

# WINTHROP EPISCOPAL LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY

## A NOTE FROM THE CAMPUS MINISTER

Oh, friends. What a challenging season this has been for all of us, for all ministries, WELCM included. In February, at the EDUSC Vocare retreat, our student Crystal Moore took me aside. "I'm really worried about COVID," she said. "No one else seems to be talking about it, but I think it's going to be bad." I assured her we would talk, but before we had much chance, Winthrop had decided to keep the campus closed after spring break. We had to cancel our spring spirituality retreat, our Tell Me About Your Day campus event. We had to mail gifts and cards to our 2020 graduates, and celebrate via Zoom.

And the challenges have been real. The quarantine split us up across several states, took some students into spaces that were less safe or supportive. Our students lost jobs, their summer camps were closed, mission trips cancelled; some parents lost their jobs; some families experienced COVID, some have lost family members to the disease; relationships have been challenged by pandemic and political upheaval. Hardest of all, in my view, has been the loss of community, of meaning, and especially the loss of autonomy our students have experienced this past year.

There have been blessings in this season, nonetheless--our students chose to keep our weekly Gatherings and contemplative Bible study going even throughout the summer, which has, to my knowledge, never happened before. Students have led discussions on race, queer theology, and spiritual practice in quarantine. We have leaned more on technology, meeting incoming freshers through virtual mixers, expanding our website and our Instagram account, creating online study groups and craft nights. When we couldn't meet in person to visit Winthrop's art galleries, Josie found us virtual tours of international museums. When we couldn't go hiking, Samantha coordinated a day of geocaching. When other schools' reopening led to COVID outbreaks, Ellery and Grace helped me rework our protocols to keep WELCM safe. And, bless God, we have all remained healthy so far. I have been so proud of our students' connection, resilience, commitment to safety, and creative problem-solving!

And through it all, we have been drawn closer together; our conversations have gone deeper; we have met God--even in online Bible study! As we have walked with one another, even through the valley of the shadow of death, God has been with us.

*Olga-Maria*

## WELCM NEWS

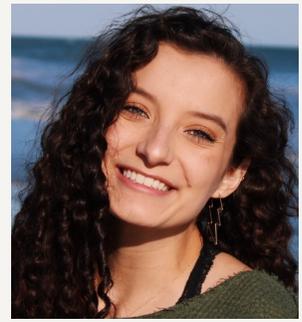
- 1 Campus Minister Note**
- 2 Peer Minister Note; Photos**
- 3 Alumni Update**
- 4 House Updates; Photos**



# A NOTE FROM THE PEER MINISTER

## Fall Planning Retreat, Grace Tristan

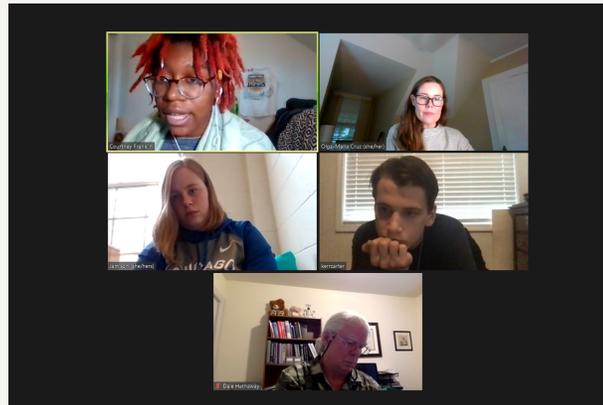
The beginning of August brought a new set of challenges for us to work through. We had to decide on everything from how this semester would operate for our ministry, to protocols to keep everybody safe, all while ensuring the spiritual needs of the community were still being met. While this semester started unlike any other, holding our Fall planning retreat offered a sense of normality, even though it was over Zoom.



Olga-Maria began our discussion with a devotion on Colossians 3.12-17, a passage focused on living in Christian community, which inspired our thinking about WELCM's ministry for 2020-21. As a group, we reflected on the things that we did well this past year, and where we want to grow. Some components that we were particularly proud of are an increase in campus outreach, the addition of new programming, and a relatively smooth transition to having ministry completely online. Given the circumstances, we were very proud of the work we accomplished the past few months! As we talked and listened to God and one another, three words kept coming up in our conversation: inclusivity, intersectionality, and intentionality.

We are proud of the job WELCM has done at being an inclusive place. During a time of extreme isolation, we wanted to ensure that **inclusivity** continued across the board. To that end, we have attended virtual events for incoming students, encouraged members to bring friends, and made a new effort to increase our social media presence in order to reach more students. In terms of **intersectionality**, we began an ongoing conversation series on topics such as race, anti-racism work, and queer theology. These topics are fundamental to WELCM's principles. We believe our WELCM table should reflect the table that God invites us to, celebrating all its diversity. When we call people to gather and sit with us, to be part of our community, our **intention** is to offer our support with equity for all in mind. We all deserve to feel love and belonging, with all of our differences of sex, gender, race, sexuality, ability, or class.

