (Molinier 2012).

Both religion and science can be blind (and blinding!). In an article titled, "Suspending Disbelief," Linda Stone (2013), a contemporary visionary thinker, states:

> Everything we know, our strongly held beliefs, and in some cases, even what we consider to be "factual," creates the lens through which we see and experience the world, and can contribute to a critical, reactive orientation. This can serve us well. For example: Fire is hot; it can burn me if I touch it. These strongly held beliefs can also compromise our ability to observe and to think in an expansive, generative way.

Stone then cites the examples of three scientists—Barbara McClintock, Stanley Pruisner and Barry Marshall—all of whom made important scientific discoveries that were rejected by their respective scientific communities in spite of the evidence supporting them. According to Stone, McClintock, who discovered "jumping genes," "was ignored and ridiculed, by the scientific community, for thirty-two years before winning" the Nobel Prize in 1984. Prusiner was also widely criticized and ridiculed for his prion theory years before he won the Nobel Prize for it in 1982. And Marshall, who theorized that stomach ulcers were caused by bacteria rather than acid and stress (the prevailing theory at the time), lamented, "Everyone was against me" (ibid.). In making a distinction between what she identifies as projective as opposed to reactive thinking, Stone says, "Progress in medicine was delayed while these 'projective thinkers' persisted, albeit on a slower and lonelier course." Stone adds, "When we cling rigidly to our constructs, . . . we can be blinded to what's right in front of us. Can we support a scientific rigor that embraces generative thinking and suspension of disbelief? Sometimes science fiction does become scientific discovery" (ibid.).

"The tragedy of the Western mind," according to Robert Nadeau and Menas Kafatos, "is that we have lived since the seventeenth century with the prospect that the inner world of human consciousness and the outer world of physical reality are separated by an abyss or a void that cannot be bridged or reconciled" (Nadeau and Kafatos 1999). In his *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, the late Distinguished Professor of Zoology and Geology at Harvard and the author of numerous books on science, argues that science and religion represent what he calls NOMA (non-overlapping magisteria, or domains of authority and teaching). As Gould says, "The magisterium of science covers the empirical realm: what the universe is made of (fact) and why does it work this way (theory). The magesterium of religion extends over questions of ultimate meaning and moral value" (Gould 1999). It would be helpful if teachers were to help students understand this distinction.

Gould suggests that, as long as science and religion keep to their respective magisteria and respect one another, dialogue is possible. I propose that those magisteria may not really be as non-overlapping as Gould suggests, and that, in the realms of new science and quantum physics, there may be space where both empirical scientists and believers can find common ground. In actuality, there are very few absolute, settled truths in either science or religion, and one is wise in both realms to keep an open heart and an open mind. I tend to distrust four kinds of people—those who never think and those who only think and those who never feel and those who only feel!

All of us, no matter our education, intelligence, or experience are limited in our ability to reason and make sense of the world. In a way, we are always mediating the world and our experience in it, translating it through the various lenses of heart, mind, body, and imagination. In a sense, it is the nature of our cognitive and emotional processes that we all construct our individual realities. As John O'Donohue stated in the April 2007 issue of *The Sun*: "All knowing has an imaginative element in it. We don't see the world as it is at all. Our consciousness always co-creates everything we see. So, what you are seeing is not just out there, on its own. You are always seeing it through the lens of your own thinking. Therefore, you are co-creating the world, whether you like it or not." Such a conclusion should leave us humble about how little we really know, and how dependent on others we are for making sense and meaning.

I remember a conversation I had with some very bright students during my first years of teaching at UCLA. They wanted to know what I believed and why. I recounted the trajectory of my religious life from the godless world of my first decade to discovering religion in my early teens and the evolution over the years

to a mature Christian faith and my particular Latter-day Saint/Mormon expression of it. When I finished, one student asked, "How as a university professor can you believe such things?" I replied spontaneously, "If the world I have just described to you is not real, then it makes me question the reality of everything else in my life." Which reminds me of what Emerson wrote in his journal (1833):

> Men seem to be constitutionally believers and unbelievers. There is no bridge that can cross from a mind in one state to a mind in the other. All my opinions, affections, whimsies are tinged with belief—incline to that side. All that is generous, elegant, rich, wise, looks that way. But I cannot give reasons to a person of a different persuasion that are at all adequate to the force of my conviction. Yet when I fail to find the reason, my faith is not less.

Our job as educators is to help students know that they do not need to live solely in the rationally dominated world that characterizes the lives of many academics, that it is possible (even essential) for them, if they choose, to integrate and balance faith and reason, to, as it were, carry water on both shoulders in their pursuit of truth and meaning. We can help them by teaching them, as St. Peter says, to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15). We can do this by honoring their choice to believe and by giving them examples of those who have successfully integrated science and religion, the rational and the spiritual. An excellent example is Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, leader of the Human Genome Project and President Biden's science advisor (who is an unapologetic devoted Christian). There are many men women throughout history who have found the life of the spirit as indispensable as the life of the mind.

As a poet and teacher of the humanities, I find it helpful to share with students stories, poetry and other imaginative expressions, including of art and music, that communicate the riches of aesthetic and spiritual experiences in ways that don't require logic or verbal persuasion. For example, the following chapter, "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn," from Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (http://www.literaturepage.com/read/windinthewillows-77.html), recounts the episode when Rat and Mole set off in a boat in search of Portly, a missing otter child. As they search, Rat hears an unexpected fragment of music, "so beautiful and strange and new" that it completely arrests his attention but is then lost on the wind. As soon as it has vanished, he has a longing for it and laments, "Since it was to end so soon, I almost wish I had never heard it. For it has roused a longing in me that is pain, and nothing seems worthwhile but just

to hear that sound once more and go on listening to it forever." Recognizing it as a gift of grace, he wishes that his friend Mole could hear it too. At first all Mole hears is "the wind playing in the weeds and rushes," and then the music comes again, and he listens. Grahame writes, "breathless and transfixed, he stopped rowing as the liquid run of that glad piping broke on him like a wave, caught him up, and possessed him utterly." Turning to Rat who had heard it first, Mole "saw the tears on Rat's cheeks, and bowed his head and understood" (Grahame 1989).

The Reverend Phillip Channing Ellingsworth (n.d.), Rector of St. Stephen's Church in Belvedere, California, says,

> When you hear something like what Rat and Mole heard, what do you call it? Rat called it music that struck him dumb with joy, and at the same time sent tears running down his cheeks. As for me, I would call it the sense that not the world, certainly, not existence, but whatever it is that existence itself comes from, the power or ground out of which our lives spring, wishes us well, you and me, wishes to restore us to itself and to each other. It is the power that ultimately all theology and worship is about.

I want students to understand that most of us have a desire if not a compulsion to look beyond the obvious and beneath the surface, to find meaning where it seems there is none. As the British writer John Berger observes, "Imagining constellations did not of course change the stars, nor did it change the black emptiness that surrounds them. *What it changed was the way people read the night sky*" (Berger 1984).

In her poem, "On Finding a Bird's Bones in the Woods," Lisel Mueller (1960) imagines Einstein with cold scientific scrutiny

> . . . gazing
> at the slender ribs of the world,
> examining and praising
> the cool and tranquil core
> under the boil and burning
> of faith and metaphor . . .

But then she imagines that, not content with such a scientific reduction, Einstein has the impulse to include as well in his exploration "the boil and burning / of faith and metaphor" in order to clothe the bare bones of the world in all that he has known of its beauty, complexity, and wonder:

> even he, unlearning
> the bag and baggage of notion,
> must have kept some shred
> in which to clothe that shape,
> as we, who cannot escape
> imagination, swaddle
> this tiny world of bone
> in all that we have known
> of sound and motion.

Thus, Mueller imagines that even Einstein, the most revolutionary scientific thinker of the modern age, setting aside examination, cognition, calculation and theory, "must of kept some shred" of the imagination to make the world whole again, just as the poet uses her imagination to clothe the dead bones of a bird she has found in the woods in all that she has "known / of sound and motion," so that, like Yeats's golden bird of Byzantium, it can sing "Of what is past, or passing, or to come" ("Sailing to Byzantium," https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43291/sailing-to-byzantium).

We tend to operate in the world as if we have all the truth necessary to live a good and successful life, and to a large extent that is true. But what we do know should leave us stricken by how little we know. As he was writing his multi-volume *Story of Civilization*, the historian Will Durant confessed, "I know no more of the ultimates than the simplest urchin in the street." The problem with believing, either as religionists or rationalists, that we have all the truth is that it leaves us closed to the truth we do not have. As William James says, "The greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths. Truths have once for all this desperate instinct of self-preservation and of desire to extinguish whatever contradicts them" (James 1907), or, as John Cage says, "We learn nothing from the things we know" (Kehl 1983, 40) Therefore, one of the greatest gifts we can give to students (and one of the virtues we can model for them) is comfort in admitting the limits of their knowledge and experience, which should excite them about the infinite adventure of learning that will last the rest of their lives.

