



AWAKENINGS

Ohio Wesleyan University Baccalaureate Ceremony

May 11, 2018

7:00 p.m.

Gray Chapel

The Class of 2018
Baccalaureate Service
Gray Chapel
Ohio Wesleyan University
Delaware, Ohio
May 11, 2018
7:00 p.m.

“Awakenings”

~ ~ ~

*“No single event can awaken within us
a stranger totally unknown to us.
To live is to be slowly born.
It would be a bit too easy
if we could go about borrowing ready-made souls.”*

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

BACCALAUREATE SERVICE
Ohio Wesleyan University
The Class of 2018
“Awakenings”

7:00 p.m.
Friday, May 11, 2018

Gray Chapel
Ohio Wesleyan University

Processional of Our National Flags Haley Talbot-Wendlandt, Organist
“Gavotte” – Samuel Wesley
“Ave Maria von Arcadelt” – Franz Liszt

University Greetings The Reverend Dr. Rock Jones
University President

President’s Commission Awards Dr. Juan Armando Rojas Joo
Professor of Modern Foreign Languages
Chair, President’s Commission on Racial and Cultural Diversity

Religious Life Awards The Reverend Dr. Blake Michael
Professor of Religion
The Reverend Jon Powers
University Chaplain

Student Leader Greeting Courtney Clark
Jackie Everetts
Elizabeth Urbanski
Baccalaureate 2018 Co-Chairs

Musical Awakening...
“Bring Me Home” – Tori Kelly Cara Harris
Pan Niyomthai

Reflective Awakening... <i>A Personal Reflection</i>	Adriana Rodriguez
Scriptural Awakening... <i>Passages from the Jewish Tanakh</i>	Zoë Rosenthal
Musical Awakening... <i>“Reckless Love” – Cory Asbury</i>	Katie Miller Sarah Watt
Literary Awakening... <i>“Manifesto: Mad Farmer Liberation Front” – Wendell Berry</i>	Izzy Taylor
Literary Awakening... <i>“Before You Came (Tum Jo Naa aa’e The)” – Faiz Ahmad Faiz</i>	Tayyab Elahi Jannat Mazari Abuzar Raza
Musical Awakening... <i>“Oxygen” – Steffany Gretzinger</i>	Kiersten Bender ‘20 Cay Johnson Emily Rupp
Reflective Awakening... <i>A Personal Reflection</i>	Isaac Kochman
Scriptural Awakening... <i>Passages from the Holy Bible</i>	Courtney Clark Sean McCartt
Musical Awakening... <i>“Here I am, Lord” – Dan Schutte</i>	Christopher Pessell Haley Talbot-Wendlandt
Reflective Awakening... <i>A Personal Reflection</i>	Audrey Castañeda Walker

Scriptural Awakening...

Passages from the Holy Qur'an

Ahmed Hamed, '20
Elizabeth Urbanski

Reflective Awakening...

A Personal Reflection

Emily Burns

Musical Awakening...

"In the Mornin'" – Charles Ives

Rachel Ballitch
Jiamo Zhang

Literary Awakening...

You Are What You Love by James K.A. Smith

Jackie Everetts

The Senior Class Comes Forward

Haley Talbot-Wendlandt, Organist

At this time, we invite all members of the graduating class to the stage for candle lighting and singing of the alma mater.

"Alma Mater"

1. Ohio Wesleyan, Sweetly and strong
Rises our hymn of praise for thee alone;
Heaven re-echoes it, loud let it ring,
Ohio Wesleyan! Loyal hearts sing.
2. Ohio Wesleyan! Proud is thy crown.
Rarest of laurels e'er Vict'ry has known;
Noblest achievements have hallowed thy name,
Ohio Wesleyan! Deathless thy fame.