While so much that we face is still unknown, there is comfort in knowing that WELCM stands as a consistent support for all students.



Contemplative Bible Study moved online, allowing more students to participate over the summer and into fall.



"Being able to still gather safely with a community of people who I feel loved and supported by, in such a serene environment has brought me so much peace. Gathering in the garden always feels like a separate, secret world, free from stress and connected to what matters most: God and community." -Courtney (center)



Fall Tuesday night dinners moved to the garden. "WELCM is a good place to hang out with new friends." - Kerr (pictured far left)

# ALUMNI UPDATE



## Grace Kirven

Hi everyone! My name is Grace Kirven, a 2020 graduate of Winthrop, where I was active with WELCM and served on the board. I am currently in my first semester of graduate school at the University of Georgia in the Child Life program. A Child Life Specialist works with children, mainly in hospital settings, to help ease their fears and educate children and families about the hospital experience. I look forward to serving families by promoting positive coping skills that will enhance their outcomes from surgeries and medical procedures.

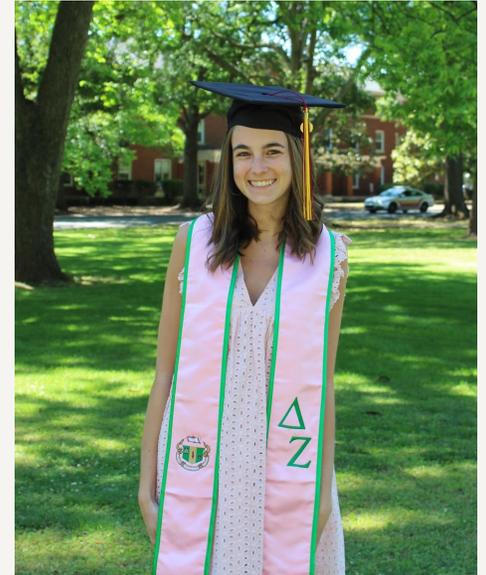
During my time at Winthrop, WELCM was a special place to create relationships, not only with my peers, but with God. Even at UGA, I have still made it a priority to set aside time to be present with others and with God. I have created a strong support system at UGA like WELCM provided me at Winthrop. WELCM taught me many things, but a consistent lesson I keep with me is the reminder to be present and listen. Life can get busy, but in the midst of it all, it is important to take a moment, take a few deep breaths, and listen to God.

## Samantha McCall

Hi hi! Alum here! (Well, that just sounds crazy!)

While it does not feel like my four years at Winthrop could possibly be up, I have been busy putting all that I have learned and experienced into action. I recently graduated from Winthrop with a degree in Early Childhood Education. I was involved in WELCM throughout all four years of college and served as a co-Peer Minister my senior year (2019-2020). Since graduating in May, I have started teaching Kindergarten in York, SC. I have loved being able to put everything I learned into action! We began the school year with hybrid instruction where I taught in-person two days a week and remotely three days a week. While this is definitely not what I envisioned my first year of teaching to look like, my heart is singing nonetheless. I love being surrounded by my little people and letting them fill me up! We have just announced that we are going back to five days a week of in-person instruction, and I can't wait to see the continued growth that comes along with it.

Because I am still in the Rock Hill area, I have loved maintaining a relationship with WELCM and its members. I have visited both in-person meals and virtual Gatherings. I love seeing this ministry and its members continue to grow through difficult circumstances. I continue to see community in this place and love that these friends have a special place and special people to turn to when it seems that nothing else is quite complete. I continuously send my love to you all!



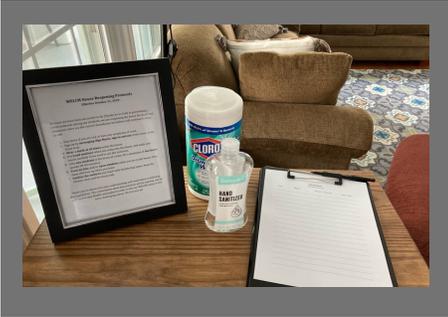
**Emmet Martin** (left, 2019) is living in Mooresville, NC and working as an analyst for a pharmaceutical company. He and Kelsey have a new dog!

**Griffin Rohrer** (2019) is enjoying her new position as a college advisor for Lancaster County schools.

**Taylor Gibby** (2019) is serving as Director of Youth and Christian Formation at Grace Episcopal Church in Anderson, SC.

# HOUSE UPDATES

Olga-Maria has been working on preparing the house for reopening, including a sanitation station with sign-in sheet and protocols, new front porch signage, and revamping the back porch for in-person, one-on-one meetings. Other decor updates will be revealed when it's safe to gather for dinners and programming indoors again. Currently, all programs are outdoors or virtual, but students can come to the house on a limited basis for study, snacks, and spiritual renewal.



## Campus Minister

Olga-Maria Cruz  
omcruz@welcm.org

## Peer Minister

Grace Tristan  
tristang2@mailbox.winthrop.edu



## Winthrop Episcopal Lutheran Campus Ministry

426 Oakland Avenue  
Rock Hill, SC 29730