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How the Wise Speak: Faith Erasure and a Hindu Pedagogical Model for Teaching Religious Difference

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Vineet Chander, JD, and Ami Chander, MA

While growing up and attending public schools in New Jersey, I often felt like I was two people living parallel but disconnected lives. One Ami existed on weekdays during the school year. She had a few close friends, did well in her schoolwork, and participated in a handful of co-curricular activities; still, most of her teachers and classmates knew little about her. Naturally shy and quiet, she tried to blend in with the rest of the class. Her brown skin and naturally curly hair marked her as one of the few kids of South Asian origin. But she tried to dress like the white students and kept her thin kaṇṭhi *mālā, a necklace made from sacred* tulsi *wood and a pendant of Lord Krishna, tucked into her shirt. The few times a teacher mentioned Hinduism—usually in reference to polytheism or the caste system—Ami would feel frustrated and misunderstood, and she would squirm in her seat self-consciously.*

But after school and on weekends, another Ami came to life. This Ami removed her shoes as soon as she entered her home and bowed her head before the family shrine. She helped her mom cook elaborate vegetarian feasts to serve out to guests at the devotional gatherings (called satsangs*) their family hosted on the first Saturday of each month, and she helped make the flower garlands that they would respectfully drape on the guest teachers—usually shaven-headed monks in bright orange robes. This Ami looked forward to Sunday evening visits to the temple, where she would meet her closest friends at youth group meetings. Some Sundays she would ask to be dropped off earlier so that she could help polish the silver paraphernalia used in the*

rituals; polishing while sitting in the quiet temple room, which always smelled of sweet incense and sandalwood, felt like a meditation and helped her feel connected to the worship that happened there. She was still shy and quiet, but occasionally she took on small roles in the dramas the youth group put on, based on exciting stories from epics like the Rāmāyana *or* Māhābhārata. *This Ami saw others like her and felt seen by them.*

It was only many years later, first as an undergraduate in an education program and then as a graduate student, that I began to process how deeply this "double life" experience impacted me. I learned about the idea of a divided-self and could appreciate the value of integration and intersectionality. I began to realize that I had internalized the idea that success—or merely survival—at school required me to reject a significant part of who I was and try to pass as what I was led to believe was "normal" instead. Learning more about the reality of the "hidden curriculum," I understood that I had been marginalized and experienced invisibility. I realized that not only was I not given the space to express my faith and cultural identity as a Hindu—it was, in fact, erased. (Ami Chander's personal narrative.)

We chose to begin this chapter with Ami's personal narrative because we believe that educators and students step into the classroom as whole people, carrying histories of the affirmation or erasure of their identities with them. We speak here as professionals in the contexts of elementary education and higher education, working as a teacher and a college administrator chaplain respectively, but we also speak as Hindu-Americans, drawing from our own lived experiences. And over the years we have heard similar stories of silencing from the students we work with. Again and again, these children and young adults would report back the familiar themes of not being fully seen, of being forced to code-switch, and of feeling pressured to keep vital aspects of their identities outside of the classroom.

As the other essays in this volume suggest, faith silencing is generally problematic. We would like to emphasize here that this sort of erasure is, in our experience, particularly detrimental to students of color, the children of immigrants, and those who identify with traditions outside of Christian normative frameworks. When we tell these students, explicitly or implicitly, to leave their faith identities outside of the educational sphere—a space that is, to them, representative of mainstream society, power structures, authority, and respectability—we convey to them that these aspects of their identity are undesirable or incompatible with their learning. These students, already saddled with the task of navigating multiplicity and liminality in their lives, thus internalize their faith identity as a weakness to be suppressed or something shameful to be hidden

from view. In fact, we remind them of their otherness, underscoring and intensifying the tropes of "outsider" and "perpetual foreigner" for them. Faith silencing here can create a false dichotomy in which the student is forced to choose: at school, she can either be a whole person, or be "normal"—but not both.

We have been fortunate to work in school districts and institutions that value diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. We have benefited greatly from trainings and professional development opportunities designed to help educators incorporate DEI frameworks into our pedagogy. Unfortunately, however, we have noticed that too often *religious* diversity is conspicuous by its absence in the DEI frameworks that we have come across. Why might this be? In discussing this with colleagues, we have found that many fear inadvertently offending others while trying to teach about religious traditions they know little about. Or they might believe that religion is too private and personal to engage with. Some even feel that teaching *about* religion is synonymous with teaching or proselytizing *on behalf of a particular* religion, and is thus impermissible in the public sphere. It is simply easier and safer, they conclude, to "keep religion out of it." While we can sympathize with the intention behind this stance, we find its impact deeply troubling.

We see the faith silencing model as analogous to offering "color-blindness" as a response to racism or "don't ask/don't tell" as a way of preventing anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination. At one time these measures may have been necessary correctives to gross injustices; arguably, they worked in the context of their times to move the needle towards greater understanding and inclusivity. Nonetheless, today we recognize that they are inherently limited approaches, reflecting the barest minimum standard of care. Moreover, we have discovered that these measures may inadvertently harm the very folks they are designed to protect—by robbing the voices of those most in need of being heard. Likewise, when educators strip the classroom of any acknowledgment of faith, they rob students' agency and ability to present themselves. And, as we have both experienced for ourselves and observed in the students around us, this stance is especially punitive to religious minorities like Hindu-Americans who have precious few opportunities to have their faith seen and understood to begin with. Ostensibly equal, policies that inhibit the expression of faith are anything but equitable.

Consider, for example, the question of whether or not to acknowledge religious holidays. An educator may earnestly claim that, for fear of offending or alienating anyone, he will simply not engage with religious holidays in his classroom, across the board. What is the impact of this decision on his students of different faiths? His failure to acknowledge or celebrate any aspect of Christmas might be disappointing to some of his Christian students, but it will likely not

define their experience of the holiday. They need only walk a block or two down the street from the school to see streets lined with Christmas trees and decor; they need only go to the local mall to hear the sound system blaring Christmas carols; they will be treated to a host of Christmas-themed television shows and movies when they flip on a TV or log in to a streaming service. When that same teacher refuses to acknowledge Diwali, however, his Hindu students have a very different lived experience. They are reminded of the marginality—"weirdness" even—of what their families are doing in their homes as they light festive oil lamps, sing devotional songs and recount sacred stories, or exchange sweets. They come to believe that one of the most important days of the entire year on their calendars simply doesn't exist in the respectable mainstream spaces around them, and perhaps they conclude that their faith and culture are of little value in "the real world."

In a few years, these Hindu students may find themselves at college having internalized that Diwali is not even worth *talking about*. And so they fail to realize that they can ask for an extension on a paper or request that an exam be postponed so that they can properly observe the holiday. They hesitate to ask that a group meeting date be changed to accommodate them. They are likely to suffer in silence, carrying the same burden that they have always had to shoulder. They may even justify it to themselves as something that *all* college students have to go through. But is that accurate? After all, at any American college or university—public or private, religiously affiliated or secular—their Christian classmates will never have to worry about an exam or meeting being scheduled on Christmas Day. This is not accidental; it is Christian privilege in action. Removing religion from the classroom does not create a level playing field, it just makes that privilege all the more pronounced.

The story of Hindu students and Diwali we offer here is not merely hypothetical. As an elementary school teacher and a college administrator, we have witnessed it—numerous times—in both of those contexts. And as Hindus born and raised in America, we have experienced it ourselves, firsthand. While it has been frustrating, it has also convinced us of the need for alternative models of diversity, inclusion, and equity that approach faith as something to be engaged with rather than erased.

We have found the seeds of one such model, perhaps, from within our own Hindu tradition. A famous aphorism attributed to the *R̥g Veda* (believed to be the oldest known extant religious text) reads as follows:

एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति—*ekam sat, vipra bahuda vadanti*
Truth is one; the wise speak of it in many ways.