We Awaken to Our Going Forth: The Benediction

Emily Burns
The Reverend Barry Burns

Postlude

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" – Michael Burkhardt

Haley Talbot-Wendlandt, Organist

THE BACCALAUREATE COMMITTEE 2018

The word *liturgy* means “the work of the people.” Tonight’s liturgy illustrates that original meaning. This service is a prayerful, earnest, and semester-long effort of the Class of 2018. Their goal has been consistent and conscientious: to bring together and celebrate the awesome awakenings through which God has touched their lives, informed their faith, and molded their character over the past four years at Ohio Wesleyan University. Like any series of awakenings, these four years together have been at the same time patterned and chaotic, personal and corporate, sorrowful and exultant. This celebration tonight is not intended to be comprehensive or complete, but rather allusive and illustrative. All the sights and sounds of this evening are a collage of praise to God, a tapestry of thanksgiving to acknowledge that “we have not come this far by our own power.”

Baccalaureate Committee: *Co-Chairs:* Courtney Clark, Jackie Everetts, Elizabeth Urbanski; *Members:* Iris Anderson, Audrey Castañeda Walker, Isaac Kochman, Adrianna Rodriguez, Sean McCartt, Izzy Sommerdorf

Ex-Officio: John Homan, Raissa Kanku, Mollie Marshall, Abigail Ralph; Class of 2019; Ahmed Hamed, Bridget Roddy, Noah Spicer; Class of 2020; Leia Ashikawa, Humza Nasir, Maia Virgei, Class of 2021; Associate Chaplains Mary Jeffries and Chad Johns, University Chaplain Jon Powers, Assistant to the Chaplain Sharon Hayes

Honoring Our National Flags

The flags placed at the front of Gray Chapel this evening represent all the nations of our Class of 2018. These flags represent:

The United States

Anthony Iacovetti

The Bahamas

Adrienne D'Alewyn

Brazil

Patrick Alcofra

China

Yitie Chen

Diany Li

Jiamo Zhang

Zihan Zhuang

El Salvador

Rene Garcia

India

Cuckoo Gupta

Gopika Nair

Jamaica

Ryan Black

Liberia

Keisha Cummings

Nigeria

Abdulhasib Akinlabi

Pakistan

Tayyab Elahi

Mustapha Habib

Husnain Haider

Jannat Mazari

Maha Memon

Muhammad Mouaid

Syed Raza

Peru

Audrey Castaneda Walker

Puerto Rico

Adriana Rodriguez

South Africa

Johannes Van Der Merwe

South Korea

Sihyun (Sean) Yang

Thailand

Wit Phoonsiri

Jakraraj Rungsaeng

Vietnam

Lan Nguyen

Tung Nguyen

Gray Chapel and the Rexford Keller Memorial Organ

Gray Chapel has long been Ohio Wesleyan's major chapel, concert hall, lecture hall, and place of gathering for our campus community. Since the 1880s, some of the world's leading performers and preachers, speakers and scholars, have held forth in this sacred space. Among the more recent are Congressman John Lewis, Morris Dees, Gloria Steinem, and Immaculée Ilibagiza. The chapel is named in honor of Brother David F. Gray, President of the Board of Trustees in the 1880s. In 1888, Acting President and Professor McCabe made a plea for a chapel to be built somewhere between University and Monnett Halls. Brother David F. Gray pledged \$10,000 toward such a building. When University Hall was built, the construction of the chapel was named in Brother Gray's honor.

The glorious Rexford Keller Memorial Organ, installed in 1980, was designed for Gray Chapel and was constructed by Johannes Klais Orgelbau of Bonn, Germany, one of the world's most prestigious organ builders. This splendid instrument is one of only eight built for America by the Klais firm. (The Klais organ at Asbury United Methodist Church in Delaware, Ohio, is the most recent.) It has mechanical linkage to the valves that admit air to pipes. This permits the musician infinite control over the shadings of the music. The organ, in a case of European white oak, contains 4,644 pipes arranged in 84 ranks and ranging from more than 20 feet in length to one-quarter of an inch. The pipes are composed of special alloys of tin, or of mahogany, pear wood, or redwood. The pipe shades, which are both decorative and functional, are covered with 22-carat gold leaf. The Klais instrument is the third organ to be housed in Gray Chapel since the chapel was constructed in 1893. It is one of the largest and finest modern mechanical action pipe organs to be found in an educational institution in the United States.

We are grateful to those who came before us for these dedicated resources which make this chapel and organ available to us for the worship of God. It is a solemn blessing, in the midst of an academic institution, to have such glorious facilities in which to praise the source of all knowledge and truth.

