

June 13, 2024 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

Delighting in discomfort

During Ramadan, a chaplain drove Muslim students to a mosque on Fridays. Despite her efforts, she felt like an outsider — it was both uncomfortable and beautiful.

By Katrina Pekich-Bundy

I forgot my socks. That was all I could focus on: My cold toes on the tile floor. Socks are not my central focus at other times and places, but I was a guest at this mosque. And I didn't want to be disrespectful.

I found myself sitting on a bench with bare feet because I am the interfaith chaplain at Alma College. For the holy month of Ramadan, I organized trips to a mosque for Muslim students on Fridays, sometimes ferrying them the hour-long distance since most of the students are international students and unable to drive.



Being a Christian minister, I tried to prepare for the work of interfaith chaplaincy. I researched and asked questions of an imam colleague. I brushed up on what I learned about Islam as a religious studies student in college many years before. Still, I felt very inadequate as the students' faith leader because my training is predominately in Christianity. I knew the basics of Islam, but each country and individual have variations of belief and practices. So my knowledge was very general.

All inadequacies aside, I knew I needed socks to enter the prayer room. I didn't know at the time why, but I knew I needed them. Anxious, I sat in the hallway and waited to see if someone else would go in without socks. Through this entire internal panic attack, women walked by me, greeting me with "salaam alaikum." No one noticed my bare feet. They welcomed me with their greeting.

"Am I covered enough?" A young woman disrupted my self-focused spiral, and I looked up at her. She was, from what little knowledge I have, appropriately covered from head to toe. I sort of shrugged and said, "I'm not sure I'm the right person to ask, but I think so?" She talked to me a moment more, then went inside. She was followed by a woman with bare feet. I stood up and tucked my feet under the hem of my full-length skirt (just to be safe) and awkwardly, yet confidently, walked into the prayer room.

It was uncomfortable for me not to have the knowledge I wanted in this situation. Yet, this experience reminded me of the cultural waters of America — and how people like me have power. The students I brought to the mosque face daily language barriers, religious barriers, and barriers of bias based on the color of their skin. For instance, colleges often have Good Friday off from classes, but not Fridays during Ramadan. CONTINUED

Delighting in discomfort, continued

Yet, the hospitality I received from the many greetings and the inclusion from students who knew that I wasn't Muslim made me feel like I belonged more than I could articulate at that moment. It was uncomfortable to be an outsider invited in. I had to let go of my power and control. Yet, this discomfort became a delight when I decided not to fight it. Embracing my discomfort allowed me to look beyond myself, my narrow worldview, and my own insecurities. Embracing my discomfort allowed me to look beyond myself, my narrow worldview, and my own insecurities.

After the time of prayer, a student embraced me and thanked me for bringing them. I laughed off my sock spiral and said, "I forgot my socks!"

She smiled and said, "I know. But it's ok."

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ANNOUNCEMENT

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

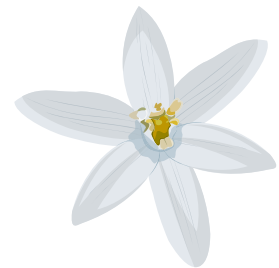
Sunday, June 23

following worship

ELECT OFFICERS

HEAR ABOUT OUR FISHBURNE PARTNERSHIP

LEARN ABOUT THE NEW PASTOR



OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

CLICK ON THE LOGOS



WORSHIP THIS WEEK.

Psalm 20

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

Sermon:
Eye-opening faith.

This Week in History.



James Oglethorpe - British soldier, member of Parliament, and social reformer is granted a royal charter for the Colony of **Georgia** in North America.

June 9, 1732



Bridget Bishop is the first person hanged at Gallows Hill near Salem, MA, for *certaine Detestable Arts called Witchcraft and Sorceries*.

June 10, 1692



The **Paris-Bordeaux-Paris** is run for the first time. Often called the first automobile race in history, the 1,178 km competition race proved both drivers and cars were capable of long distances and generated public enthusiasm for the new sport.

June 11, 1895



The **Baseball Hall of Fame** opens in Cooperstown, New York with five original members: Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner, Christy Mathewson, and Walter Johnson.

June 12, 1939



Nazi Germany launches the first **V1 Flying Bombs** at England.

June 13, 1944



Following the mutiny led by acting Lt. Fletcher Christian, Capt. William Bligh and 18 loyal crewmen from **HMS Bounty** reach Timor after sailing 4,600 in an open boat.

June 14, 1892



Bessie Coleman earns her pilot's license, becoming the first female pilot of African-American descent.

June 15, 1921