The verse is often exegeted to emphasize Hinduism's simultaneous assertion of a singular universal truth (or God) and its embrace of pluralism and inclusivity in terms of approaches to access that truth. Here, however, we would like to suggest that, beyond its theological use, the aphorism might also help us to develop a pedagogical model. We find it significant that it correlates wisdom with an ability to engage constructively with difference. There is a way to read this verse, we believe, as defining the truly wise (*vipra*) as those who respond to diversity (*bahuda*) not by attempting to flatten or erase it, but rather by discussing it (*vadanti*). It seems to suggest that we cannot truly experience a unified truth, or shared reality (*ekam sat*) until we are willing to do that. To appreciate the universal, we must honor the particulars; to enjoy true equity, we must acknowledge diversity and model true inclusion. We thus see this verse as an imperative to engage in pedagogy that fosters a safe environment in which we can *talk about* our faith-based and secular identities—not despite our differences, but in celebration of our differences. Such a model would entrust educators to be wise holders of space and would empower students and parents to be representatives, advocates, and conversation partners.

We have come to deeply believe in honoring the wholeness of our students' personhood. A core of our philosophy of education is that to teach children effectively we must ensure that they are *seen* in every facet of their identities— and this includes their religious and secular-ethical identities. We are committed to the principle that our kids don't have to leave these vital parts of who they are at the front door to "get by" in school—rather, we want them to feel empowered to bring these aspects of their identities and experiences into our shared learning space. Moreover, we truly believe that by doing so, along with feeling validated and seen in their own faith identities, these students can enrich one another's understanding and appreciation for the religious "other." As educators, we seek to hold space in which students can express what matters to them and why and also learn to appreciate how their neighbors, peers, and strangers make meaning.

We began this essay by drawing from our own experiences growing up. At the time, we often felt like we had to keep key aspects of our identities completely separate from our lives at school. We feared that these aspects alienated us from everyone else or marked us as weird; we saw them as weaknesses. Today, as educators and parents, we see those parts of us as gifts and strengths that add value to our workplaces and home. We are Hindu-Americans; people of color; the American-born children of immigrants. We have experienced marginalization and discrimination; we are also aware, however, that in some spheres, we enjoy privilege, wield influence, and bear the burden of responsibility. We carry all of

these parts of ourselves with us, and we believe that they equip us to contribute to the learning communities of which we have been blessed to be a part.

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Crisis of Faith

V Efua Prince, PhD

I remember folks calling the men who hijacked the planes on September 11, 2001 cowards. I did not know what kind of thing had to happen in one's mind to make executing such an action fathomable, although it seemed to me that they were utterly convinced of the righteousness of their actions—which is a type of faith, albeit one that walks hand in hand with strong political motivations. Their conviction troubled me because something about their rigidity reminded me of the holiness, hell-fire-and-damnation sect of my own faith tradition. Faith is a complicated matter.

My own faith was compelling enough to determine whom I would marry, where I would live, the places I would work, how and with whom I would worship. But I am certain that, if my God ever told to me to raise a knife to kill my son as he told Abraham to do to Isaac, I would never have encountered the ram in the bush. My faith would falter under the weight of a more primal code. I did not aspire to the kind of faith that called a father to wield a knife against his son or one that roused people to commit themselves for months to learning to fly an airplane with the expressed purpose of weaponizing an airliner filled with hundreds of people. People who had husbands, wives, sons, daughters, friends, coworkers, students, parents, grandparents, neighbors—still breathing human beings. Damning the unwitting passengers along with themselves and many others to certain death.

I remember: on that day I was teaching. It was a Tuesday. It must have been an 8:00 am class. The class met in a small room in a wing of the building that was shaped like a drum. There were no windows and the room had inconveniently placed square columns. The building was constructed around the time when architects were apparently inspired by crypts or by mall parking garages. The class was ENG 300 Literary Criticism and Theory, wherein we picked literature apart, then put it back together in a way that revealed its inner workings. We had been at it for a while when the door opened to reveal a quirky young woman with black hair, perfect caramel skin, and dark round eyes, whose proportions might have been determined by an anime artist. She entered and sat in a front seat by the pole. Her eyes ready and curious.

I thought she was trying to locate herself in the discussion. I was afraid she'd want to speak. She was the kind of student who liked to speak in class, but who tended to say the most unexpected things. It was often difficult for us to draw connections between the things she said and what the rest of us were talking about. She was usually late. On this day, she was very late, and I hoped she understood that meant she should listen, rather than try to contribute to the conversation. Then hesitantly, she raised her hand.

I sighed that kind of sigh my father used to make when he anticipated that the words about to come out of my mouth would annoy him. But this was not my child. And I was not her father. So I nodded to her, indicating that she should speak. "I don't know if you know this," she began, and I was certain then whatever she was referring to I would not know, "but a plane has hit one of the twin towers." See what I mean. You never know what kind of crazy thing will come out of this young woman's mouth. How was I supposed to respond to that kind of provocation?

Then another student several seats away replied, "No. My mother works there." She said the words matter-of-factly, like no, that cannot be so; your logic is flawed because my mother works there. It is simply not possible that a plane can fly into a building where my mother works. So there. Check your facts and revisit your claim.

Looking back, over a career which has now spanned more than two decades, that marked the moment I became a Teacher. In fact, I come from a family of teachers. My family was like the Tribe of Issachar who were laborers and scholars. In my generation, teaching had finally become a profession, but it had long been a blessing which flowed through my bloodline. My father was a teacher, though I am not sure if he has ever recognized that part of himself. He retired from the Metropolitan Police Department, but any important thing that he knew, he spent a great amount of care making sure we would know it too. My

father taught us trades. My mother taught us scriptures, lined up on a yellow sofa in the living room. I learned well. By the time I got to college, I could handle a drill or change the oil in my car as readily as I could manage biblical allusions in John Milton, Shakespeare, or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. And each of us, my brothers and me in our turn, grew up to teach.

By September 11, 2001, I had been teaching for some time already, but that moment when the wide eyed-student carried the news and the incredulous young woman replied, my faith and my vocation converged. Regardless of the veracity of the news which, given the source, I also questioned, there were at least two students before me in a peculiar distress—the one who bore the news and the one whose mother appeared at risk. And there were others, teetering on the edge of a ledge, as if the path we were traveling had unexpectedly and suddenly given way. We confronted a chasm, deeper and wider and more precarious than any of us had navigated before, and the situation required of me an immediate response.

I asked the young woman whose mother worked in the World Trade Center if she had a phone. She replied that she did not, so I gave her mine and excused her to make a call, just before a colleague knocked on the door to inform us that indeed, a plane had hit the World Trade Center, and a second plane had hit the second tower, and it was clear that the United States was under attack. I thanked the professor for informing us and asked him to keep us posted. I shut the door before turning back to my students.

"It's time to pray," I announced, "Anyone who will be offended by my praying can be excused, but I am a woman of faith and my faith is calling me to prayer, right here. Right now." No one left. I remember the expression on the face of one young man in particular. He had a long, narrow face and wore round black-framed glasses. He sat at the back of the room, looking more alert than I had ever seen him. His eyes seemed to plead with me like a kitten in want of milk. The image of his pleading eyes lingered in my mind as I bowed my head as much to distance myself from his pleading eyes as to find myself an altar. The long years of study, which had credentialed me for a position in this classroom, had also helped me understand that a desk is not an altar. And I saw nothing else which might substitute for one. So I went inside myself hoping to discover that I had, in fact, carried an altar in my heart.

I recalled the women at the church where I was reared, who had laid hands on me, and taught me how to call on God. Given the enormity of events, I could trust that they were already wailing at the wall. But they were not in the classroom with me on 9/11, and, although I could not see him with my lids so tightly shut, I knew that young man sat in the back with his eyes still pleading. And how

many other students? I was nearly desperate to not see and to be not seen in the way that I had only experienced in ecstatic moments while playing my emotions out on the piano or sometimes while dancing in an overcrowded room or, more often, while worshiping before the Throne of Grace. But I had none of those things readily available to me. No piano to play. No dance music. No sanctuary.

The oldest schools in this country were founded in churches, and their architectural design dictated practice. Little in the physical environment of this classroom encouraged intercession. In this way, faith is material, and the design of our world has become increasingly secular. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the World Trade Center towered above the steeples of St. Paul's Chapel and Trinity Church, which had distinguished the Manhattan skyline of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In ancient cities, the tallest edifices were places of worship. Look at a skyline to see wherein a society affixes value. Indeed, while the clock tower remains the university's iconic feature of the historically Black campus on which I stood, it is no longer the tallest building. The secular has long since displaced the sacred. Nevertheless, at a time when men were flying planes into edifices that represent the wondrous achievements of this nation, the perverse convergence of the secular and the profane left us dumbstruck and in need of a sanctuary. So I sought refuge in prayer.

