

Campus Ministry – UT Martin Interfaith Student Center

The Interfaith Student Center at UT Martin is a cooperative ministry of the United Methodist, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian (USA), and Cumberland Presbyterian churches. Our purpose is to serve the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Tennessee at Martin by providing opportunities for worship, Bible study, service, fellowship, and Christian growth. We actively seek to promote friendship and understanding among all people in the university community and beyond.

This summer, we implemented an internship program that is designed to promote Christian leadership and student involvement in the ministry. Three interns were selected. Two lead music and worship on Thursday nights, and the other coordinates our mission projects. Average worship attendance has grown from 2 to 20 students who represent a wide range of denominations. Eucharistic services have been offered by the Episcopal and United Methodist churches.

The intern program has been so successful that that Board of Directors has voted to offer a maximum of six internships for the spring 2008 semester. These internships enable us to make our ministry more inclusive. Thus far, we have found that the internships attract students who may sense a call to some type of mission or ministry. Students' work with Interfaith enables them to explore a call and to develop their abilities for future service to the Church and the world.

Before the semester began, letters were sent to more than 400 incoming students, inviting them to participate in the ministry of Interfaith. Ads were placed in the campus newspaper, and we have given away over 1,200 flying discs and other promotional items imprinted with the Interfaith logo and contact information.

About 160 students receive a weekly email update that includes a brief devotional message and information about upcoming events. About 30 students visit our facilities each week. In the last month, that number has increased six percent, calls and emails to the center have more than doubled, and the Interfaith website has received many hits.

The focus of our efforts this semester has been to build the Thursday night program, which consists of a free meal and a student-led, ecumenical worship service. We also offer midday prayers each weekday. Center Director the Rev. Jolinne Balentine-Downey, the Rev. Lee Clements of Trinity Presbyterian, and the Rev. Mace Jett of Martin Cumberland Presbyterian regularly participate with the Rev. Don Brooks in weekly service and fellowship events and serve on the Board of Directors.

In addition to numerous fellowship events, Interfaith has sponsored a number of service projects, including: a Cans Across America canned food drive, a talent show that raised \$367 for a missionary family in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and an Empty Bowls Soup Supper that raised \$1,700 for the local food pantry. Last year, Interfaith students and advisors rebuilt a home on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, provided disaster

relief when a tornado hit southern Illinois, and helped Reelfoot Rural Ministries move to its new thrift store.

Basic Christian formation classes with denominational specializations are planned for spring 2008. Spring worship themes will be developed from the Millennium Development Goals with materials from the Episcopal Church Publishing Corp.

We are currently developing a 10-year-plan for the ministry wherein the Interfaith Student Center will become a center for developing Christian leadership, particularly in the area of rural, underserved, and agricultural missions.

The interfaith students appreciate your current prayers and hope for your continued interest in and financial support of this unique ministry.