**The President's Commission
for Racial and Cultural Diversity**

The President's Commission for Racial and Cultural Diversity recognizes one student, one organization, one faculty, and one staff member for working to improve the state of racial and cultural diversity and/or social justice at OWU each year. We are grateful for the leadership, witness, and work of these outstanding individuals and groups who are honored here tonight.

**Student Diversity Award Winner:
Cara Harris**

**Faculty Diversity Award Winner:
Dr. Thomas Wolber**

**Staff Diversity Award Winner:
Dr. Chad Johns**

**Organization Diversity Award Winner:
Black Men of the Future**

UNIVERSITY RELIGIOUS LIFE AWARDS

Each of the Religious Life Awards honor an individual who exemplifies a faithful witness to the ethical, spiritual, and missional values of Ohio Wesleyan University, as delineated in the University's Charter of 1842 and the University's current Statement of Aims, as demonstrated in leadership both on campus and in the community, including church or other faith community affiliation.

These institutional honors, presented each year at the Baccalaureate Service, were cited by the John Templeton Foundation as one of the reasons for honoring Ohio Wesleyan University for its "Spiritual Growth program" in *The Templeton Guide: Colleges That Encourage Character Development – A Resource for Parents, Students, and Educators* (1999). The John Templeton Foundation declares such programs vital for college life.

"Students searching for meaning, connectedness, and significance present both a challenge and an opportunity for colleges and universities. Programs that foster spiritual growth provide a means to develop a vision of moral integrity that coheres and connects belief to behavior. Exemplary programs (*such as Ohio Wesleyan's*) affirm the integral role that spirituality and religion often play in shaping character."

This distinction has been reaffirmed in recent years by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., The United Methodist Church, the National Catholic Campus Ministry Association, the National Interfaith Youth Core, President Barack Obama's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge, and The President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

**The Bliss and Mildred Wiant Award for Outstanding Leadership in
Interfaith and Intercultural Relations**

Elizabeth Urbanski

“Christian, Jew, Muslim, shaman, Zoroastrian, stone, ground, mountain, river – each has a secret way of being with the mystery, unique, and not to be judged.” Rumi

“Hijab includes the way a person walks, talks, looks and thinks, All of it should be Done modestly and applies to both Men and Women.” “Haya (Modesty) Does not bring anything except good.” Muhammad (Peace be upon him.)

Elizabeth’s prophetic and pastoral leadership with the Interfaith Movement at Ohio Wesleyan has impacted our campus community profoundly. Her leadership with the Interfaith House, OWU Better Together, Tauheed, two Spring Break Interfaith Service Teams, Interfaith Youth Core’s Interfaith Leadership Institute, Baccalaureate leadership, and her instrumental role in collecting 3,356 diapers from fellow students for the local Delaware Diaper Bank has been grounded in her own compelling story of a faith journey that has embraced every one of us in deep and abiding ways. Her own words say it best: “I have a love for interfaith dialogue, as it’s an incredibly important tool in the fight against ignorance. Such dialogue also provides me with the opportunity of self-reflection on what it means to be both a Muslim and a white former Catholic woman of eastern European heritage in our turbulent world. As someone who belongs to both of these seemingly disparate groups, I hope (my leadership roles) will give me a framework on which to base my own interfaith interactions and provide me with a greater understanding of Muslim-Christian dynamics.”

Insight and Courage. Maturity and Modesty. Divinity and Diversity. Brilliance and Beauty. Like Rumi’s quote above, each of these virtues are core attributes of Elizabeth Urbanski, and each such virtue has a secret way of being within her, all a mystery, each unique, and none to be judged or disconnected from the rest of her sacred being. Blessed be.

**The Chaplain James Leslie Award for
Outstanding Leadership in Peace and Justice**

Hailey LaRoe

“People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.” Dorothy Day

What drives Hailey LaRoe’s civic engagement is her stirring passion for social justice. Hailey stepped into a major leadership role with one of our newer student organizations on campus, Young Democratic Socialists of America. She planned a number of major events focused on injustices and polarizing political stances that currently divide our country. Leading our partnership with the March for our Lives to end gun violence in America, Hailey organized a large number of students to speak in depth against gun violence, coordinated a sign campaign for students to take with them to the national rally in Washington, D.C., and also organized OWU student participation at the local rally in Columbus.