Then suddenly, I felt myself wholly inadequate, rather than holy like those mothers who would comfort me at the altar. The altar where I learned to pray was located in a neighborhood where few of my erudite friends would dare to park their cars. My father had worked alongside the husband of the pastor to convert a house into a small church. It sat atop a hill in Anacostia, not too far from Frederick Douglass's historic house. The crack years during the 1980s, when Washington, DC was noted as both the seat of the democracy and the murder capital of the world, had taken its toll. Blight was rampant. We would go into those streets sometimes to evangelize and other times to pick up trash that polluted the ground. When we shared the Good News with those young men who were dealing on the corners, the church mothers would whisper, "Watch and pray."

I prayed aloud in that classroom, knowing that others were watching. Still I had not found an altar. The words stumbled off my lips while my soul pried at my locked chest. It had been sealed by a professionalism completely distinct from the standards by which my faith was measured. There might have been some among my students who had been raised in a congregation like the one in which I had come of age. If I had been called to pray in that congregation and my spirit faltered, then someone would encourage me—It's alright, tell God about it. Or they would call on the name of Jesus. And I would find strength there at

the foot of the cross. But if they were in that room, they did not make themselves known to me.

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How Studying Higher Education Helped Me Find My Solvent

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Jonathan Schwab, EdD

Modern Orthodox Judaism seems like an attempt at the impossible: the mixing of traditional, millennia-old religious practice with full-throated participation in modern culture. The challenges of this mission were apparent and yet accommodated at Yeshiva University, the faith-based Modern Orthodox Jewish college I attended. Religious practice was an unquestioned element of everyday undergraduate life. While my friends elsewhere scrambled to schedule courses that would not interfere with prayer times—or began to miss the occasional prayer—there were no classes during prayer times at YU, and no prayers during class times. Keeping a strict kosher diet was not hard when the cafeteria exclusively served kosher food. Nor did I stand out from my peers on the all-men's campus; in my sixty-person Organic Chemistry lecture, the only person not wearing a *yarmulka*, a traditional head covering, was the professor. My mornings were devoted to Talmud study and Hebrew Bible, inviolable time set apart from "secular studies," and in afternoons I studied the same literature and science that I assumed all other college students were learning. To me, it was the ideal college experience: to participate in everything I wanted to, I never had to sacrifice on either my committed practices or strongly held beliefs.

The brightest moments of this idyllic time were those spent discussing out what it meant to be Modern Orthodox beyond this "dual curriculum." The university's motto was "Torah U'Madda," meaning "Jewish tradition and general

knowledge," and my peers and I put in many hours of study to further both of these domains intellectually. But we would also sit at meals and in dorm rooms, discussing what it meant to hold interests and identities in both traditional religion and modern culture. Studying literature gave me a method of critical analysis that incorporated critical perspectives, but chemistry gave me the language to discuss my complicated identity. I thought and spoke in terms of chemical mixtures: were Modern Orthodox Jews suspensions, with the particles of one identity distributed but not dissolved in the other? Or were we solutions, with two substances chemically combined and bound in a way that produces something with changed properties in the whole?

When I graduated from Yeshiva and moved from being a student to an administrator on campus, I wanted to find a balance between what still felt like two different identities, their distinctions growing stronger. Many of my contemporaries left to pursue graduate school or professional opportunities in what we called "the real world," outside the somewhat insular Modern Orthodox community. To me, their lives seemed bifurcated: from 9 to 5, they were accountants, doctors, or therapists. Even as they ate their kosher lunches and did not come to work on Jewish holidays, their professional identities seemed wholly apart from any religious one. In the evenings and especially on Shabbat, the day of rest when work is forbidden, they would be more fully ensconced in prayer, Torah study, and celebrations. I, though, could not imagine leaving the stronghold of campus: unsure where I fit in, I continued the same conversations in the cafeteria, even as I grew farther apart in age from those across the table.

Through working in the offices of Undergraduate Admissions and then Residence Life at YU, I stayed within the bounds of this community. But I slowly ventured out to the broader world of higher education, attending professional conferences, gatherings where, in contrast to my home campus, I felt that I stood out as the only one of my kind. I was surprised when it was easy to work with organizers to arrange kosher food, or when they were willing to change a session so it could be on Sunday and not conflict with Shabbat. I had always expected—and occasionally been warned—that the world outside of my community would be harsh, judgmental, inflexible, but though I sometimes did encounter that, I was mostly met with welcome and accommodations. Easing myself into professional networks, presenting our practices at Yeshiva, and making connections with colleagues from other campuses, I stopped assuming that they looked at me and saw only a *yarmulka*. I saw what my former classmates had—that I could have two identities, a life decanted into differing roles.

When I eventually left Yeshiva to study higher education at New York University, I embraced this idea and drew firm lines between my professional

and faith identities. Though my *yarmulka* still visibly marked me as an Orthodox Jew, I was insistent that my research interests matched those of my classmates—or what interests I imagined other early-to-mid career higher education professionals would have. I ignored our professor's exhortation to study something we felt passion for, even though my college experience had been defined by grappling with religious identity and I had seen this echoed in many of the students with whom I worked. My first dissertation proposal was to understand how college students—in my mind, a faceless, featureless, achromatic group—decided to pursue leadership positions on their respective campuses. Here was a topic broad and bland enough to "fit in" with this group of professionals, that was firmly what I imagined an EdD student would investigate.

My classmates, however, had made different choices than I expected. Each of them seemed to have found a topic deeply personal to them, attached in a way to their own stories or to their ethnic, racial, or sexual identities. I was the only one who felt a need for focusing away from myself, withdrawing my own identity for the sake of an academic discussion. I applauded one classmate's choice to study second-generation Filipino-Americans like herself, or another's to look at Asian-identified students' experiences through the COVID-19 pandemic. Why, then, did I reject my own ideas, like researching students who struggled with belief at faith-based campuses? As I considered taking on this project, my committee, whose knowledge of Modern Orthodoxy was limited to what I had shared, pushed me to get more specific and personal, embracing the idea of studying Modern Orthodox students as more academically valid than I did.

Long-hesitant to figure out where at the seminar table I belonged, I began to gravitate toward the chaplains, one Hindu, one Muslim, and a fellow Jew, who were unabashedly there to think about religion in the college context. When a guest lecturer was scheduled to visit, and we were given the afternoon to meet with him, I joked that instead of trying to find the one restaurant that was halal, kosher, and vegan, we could all just bring our own food. But the department found such a place to order from, and we all ate together. This sparked an afternoon of conversation that solidified my project, studying how Modern Orthodox students thought about their identities amidst personal change. More importantly, I was at the more sophisticated version of my old lunch table, discussing with like-minded peers not just the balance between different selves but the possibility of whole, integrated ones.

Not every encounter was an opportunity to fit in and find commonality. As I took more courses in student development theory and practice, I found that faith was often discussed shallowly outside of my group of chaplains. "Spirituality" was the broad term to describe the search for and expression of meaning. But

spirituality is an aspect of identity not unique to religiously practicing students. When classmates or professors spoke of "incorporating spirituality into student affairs work," it would be about adding a meditation session or space to new student orientation, but not about ensuring that dietary laws were met, that the schedule allowed for time-bound prayers, or that students knew how to request accommodations for observances. Discussing diversity and the need to respect all backgrounds, religion often seem to be framed only in developmental terms, with the idea that students would—or should—eventually "grow out of" simplistic, practice-based faith.

Understanding the nature of things brought me back to chemistry, and I thought that these perspectives on religious students seemed to be like filtration, the process of physically separating a mixture based on the properties of its parts. But—as any introductory lab will teach—this method only works when the components are molecularly distinct and disconnected. A filter can remove particles small and large from coffee, but these particles were never bound in the mixture. Trying the same process to filter salt water, though, will not work; at a molecular level, salt has separated into ions, each lining up around water, finding affinity for different charges and completely changing the properties of the whole. My own identity was not a mixture that could be sifted or purified. My authentic self was a true *solution*, mixed and bound on the atomic level, inseparable and having properties different from either component part.

In my final semester, I wanted to take a Higher Education and the Law course, but the first four sessions conflicted with Jewish holidays. I thought that might be too much to accommodate, but I suggested ways I could make up missed classes. Instead, the professor took responsibility for finding times to meet, allowing other students to opt for those sessions as well so we could recreate group conversations. This flexibility placed value on both my religious practice and participation; missing class was not seen as a lack of interest. I was dedicated to two pursuits, and we—me, the professor, and classmates—just had to find time for both. Later in the term, when we discussed cases of religious freedom and expression on campus, the professor reiterated his happiness that we found a solution so I could share my perspective—everyone had gained, he said, from my unique viewpoint.

