

## All.together Campus Ministry 2022-2023 Academic Year Report

Dear people of the Southeast Michigan Synod,

I am so excited to report to you all of the amazing things God has done in our All.together Campus Ministry community this recent academic year! This was our second academic year as an official student organization at Wayne State University and our first ever that we entered into with an elected student leadership team, which we call the Dream Team. This leadership team consisted of our President, Joslyn Dozier, our Creative/Social Media Leader, Maddi Ashwood, our Social Justice Leader, Jasmine Keys, and our Fun Leader, Logan Darden. The Dream Team met before the Fall semester for a leadership retreat and we spent time preparing for the year ahead, growing in our understanding of our personal strengths and growth areas using the Enneagram, and we practiced the art of restorative circles, something we were able to offer to our campus through the form of a healing circle during Black History Month.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves talking about Black History Month. Let's take it back to the start of the semester in September where our student leaders created various opportunities for our community to engage including weekly community groups where we shared food, fellowship, and had faithful conversations. We hosted a homecoming tailgate, a Halloween party, and a Friendsgiving potluck. We took field trips to Hell, Michigan, Eastern Market after Dark, a haunted maze in Lenox, MI, a Fall Retreat at Stony Lake Camp, and to Ann Arbor on three different occasions: a welcome BBQ at Pastor Ben's house, a lecture by Kristin Kobes Du Mez, author of *Jesus and John Wayne*, and a Holiday Party at Pastor Ben's. We also got out and served at the W food Pantry on Wayne State's campus, we hosted a Stocktober food drive for the pantries at UofM-Dearborn and Henry Ford College, we made 300 sandwiches for the Noah Project, and wrote and delivered 100 Christmas cards for the residents of the Medilodge Nursing Home in Taylor.

And that was just the Fall Semester! The Winter Semester quickly got underway after students returned from break with a new thing we started where we visited the Cathedral Church of St. Paul for worship on the Third Sundays of the month. Students were invited to stick around after the 11am service for coffee hour and Messy Church (a way of being *church* for all-ages to join in experiencing fun and faith formative activities).

Our community groups continued on Wednesday nights, and in January we had a series of conversations called "Be Real." These conversations addressed the culture around new years resolutions and how we can be our real selves, not our ideal selves. Then in February we used the theme of Black History Month to inform our topics we covered including conversations like *Jesus is (still) Black*, *America's Original Sin*, *Womanism*, and the *Theology of Martin Luther King Jr.* Then in March we were able to feature a conversation about Revival in light of the Asbury Revival that had occurred in late February, we had an International Women's Day Spa Day, we were off one week for spring break, we hosted an Opioid Overdose Training, and finally we closed out Women's History Month with a conversation about *Badass Women of the Bible*.

In addition to these regular monthly and weekly opportunities we also served at the W Food Pantry and Wardrobe, we attended a Pistons Game together to celebrate Maddi's birthday (our Social Media Leader). The Winterfest student involvement fair got derailed by a winter storm, but we were able to regroup and be present for the rescheduled Winterfest where we met over 50 students who expressed interest in our community. Then came our Midwinter Retreat at the Potawatomi Inn in Pokagon State Park in Indiana where we were joined by folks from the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan for a weekend of discussions, worship, and games all centered around the theme of Theology of Play. We even enjoyed the toboggan run they had!

Then, just days after we got back we were hit with the news of the shooting that took place at MSU. The students agreed that community group should be cut short the Wednesday following the shooting so we could attend the Vigil being hosted at the Cathedral. Our student Maddi Ashwood and Pastor Ben served as readers for that vigil service.

The week after was the beginning of Lent so we kept with our tradition of hosting a Body Positive Fat Tuesday table where we gave away 200 paczki in only one hour! We also gave each student a sticker reminding them that they are fearfully and wonderfully made as Psalm 139 tells us. Ash Wednesday was affected by the ice storm so we weren't able to do Ashes to Go on campus, but we provided students with an at home liturgy that they could do privately or with a small group of people.

The final events of Black history month that we were able to carry out were a trip to the Underground Railroad Living Museum at First Congregational Church and our student leaders hosted a healing circle after a heavy month of death from the shooting at MSU to the video being released showing the death of Tyree Nichols by Police in Memphis.

Then came the culminating moment of our Winter semester, our spring break Justice Journey to Philadelphia. From March 13th-18th Joslyn, Logan, Maddi, Shemaiah, Nia, Lauren, and Pastor Ben traveled to Pennsylvania where we were hosted by the wonderful folks of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale and we made trips into the city each day to visit various places and learn about how they were responding to justice issues in their community. The list of places we visited is below:

- The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas (The first Black Episcopal Church founded by Rev. Absalom Jones)
- Welcome Church (An ELCA congregation proclaiming the hope and love of a gracious God to all people and especially to people experiencing homelessness)
- Reading Terminal Market
- University Lutheran Church for Feast Incarnate (a meal that was started out of a response to the stigma faced by people with AIDS, but now serves a community of food insecure folks in Philly every Tuesday!)
- United Lutheran Seminary where we received a wonderful tour and had an amazing conversation with Bishop Patricia Davenport of the Southeast Pennsylvania Synod!
- Max's Steaks for some of the most delicious cheesesteaks and hoagies we've ever had!

- Independence Hall National Park
- The Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral for their Wednesday night community meal hosted by the [University City Hospitality Coalition](#).
- We visited with a member of the [Germantown Residents for Economic Alternatives Together](#).
- Philadelphia's Magic Gardens
- The William Still House
- Dinner at Pastor Ben's Aunt Nellie's house.
- We were hosted again by Bishop Davenport for breakfast, and we left her with the [Franciscan Blessing](#) and an anointing.
- We visited the Museum of the American Revolution for their Black Founders exhibit.
- We had a delicious final dinner with Rev. Fritz Fowler and his husband Trevor of Trinity Lutheran, Lansdale.
- The church even fueled us up with donuts before we left and we made one last trip to Asbury Park, NJ to see the Atlantic Ocean before heading home.

We returned from Philadelphia safely, and had only one month left of the semester. Time was flying, but we had a wonderful Holy Week, we continued our weekly community groups where we started the process of becoming a Reconciling in Christ campus Ministry by inviting students to craft our [welcome statement](#), we celebrated earth day by creating some recycled collage art, we held an information session about our trip to the Holy Lands in May of 2024, and we held elections for our 2023-2024 leadership team! We finished the year with some fun and festivities by attending a Tigers Game, and holding a Baccalaureate worship service and Dinner to honor our graduates and celebrate another amazing year of ministry.

Behind the scenes, our board of directors grew as we added three new members this year: Rev. Halim Shukair of Mother of the Savior Church in Dearborn, Nicole McCarthy Associate Director of Living Water Ministries, and Eric Ash Professor of History at Wayne State. The board met to adopt bylaws for our organization which led to us officially receiving our 501(c)(3) status, and this allowed for us to finally establish our own All.together bank account and online giving platform. The board also elected a new Executive Board with Nicole McCarthy serving as our President, Professor Eric Ash serving as our Secretary, and Carol Welsh staying on in a temporary position as our Treasurer. These elections made room for our charter President Jon Carlson to roll off the board, and we are so grateful for the time, attention, and energy he has provided to our ministry as we got off the ground in these first 20 months.

On a personal note, Pastor Ben and his wife Tara are excited to welcome their second child who is due on May 15th, so if you don't see him at Synod Assembly, you'll know why!

If you have any questions please feel free to email Pastor Ben at [ben@togethercommunity.org](mailto:ben@togethercommunity.org) and you can see pictures by following us on Instagram [@all.togethercommunity!](#)