Hailey also has been a staple at WCSA's new Town Hall meetings, asking difficult but vital questions of the Senate, seeking transparency about how student groups are funded, enlisting greater institutional support for student activism, and encouraging WCSA leaders to listen more closely to the voices of the student body. She is also an active member of the Citizens of the World House, and is always eager to engage in dialogue about peace and justice with various members of the campus and greater Delaware communities. Hailey is not afraid to make her voice heard! She truly lives by the historic OWU Arneson Pledge that encourages students to "commit themselves to a life of service to the common good".

The Bishop Gerald Ensley Award for Outstanding Christian Leadership

Courtney Clark and Cay Johnson

COURTNEY CLARK

Courtney Clark is an incredible leader who genuinely cares for all people she meets and is willing to get to know them. Her laugh is infectious, her joy unmistakable. She, without a doubt, lives her life for Jesus and shows this in her life every day and in all of her activities on campus. Throughout her four years at OWU, Courtney has served as a leader in YoungLife (Buckeye Valley High School), Campus Crusade for Christ, and Delaware City Vineyard. After her first year with Young Life, she invited other students to become leaders with her and re-establish YoungLife as a standing club on campus. After her first summer mission with Cru in Ocean City, she was invited onto Cru's servant team on campus, where she arranged for speakers, taught at Cru weekly meetings, met with younger students to build relationships with them and hear about their faith background, and went on a Cru Summer Mission to Ecuador. In Ecuador, she started intra and interfaith conversations while on the mission trip in Guayaquil and continued these conversations in Quito when she began interning at a local Vineyard Church. Since returning from study abroad, she interns at Delaware City Vineyard, co-led a Spring Break mission trip to Ecuador with Pastor Robb Morgan, and co-led a young women's small group.

Courtney regularly shares her faith with others, even as she eagerly learns about other faith perspectives from friends and classmates of various faith backgrounds, such as House of Black Culture, Interfaith House, Athletes in Action, Rafiki Wa Africa, Cru, YoungLife, and Kappa Phi. In all these conversations, she promotes unity between Christian organizations on campus by planning worship and prayer nights together.

CAY JOHNSON

Cay Johnson shows the love of Christ to everyone she meets. She will always take the time to really get to know people and help them in whatever ways she can. She worships and proclaims her love for her faith with abandon. She is an amazing leader who is exemplary to all other students around her, and she serves Christ every day. She has been a huge part of the success of OWU's partnership with the Jubilee Conference the past four years, as she has recruited and invited dozens of students to the event. She has been a consistent member and leader in the Delaware City Vineyard (DCV) College Group, helping to lead worship and disciple other students. She has served in many other ways at her church – leading worship, teaching in Family Ministry, and serving at FEED. The mission statement of this program truly exemplifies Cay's daily work and witness in everything she does: "Because no one in our City should ever go hungry! FEED is a ministry of the Delaware City Vineyard with the mission to see that 'no one in our city would ever go hungry.' In FEED we are working to end hunger, food insecurity and food scarcity issues in and around the city of Delaware." Cay initiated and organized an annual holiday toy shop as part of the local FEED Program at DCV. This program has served hundreds of Delaware families in need during the holiday season. She twice attended the Coalition for Christian Outreach (CCO) Ocean City Beach Project, first as a participant, and then as a student intern. She has been accepted to the CCO's Fellowship program for the coming year and will be ministering to students at the University of Memphis in partnership with Hope Church.

The Cheryl McGinnis Award for Outstanding Catholic Leadership

Dominique Garrett

“I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in every person's life. God is in everyone's life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else - God is in this person's life. You can - you must - try to seek God in every human life.”