Upholding the religious identities of students means much more than respecting their backgrounds and valuing a broad definition of spirituality. It means valuing their commitments to practice not as personal choices but as requirements for their lives and believing that these lives give them perspectives from which everyone learns and gains. College campuses should aim for accommodation that allows full participation. Finding communal solutions that

meet individual needs, where no one need refrain or sacrifice, recognizes that a community is made of individuals, and those individuals are complex with a unique blend of inseparable parts. Having a common table eliminated the barriers between me and a group of people with whom I shared much more than I realized.

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Parallel Worlds with
Few Intersections

Saul Newman, PhD

I am an Orthodox Jew and an academic. I love my life in both those worlds. I spend most of my time protecting those worlds from each other rather than reveling in their cross-fertilization. Allow me to explain why they are parallel worlds for me and why, and how, they occasionally intersect.

Until I was eighteen and a half years old, I was educated in Modern Orthodox schools. Modern Orthodox schools profess a commitment to the integration of Orthodox Judaism and secular knowledge, "Torah U'Madda," Torah and general studies.[1] In point of fact, these two streams were not integrated in my education, rather, they were parallel streams of consciousness, running side by side but never intersecting. The closest these streams came to intersecting was in the abstract commitment to them among many of our secular studies teachers and the members of the community in which I grew up. Religiosity and Torah study were valued aspirations and success in the "modern and secular" professional world was praised. Both were valued commodities. Living a religious life while being professionally successful was a *Kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification

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1   Torah U'Madda is the slogan of Yeshiva University (YU), the flagship educational institution of Modern Orthodoxy and the place where I spent three years in high school and a year and a half of college.

of God's name among both our non-religious Jewish brethren and the larger non-Jewish world.

Integration of religious and secular ideas was never attempted. As part of my Modern Orthodox upbringing, my teachers never discussed how to reconcile religious "truths" and scientific "truths." The contradictions were right in front of our eyes but were better left unconfronted. When I asked about these contradictions, I was directed to the writings of Orthodox Jewish scientists who offered religiously self-serving and unsophisticated reconciliations of these contradictions. It would have been better had I not read these works as they made me uncomfortable in their attempts to portray tenets of faith as tenets of truth. It would take several more decades, when I was in my forties, when I began to encounter the understanding of religion and science as parallel and complementary truths both continuing to evolve. It was years later, in the work of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning*, that I eventually found affirmation for this understanding (Sachs 2011).

After spending about a year and a half of college at Yeshiva University (YU) I transferred to Columbia University. My two academic passions were political science and physics, and I felt the variety of opportunities were greater at Columbia while still being able to live near YU and take advantage of both social and Torah orthodoxy[2] (Lefkowitz 2014). My first semester at Columbia I took Literature Humanities in the Core Curriculum. Our first reading was Genesis in English. I knew that cold and in the original Hebrew. This was going to be easy. On the first day of discussion my professor, James A. Schultz, a scholar of medieval German literature, immediately honed in on the contradictions between the first two chapters of Genesis with their competing creation stories. What seemed obvious to him, and now to me, had previously eluded me, and never been taught to me in yeshiva. To Professor Schultz what seemed like evidence of multiple biblical authors had to have another explanation. I went back to YU looking for another explanation and found it in the book *The Lonely Man of Faith*, which had been first published fifteen years earlier by the leading intellectual voice of Modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1965). He argued that the first chapter described "majestic" man while the second described "covenantal" man, two facets of a person of faith who seeks to have a relationship with God. My previous distress at the failure of my

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2   Jay Lefkowitz, in an insightful and controversial essay published in *Commentary,* argues that much of Modern Orthodox praxis is rooted in a commitment to having a social community (2014).

education gave way to pride that my "community" had addressed this issue and done so insightfully. I proudly shared Rabbi Soloveitchik's explanation with my Lit Hum class.

A week later, I had my second Lit Hum existential crisis. Professor Schultz argued that the Talmud, what I knew as the Oral Law, which I believe was based on the word of God, was heavily influenced by Hellenistic and Roman culture. My initial reaction was to recoil. After a while, this eventually reached into my subconscious and became liberating. It became liberating not by "freeing" me from religion but allowing me to see religion as an evolving organism that borrows from other cultures and idea systems to enrich and renew itself. Perhaps that was "Torah U'Madda," even if it was never couched for me in those terms. I still struggle with how that evolution happens to a religion rooted in a strong commitment to upholding past precedent in Halacha, religious law. Yet, I find that struggle challenging in the best kind of dialectical way. The greatest academic reinforcement of that perspective came to me when I first read the magisterial work by Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy" (1994). I was able to learn from that work how historical forces influenced the theological and legal structures of the very religious community in which I lived.

While studying for my PhD in political science at Princeton, my apartment-mate was a non-Jewish atheist PhD candidate in economics. In the mid-1980s, his favorite pastime was watching the most unusual and dramatic television preachers he could find. He watched them all night for the entertainment value, and I watched along with him. While he laughed at the behavior of these charismatic preachers and their rhetoric, I kind of laughed along. As I laughed, I had a feeling in the pit of my stomach wondering if my religious observances looked to others as equally unusual and perhaps laughable.

Over time I came to have a slightly scary but not unsurprising thought, given my socialization and education in the Modern Orthodox world. I realized that fundamentalist television preachers seemed alien to me, precisely because they believed in a personal relationship with God. I remember when my atheist roommate asked me about why I believed in God, I responded by telling him that there is so much incomprehensible about Creation that there must be a God. He looked at me and said, "So why add in an extra level of complication by introducing God when that requires a whole new set of explanations?" I was unprepared to respond to this, partially because my religious upbringing, which emphasized the special relationship between God and the Chosen People, was largely rooted in practice but not a clear understanding of the Nature of God. God was a force who did miracles in Egypt, but God was not a supernatural

force in our daily lives. Instead, observance of ritual became a proxy for a personal relationship with God and understanding God.

These experiences and socialization have turned my relationships with academics and religion into a unidirectional one. Social science has deepened my understanding of my own religion. My own academic research focuses primarily on conflicting nationalisms around the world. In many instances, nationalist conflicts are bound up in religious differences which has given me considerable exposure to theories of religious identity and involvement. The one theory that has probably impacted my religious life more than any other is the theory of the "religious marketplace." As I will explain shortly, religions compete in the marketplace of ideas, which drives religious innovation. There is a strong and enduring relationship, between levels of economic development and levels of religious beliefs and practice. Starting with the works of Emile Durkheim (1964), there has been a consistent stream of academic arguments that scientific advancement, the division of labor, and economic modernization all will result in increasing secularization. There have been several causal schema offered for this. They include Durkheim's transition from a mechanically integrated society to an organically integrated society requiring less emphasis on the sacred to provide social order, the replacement of divine explanations with scientific explanations of mysterious phenomena to the notion that in a modern state and society religious institutions are not needed to provide economic support networks. Despite widespread endorsement of these arguments, secularization, however defined, has spread unevenly across the globe.

One of the great outliers to the assumption that economic modernization breeds secularization has been the United States. When you compare us to all other countries in the world at a similar level of economic development, the United States is more religious by a vast amount across all measures, including belief in God, belief in heaven and hell, and house of worship attendance (Norris and Inglehart 2011; Putnam and Campbell 2010). There are several explanations for this, including our status as an immigrant society. Immigrants seek out their "native" religion in their new country as a way of accessing institutional resources, knowledge of their new environment and social supports from people who share a common lived experience, culture and language. But the most compelling argument for me is the role of the "religious marketplace" in the United States (Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Finke and Starke 2005). Economically advanced societies usually exist within states that have a recognized state religion. Scholars such as Stark and Bainbridge argue that state religions often become institutionally and bureaucratically sclerotic and, as a result fail to attract and inspire believers. However, the separation of church and state,

coupled with freedom of religion in the United States, creates an unregulated market where religious entrepreneurs can promote religious innovations that effectively attract religious customers. Religious entrepreneurs market religion in innovative ways so they can expand their base of adherents. The variety of religious beliefs and organizations in the United States, as well as their constant innovation, are the result of the open marketplace for religion.

The first clear illustration in my workplace life of the active role of the religious marketplace was when I got involved in my campus Hillel, an organization committed to "enriching the lives of Jewish students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world" (Hillel Mission Statement, https://www.hillel.org/about). I was asked to join the Hillel board by the campus Hillel's executive director. The Hillel on my campus is more an expression of ethnic and cultural affiliation and not an Orthodox religious organization. It did not speak to my religious commitments, but I recognized that I was not the audience for Hillel. A diverse Jewish student body was the audience. After several years on the board, it became clear to me that the potential market for Jewish affiliation on campus was quite large, and the Hillel was not appealing to that potential market. I began to ask my Jewish students if they were involved in the campus Hillel. Once, after having a meeting with one of my students about his term paper, I asked him if he was involved in the campus Hillel. He looked at me somewhere between quizzical and pained and said to me, "Why do you ask?" I sheepishly responded, "Because you have 'a Jewish name' and 'look Jewish,' I assumed you were Jewish." I was in the middle of apologizing when he cut me off and blurted out, "You know I have often thought that I was Jewish, so I asked my dad about it, and he said don't ever ask me that again." That conversation shook me to my core. I kicked into action. In what was a painful, but necessary, several years of hard and confrontational work, I succeeded in transforming the lay and professional leadership of the campus Hillel, creating a new organization that was more in tune with the market desires of the student population. Today our Hillel is more dynamic with greater and deeper student involvement than ever before. I was able to use my understanding of the religious marketplace to make a difference in the place where I worked but not in the academic side of my professional life.

However, I really took the religious marketplace to heart in my own religious life when I became the lay president of my synagogue. After years of involvement in my synagogue, organizing a search for a new rabbi, serving on my synagogue board as vice president for development and first vice president, I eventually became president. I quickly saw my role as an entrepreneur in the religious marketplace. My job was to get more people to come into the doors of the

synagogue and participate in services and events, to get more people to become dues-paying members of the synagogue, and to get more people to make donations to the synagogue. I was totally committed to creating an environment and developing programs that would accomplish those goals. The phrase I coined was that I needed to create "demographically specific portals of entry" into the synagogue. Rather than hewing closely to the singular vision developed thirty years earlier by the founders of the synagogue, my role was to offer innovative programming that would draw younger generations into the synagogue. Once they were in the door, I joyously left it to our amazing rabbi to bring God into the lives of the membership. He was my partner in shaping the message to the market, but he was also the person who could use the market in the interests of a higher calling.

I often wondered if this viewpoint repurposes religion from a worldview that is deeply held and sacred to just another consumer good to sell in an open marketplace. Was I no better than the television preachers who marketed their "product" on the TV I watched with my Princeton roommate? Yet, I did not let it weaken my passion. I may not truly know God, but I was using the timeless rules that God created, that I learned through the academia, to bring others to religion and possibly God.

My academic pursuits impact my religion but does my religion impact my academic pursuits? My religion is private and does not influence my academic life, other than in the way it determines my schedule, my days on and days off dictated by Jewish holidays and the Sabbath. In fact, it provides a valuable communal sanctuary away from the academia. My friendships, my social life, my community *is* my religious community. My synagogue and my childhood friends who grew up in the same religious institutions are my social network. I really like my colleagues at work, and they are my good friends, but they don't truly know me. Only those people who share my religious socialization truly know the real me. In 2019, the last pre-pandemic year, my wife and I went to over twenty-five weddings of relatives and the children of our Orthodox Jewish friends. My colleagues at work have no frame of reference for that. Their weddings are not as large, and their communities not as tightly knit. I wear my religion on my head at work, my *kippah* or *yarmulka*, and I am not shy about my religious affiliation, but my religious community is my home. My academic job is one of my passions, but it is where I work.

I was taught to live in two worlds, and I hope I do that fairly well. I have learned to merge those two worlds by bringing my academic understanding to my religion. At my age, I still don't know how to fully bring my faith into my work. I'm not sure I really want to bring my faith into my work. Keeping

these worlds apart gives me an internal tranquility I might not have if the two collided frequently.

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The Bridge and the Veil

Erica Brown, PhD

"In my opinion, as an engineer, a bridge is the most difficult thing you can do. You are not working in the direction of gravity but against it—so the problem opposes the solution." These are the words of Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, who has designed bridges across the world and finds them to be architecturally challenging. Many architects refuse to work on them, Calatrava contends. At the same time, Calatrava acknowledges that bridges often inspire feelings of religious transcendence and that the very word "religion" comes from the Latin *relegare*, which means "to bind" or "to connect." A bridge connects two disparate geographic spaces while never belonging fully to either. And it can be terribly lonely, this not-belonging.

I regard my academic work as a bridge. I try to translate often esoteric academic abstractions into accessible concepts in the classroom and in my writing. Bridging the work of researchers and leaders, I often facilitate conversations between theoreticians and practitioners. I am intrigued by in-between spaces— the place where ideas meet lived realities. I try similarly to create bridges between the worlds of my faith and my academic studies. This all sounds good on paper, but there is a downside to being a bridge. Like a bridge, in spanning multiple worlds, I belong fully to none. And it can be terribly lonely, this not-belonging.

I did not come to this understanding of the bridgework of my life easily. From childhood, I loved school and have clear memories of shedding a tear or two

when the academic year was over. I was an obedient student who sought the approval of teachers. Doing well only made me want to do well again. School was a validating experience for me, where social life was not. I was not adept at negotiating friendship dramas and gossip. I was not a cool kid. Books were my salvation and my refuge.

In my last years of elementary school, I also became increasingly interested in Judaism. Not from a religiously observant family, I sought to know more and become a student of Judaism. My mother was a child survivor of the Holocaust. My grandparents both survived Auschwitz, and, within a year, all three had found each other. But this modern-day miracle changed them; they shed their Hasidic roots when they came to the United States. Their Judaism was pockmarked by darkness, an antisemitism so thick that it took their entire village and thirty-eight members of the family. There was no real recovery, only moments of respite. I, however, was seeking lightness, a certain kind of joy and spiritual buoyancy far from the high-achieving world of school success and the materialism that surrounded me. I found it in the very Judaism members of my family rejected.

As a high school student in a demanding private school, I was in regular contact with raw ambition in relatively shallow water. The faith life to which I was gravitating was more complex, more ethical, and much more morally demanding. In my junior year, I left prep school to go to a yeshiva high school with a dual curriculum and a long day—until exactly 5:01 p.m.—to accommodate the load. For me, the days were magical and intense.

Before I entered university and after, I also studied in Jerusalem at a seminary for the advanced study of Jewish texts in their original languages: Hebrew and Aramaic. I returned to the United States as a student at Yeshiva University, where I majored in general philosophy and Judaic studies. I envied seniors who studied accounting and marketing and wore suits to the cafeteria on their job interview days. They had real job prospects. I was unsure of my career path but knew I would never leave the life of the mind. At YU, I could be openly Jewish in my commitments in practice and enter a world that spanned from Aristotle to A. J. Ayer without betraying or hiding any part of myself (Lamm 2010; Lichtenstein 2003; Kolbrenner 2004).

After completing a BA, I spent the next fifteen years or so in graduate school. I was not collecting degrees. I was just unsure of the path. I never wanted to leave school yet was overcome with imposter syndrome in any academic setting. There was so much to learn and to know; mastery felt impossible, in the words of a Hasidic master: "The end of all knowing is not knowing." This did not seem a good proscription for a career trajectory. The very skills that had served me

well until graduate school—obedience and hard work—needed to morph into an intellectual feistiness and confidence I lacked. I never felt smart enough.

But something else created discomfort that I could only name years later. Part of my own insecurity was generated by an internalized feeling of shame that I was a believer in a very secular environment. It was "in" to be an eternal skeptic. All the cool kids, it seemed, were atheists. Academics who knew of my religious commitments, I thought to myself, must assume I'm too irrational to do real research. This "less than" feeling gnawed at me, in great part because my faith demands such intellectual depth. The false dichotomy that separates the intellectual and the spiritual, agitated by statements like "religion is the opioid of the masses," was foreign to me. Judaism required all of my mental faculties and more. It forced me to think and wrestle because it's a faith filled with more questions than answers. Judaism is an interpretive tradition where learning and argument is foundational; the study of the Hebrew Bible and Talmud is designed for curiosity rather than mastery. The goal is never *a* degree, only *the* degree of engagement you apply to what you learn.

In addition to my inherent sense of inadequacy in higher education, I also struggled with the hierarchies of academic life and the poor teaching to which I was often subjected. I was an adult educator myself by this time and tried to make my classroom as flat of hierarchy as possible. I wanted to know my students and prioritized their learning over my research. When I sat in my carrell working on my dissertation, I felt alone. There was something arid in the space. I recall with a twinge of sadness being seven or eight months pregnant with my third child. The only person for the entirety of my pregnancy to notice and comment was a janitor in the elevator up to the seminar room of the university library. It was impossible not to notice I was pregnant. This brief interaction summed up a nagging discontent. In academia, I felt that I could not be a whole self. Not as a woman. Not as a teacher. Not as a human being. Not as a Jew.