Pope Francis

Over the past four years, Dominique has shown faithful commitment to her Catholic community by volunteering with various Catholic schools throughout the diocese. She has served as a volunteer in the first grade classroom at St. Mary school, helping with various classroom activities and joining the class for Mass. She has also worked with Immaculate Conception Parish, setting up the lighting for the summer festival, directing volunteers and helping with the layout. When her father passed away her freshman year at OWU, Dominique eagerly took on his role as unofficial electrician for the summer festival. Dominique also has helped the Bishop Watterson High School track team by coaching the throwers when they were without a coach. Here on campus, Dominique led an OWU Spring Break Interfaith Service Team to New Orleans, where they volunteered with The Saint Bernard Project and helped rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina; a project that was eye opening for her when leading religious discussions amongst the diverse group.

To use her many talents and passions in so many different ways to impact the lives of so many different kinds of people is truly a gift to us all, and a tribute to the solidity of her faith tradition as a Catholic, and her commitment to the vision of Ohio Wesleyan, “to educate moral leaders for a global society.”

The Taban Blake Award for Outstanding Servant Leadership

Jackie Everetts

“Service which is rendered without joy helps neither the servant nor the served. But all other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy.”

Mahatma Gandhi

“The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first.”

Robert K. Greenleaf

Jackie is active as a member of Citizens of the World House, and as a senior, is a co-chair for Baccalaureate. Her house projects have helped to spread awareness of cultural sensitivity and understanding. Jackie served first-year students for two years as a leader on Fresh X (now Camp Oh-Wooo), helping them through the transition into college and welcoming them to campus. She has been a member of the Outdoor Ministry Team for four years and helped to lead meetings and activities. She was the student leader on the Fall Break Wilderness Trek to Virginia. This year, she was the President of OWU Faith & Justice, giving new leadership and energy to the group, and leading students in awareness of justice issues through the lens of faith and sacred scripture. Jackie is a quiet, behind-the-scenes servant leader who is gifted at teaching and encouraging others to learn and make their own discoveries. She has been accepted to the Coalition for Christian Outreach (CCO) Fellowship program and will serve college students here at OWU this coming year in the Wilderness Ministry of the Chaplain's Office.

**The Arthur S. Flemming Award for Outstanding Leadership
in the Civic Arts**

Cara Harris

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Cara has been a core leader in the Civic Arts throughout her time at OWU, most recently and most prominently as the President of Student Government (WCSA) and the President of The Black Student Union. In both of these key positions of civic leadership, Cara exemplifies the epitome of a great leader: she shares power, she puts the needs of others first, and she helps people develop and perform at their highest level of potential. These virtues of civic leadership come naturally to Cara. In both weekly Senate and Executive meetings, and at Black Student Union meetings, Cara consistently encourages others to offer opinions and insights, and allows others to come to decisions and conclusions on their own, while offering guidance and support. She does not operate as a pinnacle of power, but more as a gentle guide who is there to lead and develop her fellow students. She constantly has the best interest of the whole student body in mind, and strives to find ways for each organization to meet the unique needs of the particular population they serve. At the same time, Cara continues to grow as a person and leader through rigorous self-reflection and intentional learning. Cara takes on the tough challenges with deep, thoughtful reflection and a humility that makes her rise to the top as Civic Arts leader on our campus, our community, and our global society.

The Rabbi Andi Fisher Berlin Award for Outstanding Jewish Leadership

Zoë Rosenthal

“When we can fully embrace all of ourselves, we become whole. When we honor every individual in our community, we develop skill and emotional depth otherwise inaccessible. May each soul, each element of the divine in us, find its place in our community. And through them, may we find the highest of ourselves.”

Rabbi Andi Fisher Berlin, *I am Rebecca*

A person who finds balance between self and service always has been a rarity; the culture of higher education and young adulthood is no exception. Yet the wisdom of Jewish culture is to not only find that balance, but also to live it and celebrate it. Zoë Rosenthal is an exemplar of such a quest. Her dedicated service to the Jewish community of Ohio Wesleyan has been consistent and substantial. She was one of the founders of the renewed Hillel chapter on campus, and served as secretary and an instrumental leader in both the religious and cultural celebrations of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and annual Passover Seders. At the same time, Zoë has served the greater university community in myriad ways: Admissions Prospective Student Caller; House Manager for the Department of Theatre and Dance, Delta Zeta sorority member and Pam Hellenic representative, Astronomy Club, Chorus, A Cappella group, Theater, Poetry Club, and Student Government, Event Planning Committee. Zoë also finds time to serve her home community in a variety of roles, such as a swim counselor and teacher at a day camp and day school; an arts and craft specialist at Jewish youth camps; and an active volunteer at New York Cares and the Delaware Speech and Hearing Center. We celebrate Zoë for her journey of self and service which exemplifies both her Jewish culture and her commitment to the ideals of Ohio Wesleyan University.

**The Robert and Bette Meyer Award for faithful witness
to the ethical, spiritual, and missional values of Ohio Wesleyan University
as delineated in the University's Charter and Statement of Aims**

Nancy Bihl Rutkowski

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."
John Quincy Adams

For over three decades on this campus, Nancy has been the one who consistently embodies "scholarship, leadership, and service that enriches both Church and society." Her service to the institution is rooted in the core Mission Statement of Ohio Wesleyan: to 1) impart knowledge, 2) develop and enhance certain important capabilities of students; and 3) place education in the context of values.

Nancy imparts an unending influence and impact on leaders, who then go out into the world and make significant contributions to their individual societies. Indeed, Nancy has sent forth into the world a countless number of leaders who were cultivated with great care under her skilled guidance and passionate mentorship. This past year, two of her former students' leadership experiences were featured in the book, *The Student Leadership Challenge*. Every year, dozens of students visit her office on a regular basis, and countless alumni come back frequently to campus to visit her, and to thank her for her counsel, encouragement, and training. In addition, every year, there are dozens of faculty, staff, and community members who visit Nancy on a regular basis just to soak up her positive energy, her kind demeanor, and her faith witness so deeply grounded in her Catholic community. It is well overdue that we all, as a University community, take a moment to thank this Wonder Woman for her powerful presence in our midst!

**The Bishop Francis Enmer Kearns Award for faithful witness
to the ethical, spiritual, and missional values of Ohio Wesleyan University
as delineated in the University's Charter and Statement of Aims**

Dr. Lynda Hall

Professor, researcher, administrator, role-model, interfaith mission team advisor, mediator, advocate, counselor, consoler, challenger, quiet-but-potent prophetic voice...Lynda Hall is a Scholar and Servant Leader to us all at Ohio Wesleyan – in her classroom, in her office, in her community, and in her church. In the midst of her many teaching and administrative duties, she yet finds time to be a faculty mentor/advisor to a student interfaith service team to Philadelphia, making lasting connections with the students of various faith backgrounds. She takes her personal time to accompany OWU students to Washington, D.C. for the March for Our Lives Rally, and for the Women's Rallies. She sets aside even more time to personally value the work of students in and out of the classroom; serving as a steady presence of support at countless student events, performances, fundraisers, and activities on campus.

In her classroom, students consistently report that she goes “above and beyond” to help students be successful; they speak openly about her kind demeanor and how they feel comfortable talking to her; so many students simply say, “We love her”. Lynda is deeply involved in her community and her church through a number of service programs and organizations. In her gentle but clarion way, she is outspoken about the injustices she sees, and she fights for equal rights for her students and for our global society. Lynda's passion for social justice and equality for all people includes, in a very special and meaningful way, the marginalized students of OWU. She is truly the epitome of what it means to be a “moral leader in a global society.”