So I left. These feelings of inadequacy, despondency and alienation were hard to juggle all of the time, even if much of this was taking place in my head and not in reality. I transitioned to work in the non-profit sector for close to twenty years, trying to bring the best of what I learned in my work with non-academics. In my own classes, I sought to build communities of intention and friendship. While I aligned with the missions of the organizations I worked for and valued the teamwork, my background in scholarship and research was never fully utilized. The bridge life was not working. I had times when I closed the door to my office and sat alone with my unsettled thoughts. There, too, I felt dislocated.

After nearly two decades away, I returned to campus. I crossed the bridge from one life back to the other. Calatrava writes, "A bridge is born of necessity,

but it must establish its own identity. It should harmonize with its surroundings, and the design must transcend the purely local and transform the setting." It was clear. I needed to establish my own identity and be comfortable with the span and not only the substructure and foundation. One part of me finally settled into the academia, where reading, writing, and teaching—my only real skill sets—are the fundamental activities of students and faculty. The other part still feels hidden, undernourished and invisible.

It turns out, in the intervening years when I was away from the academia, it became easier to be a woman on campus. Teaching has become more valued, and we are blessedly more concerned with the holistic sides of education. We are charged with thinking about the anxieties and mental welfare of our students in ways unimaginable when I was a graduate student. But as a Jew, I still feel conflicted. There had been a smattering of antisemitic incidents on my campus. After the Pittsburgh Massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue, only one colleague reached out. I have walked into a building wallpapered with "Israel is apartheid" posters, a glib statement that cannot capture the political complexity of the Middle East; one country's politics cannot be easily exchanged for another. I was shaken. There was, it felt, no place to talk about Judaism without the politics of Israel seeping in and changing the conversation. Intersectionality and cancel cultures have not always made us more sensitive (Bouvier 2020; Clark 2020; Veil and Weymer 2021). They have often made us less tolerant and more belligerent (Paresky 2021). They have also supplied a convenient and self-righteous cover for ignorance.

I surprised myself with my own self-censoring. Teaching a course in diversity and development in a graduate school of education, I refrained in the first few years from discussing antisemitism. We were busy reading Beverly Daniel Tatum's *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Alone in the Cafeteria?*, Amanda Lewis's *Race in the Schoolyard*, and Anette Lareau's *Unequal Childhoods*. We thought about race, class, gender, sexuality, and ableism in education—making space for all kinds of commitments, orientations, lifestyles, and choices—but I did not mention antisemitism for the first two years, despite the shocking rise of antisemitism in Europe and the United States. When I finally introduced a class on it, asked students to read Deborah Lipstadt's *Antisemitism: Here and Now* and had them scour social media to share links to antisemitic posts every day for a week, many were shocked. This was entirely new hate territory. Every year, consistently, I have a student or two who sheepishly confesses, "I have *never* heard of antisemitism." No wonder it seems to be one of the few micro-aggressions on campus that is still tolerated. I hear the same from some of my Muslim colleagues about anti-Islamic rhetoric.

I watched an openly Catholic student struggle with how or if to share how much religion has shaped her life during a class on professional identity mapping. We spoke afterwards. The university, she shared, is not a safe space to talk about faith. It is a deeply secular place, where religion is regarded as unsophisticated and fundamentalist. Jon Levenson, a professor at Harvard, writes this about higher education: "Almost always, the diversity so eagerly sought is one of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Diversity of religious affiliation is, by contrast, almost never even considered" (Levenson 2021). Levenson makes the case that "encountering religion in its bewildering diversity is essential to the task of liberal education and by no means a matter only for the devout. Without it, misconceptions about the deepest formative convictions of a great many Americans abound" (ibid.). I know this firsthand. Telling someone in university that your PhD is on the study of a biblical book is like saying you are an evangelist in deeply secular environments. People make all kinds of assumptions about your intelligence, your feminism, your being.

As this student shrank herself to fit in, I recognized the faith silencing I myself was experiencing, since I bought into these same myths of how to be. I also took to heart something I had these future teachers read, the words of Parker Palmer in *The Courage to Teach*: "If we want to grow as teachers—we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives—risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract" (2017, 12). How could I have them read that and not live it myself?

And here, I leave the bridge for the veil.

In a fascinating biblical passage in the book of Exodus, Moses received the Decalogue and descended from Mount Sinai, his face aglow with knowledge. Because Moses could not see his own face, he did not know that his experience of transcendence colored his skin. "Moses was not aware that the skin of his face was radiant . . ." (Ex. 34:29). The light was apparently so intense that Moses wore a veil to mitigate the bright light (Ex. 34:32–35). A contemporary Bible scholar notes that when Moses "mediates the divine word to the people, his radiance authenticates the Source of the message" (Sarna 1991, 221; Mellinkoff 1970). But it is hard to stare at intensity.

There is something about the diaphanous, fluid quality we associate with veils that is not quite a wall but a separation, nonetheless. In the biblical narrative, Moses's veil hid the ephemeral radiance of the spirit he incorporated. In this sense, his veil and those we all wear both reveal and conceal; in wearing them we hide parts of ourselves that we wish to keep private. Yet the very wearing of them invites attention and intrigue.

Sometimes, like Moses, what we veil is the part of ourselves that shines most. We conceal some part of our passion that is mystical and wonderful and life-giving because of what others may say or think. We imagine the way we will be judged, which may not actually be the response; it's just the one generated by the internal critic. What we shroud and when are both conscious and unconscious acts. The veil moves, and we move with it. A few weeks into my Introduction to Judaism class, I ask undergraduates if they have ever had a spiritual or mystical experience. A lull descends over any otherwise chatty classroom. But a few minutes later, one student invariably raises a hand hesitatingly and shares. It opens a floodgate of responses. There has never been a place in their education to share, name and examine these experiences, validate their authenticity and place them within the context of, say, William James's observations in *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

As an educator, I am, at some moments, all too aware of this veil, like a face wrap in a Rene Magritte painting. It is a prop in a dance all teachers perform with students. When we begin to teach, we put on a veil. Behind the veil lies details of family life, hobbies, feelings, events. In the desire to cover a packed curriculum, we cover ourselves. We might not believe our students are interested in anything beyond the syllabus; thus, we hide. But the very act of teaching requires so much exposure that, like Moses, we veil ourselves as a small act of protection. The veil gets increasingly opaque as instructors move up the educational ladder from the earliest years of school and into higher education. By that point, it seems as if the distance between the student and teacher is an unbreachable chasm made more remote by advanced degrees and specializations. Kugel (1993) discusses the stages that professors go through in learning their craft and developing comfort in the classroom but does not deal with this question of 'removing the veil.' But what if we cannot remove the veil when we *want to* because we fear judgment? I hide most consciously behind one specific veil: that of my personal spiritual commitments from students, faculty and administrators. I am a practicing Jew. This involves a rigorous set of commitments that begin the moment I wake up and travel with me throughout the day. I pray three times a day and study religious texts each morning. My home is kosher. I dress modestly, and I am fully Sabbath observant, which involves abstaining from commerce and the use of anything electronic. I do not wear any outward symbols of my faith, and to others I am simply a short woman with brown hair and glasses; in other words, I look a lot like many female academics. Yet, my life is ultimately guided not by the quest for tenure or by the writing of the perfect footnote but by a superstructure that helps me put all of the work into perspective. My life is larger and deeper

than the library. My love of knowledge has never flagged. It has only intensified as a result of my religious commitments.