John and Charles Wesley Lifetime Exemplary Service Award

Thomas Burns

One student's essay speaks for us all: "Professor Burns has been a mentor and source of support for me both academically and personally throughout my time at Ohio Wesleyan. I took his UC 160 class the fall of my freshman year, and he is one professor that has been with me throughout my growth and development. I appreciate that when he is called to lead or go beyond his faculty duties, he accepts his calling with grace and humility. For example, when I asked him to read to a group of children I was working with one summer, he gave one of the most passionate, emotional readings of a children's book that I had ever witnessed. This past spring, when I asked him to be a faculty advisor for the Lakota Interfaith Service Team, he accepted with an open mind and an open heart, and he helped create one of the most memorable experiences I have had through OWU programming. One of the most profound things about Professor Burns is the way in which he deeply reflects about himself and the world around him. Just recently, he published a reflection on his experiences on the Rosebud Reservation in the Delaware Gazette, and it moved me to tears. He has a sense of humility and willingness to learn that is rare to encounter, and I appreciate the ways in which he takes on new experiences and situations as opportunities for learning, growth, and development. The second most inspiring thing about Professor Burns is his love and passion for his students and his work. He is passionate when he teaches, and he is excited by the potential his students have. He is the only professor I know who described himself as being excited to grade his students' papers. Every Friday, he pours himself into his programs at the Perkins Observatory. The love he has and shares with others has truly been a highlight of my Ohio Wesleyan experience."

As Tom retires, we look with gratitude upon his years at Ohio Wesleyan and recognize that the light of his star has illuminated the lives of more students than we will ever know.

OWU's Motto & Seal

"In lumine tuo videbimus lumen" is Ohio Wesleyan's official motto. In English, it means "In Thy Light We Shall See Light" or, more plainly, "In Your Light We See Light." The motto is a quote from Psalms 36:9. The biblical "thou" is obviously a reference to God who is the creator of all life and the light in the darkness. After all, OWU was founded by Methodists in 1842 who looked at God as the bedrock of all things. The open book we see in OWU's seal is therefore the Bible, not just any old textbook. Maybe it even shows the page from whence the quote was taken. Thirty-two light rays or spokes emanate from the tome in the form of a wheel – the light of God's inspiration and guidance. The number 32 is no coincidence. Those interested in numerology know that it is a holy number laden with both Christian, non-Christian, and pre-Christian meanings. It often suggests completeness and perfection. There are 32 pieces on the chess board. Some have claimed that the face of God would be formed by 32 letters of the alphabet if we knew them all. An interpretation that makes sense in the context of a university is to say that the number represents the 32 areas of inquiry, paths of wisdom, and/or God's ministries. Surrounding the Bible is a triangular shield (the trinity) that protects us from worldly sins and wickedness. A shield is an armorial device, but there is no complementary sword or spear. It is intended for defensive and peaceful purposes only, not for militant ones. If we trust God's word, i.e., the Bible, we are safe and protected. There could be other meanings hidden in plain sight, but the essential message is clear: Ohio Wesleyan University was founded as a school deeply rooted in biblical values, as a shiny city upon a hill, and a righteous fortress in an imperfect world. Its graduates were meant to be followers of God, peacefully doing His will and performing His work. It might also be noteworthy to point out that OWU's seal does not condemn, reject, and retreat from the world. On the contrary, the world is the stage, theater, or arena where we must stand, speak, and act. OWU sees itself not separate from the world, but as a part of it.

How is Ohio Wesleyan University related to the United Methodist Church?

1842 Official Charter and Current Statement of Aims

Since its founding, Ohio Wesleyan University has maintained its connection with the Methodist (now United Methodist) Church, offering a quality of scholarship, leadership, and service that has enriched both Church and Society. Its charter provided that “the University is forever to be conducted on the most liberal principles, accessible to all religious denominations, and designed for the benefit of our citizens in general.” In spirit and heritage, the University defines itself as a community of teachers and students devoted to the free pursuit of truth. It attempts to develop in its students qualities of intellect and character which will be useful no matter what they choose to do in later life.

One of the three primary objectives of the University is to place education in the context of values. Liberal education seeks to develop in students understanding of themselves, appreciation of others, and willingness to meet the responsibilities of citizenship in a free society. It recognizes that trained sensitivity to private and public value issues, grounded in a sound grasp of various cultural heritages, is important for maturation and for living a good life. It accords high honor to intellectual honesty. Consistent with our Methodist tradition, Ohio Wesleyan University encourages concern for all religious and ethical issues and stimulates its students to examine their own views in light of these issues.

Official Affiliation with the United Methodist Church

In keeping with these sacred and social commitments, and based upon a regular review of its academic program, religious life, student life, and financial standing, Ohio Wesleyan University is officially affiliated with The United Methodist Church as a United Methodist institution of higher education.

Special Notes of Thanks!

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