David Shatz, a philosopher who is also an observant Jew and was one of my own professors, was asked to explain if his worlds collided and offers his answer, in his essay *God and the Philosophers*, entitled "The Overexamined Life is Not Worth Living:"

> Is it really possible to integrate these religious perspectives with a philosophically detached "assessment" or their "epistemological merits"? My point has been no. My commitment is not rooted in the (naïve) notion that reason vindicates my beliefs. It is rooted in what Judaism provides me with: intellectual excitement, feeling, caring for others, inspiration, and a total perspective that is evocative and affecting. I have no doubt that people of other faiths and of other denominations in Judaism gain parallel benefits from their commitments. . . . Philosophy has its place among the truly enjoyable, challenging, and edifying endeavors in our culture. But it is not the arbiter of all we think and do; what we do in our study and what we do in the rest of our lives are often not commensurate, because the study is the smaller room in life. (Shatz 1994, 284)

The bridge and the veil will never allow completeness, and perhaps the expectation that either would is naïve. The feeling of dislocation shared over millennia has created a unique perch for Jews as outsiders/insiders everywhere they have lived. This participant-observer status never offers full belonging. Instead, it creates a liminal space—a life on the borders—with which to judge and filter. Those who can step outside the culture they are in always have an advantage in seeing the limitations of that culture. In that, they can better serve humanity, as Palmer once again captures so beautifully:

> When I forget my own inner multiplicity and my own long and continuing journey toward selfhood, my expectations of students become excessive and unreal. If I can remember the inner pluralism of my own soul and the slow pace of my own self-emergence, I will be better able to serve the pluralism among my students at the pace of their young lives. (Palmer 2017, 25)

I like to think that with the passage of time, I have come to embrace both the bridge and the veil as the great metaphors of my life. Rather than resent these images which are neither here nor there, which obscure and enlighten, I have come to appreciate that discomfort is generative and promotes growth. Bridges span and connect spaces. Veils can be lifted or put on at will. Now that I work and teach at Yeshiva University, a Jewish institution, I am less conscious of revealing and concealing my identity. I can be authentically who I am in most domains of my life. But I am saddened that the same was not always true in other academic settings for the reasons I discussed above. At times, when academic life proves unnerving or my sense of displacement feels heavier than usual, I have to remind myself that I am the one in control of the veil and that a bridge is a structure of true beauty.

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The Power of a Holistic Education with Faith Honoring

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Jill L. Lindsey, PhD

My understanding of what a truly holistic education can be is grounded in my lived experience. My parents and grandparents surrounded me with music, dance, literature, math, science, and faith. My public school education included music, theatre, art, and dance, but it was my home life that was truly holistic—family gatherings with grandma playing the piano while we sang along, "shows" we cousins created to perform for the adults, singing and dancing in the kitchen while washing the dishes, story-time, Bible readings, hymn-singing in the car to pass the time, and Sunday church. Faith was ever-present in prayers (grace before meals, bedtime prayers, prayers of gratitude, prayers for guidance) and behavioral expectations (love they neighbor, do unto others, strive for Christ-like love, kindness, and forgiveness). While I was raised a Christian, we were taught not to judge those who believed differently. However, I did not get to know peers who followed other faith traditions until we moved to a more religiously diverse area in my teens. My first experience with something akin to faith honoring in the classroom happened during a seventh grade Social Studies discussion about social norms and laws, and how we decide what is right and wrong. Students were sharing their beliefs and values, and the basis for those beliefs. Religious moral teachings from a variety of faith traditions—Jewish, Catholic, Jehovah Witness, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist—were the basis for many of the ideas shared. This inclusion of faith, faith honoring, in the classroom was not regularly

invited, but it was never discouraged. I also recall a conversation in eighth grade with a fellow classmate I didn't know all that well. We were riding the bus to an event and naturally we engaged in a conversation. During that casual talk, she asked me what made me so nice and easy to talk to, that she "wanted what I had." I told her I thought the thing she wanted was faith. We went on to talk about how it was because of my faith that I felt loved by God and tried to live the way of Christ; to love everyone, not judge, forgive and have an open heart always looking for the good in others. I explained that I believe God loves all of us, and all we have to do is believe and open our hearts to loving others. I never felt I needed to pretend or hid my faith; my spirituality was just part of me.

My undergraduate and graduate educational experiences were rich in the arts and sciences with religiously diverse peers but our classrooms and instruction were not intentionally "faith honoring." During undergrad, I was a vocal music major so we did a lot of performing of sacred music in a variety of churches but we never really talked about religion outside of the historical context of the music. During my master degree, religion was discussed clinically as an aspect of some of the lives of people seeking counseling, but do not recall a single conversation about any of our own faith beliefs.

However, I experienced faith honoring as an integral part of a holistic approach and culture during my doctoral education at the University of Dayton. The University of Dayton is a Catholic Marianist institution. Marianist schools were founded by the Society of Mary to promote shared values of faith, community, caring, and service. The university views a diverse student body as a strength, accepting students from a variety of racial, ethnic, gender, religious/non-religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This diversity is intentionally cultivated because it strengthens students' ability and skills in getting along with others and understanding oneself.

I particularly recall a service of remembrance I attended for a beloved professor who had passed away from cancer. The service began by welcoming practicing Catholics, those from other faith traditions, and those who may not practice any faith tradition, stating that all were invited to participate in their own way, as their own practice and conscience dictated. That we have come together in love and respect to celebrate and remember the life of a precious member of our community. All were welcome. It wasn't just their words; it truly felt that way.

Daily life at UD felt spiritually welcoming. My dissertation focus was the relationship between engaging in the arts and one's sense of being connected to something greater than self. Since I grew up in a family that sang, danced, worshiped, appreciated art, and practiced Christian love and forgiveness, the arts are integral to my sense of well-being, spirituality, and life well-lived. The

arts help me feel connected to something larger than myself; some call it the collective unconscious; some call it God.

I no longer attend church because what is taught is too narrow to harmonize with my spirituality, but I spent many years as a Methodist because I love the openness of "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" and continue to strive to practice them. I spent the first fifteen years of my life attending a Baptist church where altar calls (inviting "lost sinners"/non-Christians to come forward, fall to their knees to ask for forgiveness for their sins, and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior) were the final element of every church service. Being "born again" was the requirement for any seeking membership and those who practiced other faiths were not considered "real Christians." However, my parents did not believe this and taught us that all paths to God were worthy of our respect. My family left the Baptist church in my teens when we moved and my parents selected a Presbyterian church to attend. As a young adult, I chose the Methodist church because of an incredibly talented minister and the opportunity to sing in a wonderful church choir. I had my own sense of spirituality and never felt tied to a particular religion, but Methodism provided a spiritual community for me and my children for many years.

As an officer in the United States Air Force, I lived abroad for three years and traveled in the Middle East. Exposure to non-Christian religions expanded my ideas about spirituality and helped me see common principles and values across religious traditions. Work in PK-12 schools as a parent and grant consultant prompted me to undertake doctoral work exploring holistic approaches to education and the intersections of spirituality, psychology and educational leadership. The decision to study at the University of Dayton was two-fold: proximity and that an institution of faith would be so receptive to my topic of interest.

To my delight, the university culture was not just receptive but supportive, welcoming me and others from a variety of faith and non-faith traditions. In classes, students were invited to share the ways their faith/non-faith informed their views, decisions, and sense of purpose. This created a learning community that encouraged exchanges of ideas grounded in beliefs and nurtured in me a sense of acceptance and being valued unlike anything I had experienced in a classroom. And it wasn't just from one professor, it was in every course by every professor. They each had their own approach to nurturing this culture but it was ever-present.

During my doctoral work, I was fortunate to have a graduate research assistantship with an amazing professor who later became my dissertation advisor. As her GRA, I was included as a member of a research team funded to explore "The Experience and Meaning of a Marianist Education." Through that

research project I learned that the holistic faith-honoring culture I was experiencing at UD was being enacted in Marianist high schools across the country. In focus group interviews with students, teachers and parents I heard story after story of learning being deeply connected to personal meaning making in faith-honoring holistic classrooms. This is the Marianist way of educating and creating community.

When I graduated and started my academic career at a state university, I missed that nurturing, welcoming feeling I experienced in a faith-honoring inclusive community. I found a few colleagues who shared a desire for a more inclusive culture, and we organized a retreat that built on the Quaker principles captured in Parker Palmer's book, *The Courage to Teach*. It was an incredible shared experience that helped sustain those of us who participated but we were unable to engage other colleagues to move toward transforming our department culture, let alone the culture of a large state institution.

The University of Dayton is an institution built on valuing a holistic education that includes faith honoring, even if they don't describe their practice using that term. It is simply part of their conceptualization of a Marianist education. I lived in that culture and experienced what it felt like to be honored and to openly honor others for their whole selves including their faith. My experience at UD shows that is possible to create a culture of faith honoring when a culture values religious diversity as a way of making meaning and a strength that enables growth and getting along.

I was raised with a deep sense of my own spirituality. Growing up I felt my spirituality was just part of who I am and fortunately never felt I needed to pretend or hid the way my faith gave me a quiet strength. However, teachers did not regularly invite us to share our faith as it related to learning. During my doctoral studies I felt fully embraced as a whole person by a community where faith was welcomed and seen as integral to learning and meaning-making. It must begin with teachers welcoming faith in the classroom, but it is not enough for individual teachers to cultivate faith-honoring classrooms. To foster school cultures that provide a truly holistic faith-honoring education where the whole person is welcomed will require teams of teachers working together to practice faith honoring in their classrooms led by administrators who model and promote faith-honoring pedagogy.

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