



Cal Aggie Christian Association
FALL 2011

In the House

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Our Christian Identity

BY REV. KRISTIN STONEKING,
DIRECTOR & CAMPUS MINISTER

Several years ago, the University of California, Davis, decided that unless a group was officially a part of the university, "Cal Aggie" could not be used in their title. Because the Cal Aggie Christian Association had already been incorporated for several decades when this decision was made, we were allowed to maintain our name. We are proud of the "Cal Aggie" in our title and that it signifies that our roots and participation in the life of our campus and community are deep.

We are proud of the second part of our name, "Christian Association," as well. As a Christian Association, we have sought always to follow the example of Christ in the midst of the university: to be a place where students could be fed physically and spiritually, worship in the Christian tradition, be guided in connecting their studies with their faith, and serve God and others.

The word "Christian" is essential to our history and present mission: our relationship to the tradition of Christ and the church informs our sense of love and hospitality, energizes us when we are exhausted and overwhelmed with our task, and directs us toward a future of love and justice. But for some, the word "Christian" is deeply problematic in its connections to colonialism, perceived exclusivism, and an air of triumphalism. These presumptions and perceptions then become problematic for us as we continue to claim the word and identity of "Christian."

Anyone who knows anything about CA House knows that our approach is radically inclusive. Moreover, we understand a critical piece of our ministry as addressing the discriminations and dominations that have diminished humanity and the earth as a result of past and present political realities. One of the things persons have most appreciated about CA House over the years has been our ability to claim a Christian identity that pays attention to and is sensitive to these perceptions and legacies. Our actions and our identity as Christians are inextricably linked.

These questions of Christian identity have taken on new complexity with the opening of the Multifaith Living Community. Within our own community, how do we proudly proclaim our Christian identity without triggering preconceived notions about Christian hegemony? The answer, we are finding, is lived out in relationship, through conversation, through taking chances and moving forward, reflecting,

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correcting and moving a bit farther again toward a reality that honors the integrity of religious paths, individuals' agency and a community that assists in affecting liberation.

The way is not straight and it is not narrow; it is a process of boldness and humility, navigation and negotiation, honesty and reconciliation. In so many ways, we are moving through uncharted territory. And yet we feel that the lessons we are learning about being in relationship, about love and justice, and the environment that makes that discovery possible, are essential to our ability to live faithfully as Christians, and as people of faith. Thank you for your support and the ways in which you make this exploration possible. ☞

Ushi Strouling

CA House Sangha

Meditation is a practice integral to many of the world's religions. Practiced for millenia, meditation has been a path to higher states of awareness and intimate connection with God, as well as the more mundane goals of relaxation and greater satisfaction in life. Beginning this fall, CA House is offering twice-weekly meditation times for any and all who may be interested in exploring what meditation is and how it can be a positive aspect of one's daily life.

Held on *Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:30 - 10:00 am*, sessions will be led by CA House staff member Brett Kersten who has been practicing meditation in the Theravada Buddhist tradition for over 25 years. No experience is necessary and instruction in basic mindfulness practices will be gently offered to those exploring meditation for the first time. *Please contact CA House for more information.* ☞



Living in Community

BY CHELSEA GUENTHER,
COMMUNITY COORDINATOR



Now that I'm beginning my second year at CA House, I've been reflecting on my experience of the past year. I find myself thinking about what it means for me as a Christian, and CA House as a Christian organization, to be doing this work. In my role as Community Coordinator I give tours to potential residents, and a question that comes up frequently is, "So, uh, this place is Christian?"

Students are wondering how it is that we are a Christian organization, yet we run multifaith programming and the Multi-faith Living Community. For me, these two things do not contradict one another. I do multifaith work precisely because I am a Christian. Jesus calls me to love, so I try to love as fully as I can. Jesus calls me to work for peace and understanding, so I try to do that too.

Yet living out this commitment to being both Christian and dedicated to multifaith engagement can be a difficult balancing act in practice. I find myself wanting to not be "too Christian," as I know the historical weight that my religion carries when I interact with persons of other religions. It can dominate others without me even realizing what is happening, and it provides a cultural template for religion in our country that excludes many. I confess that even after all the interfaith work I have participated in, I am guilty of forgetting that beliefs and practices of other religions can't simply be translated to fit my Christian understanding. For example, on many Wednesday nights here at CA House, I have sought students to say the blessing before the community meal. Several times students gave me confused looks. It took me a while, but eventually, after students explained their hesitation, I figured out that the concept of a generic blessing before a meal (as opposed to a specific prayer for a specific event or food) is not necessarily a part of every religious tradition.

My assumptions about religion, rooted in my own religion of Christianity, can be barriers in multifaith work. Yet I cannot easily unlearn the lens through which I see the world. Should I try to be less Christian, then? I don't think that is the answer. That would contradict the kind of religious pluralism for which I work. True multifaith engagement creates space where everyone can be fully, deeply faithful to their religious tradition or spiritual journey and also in relationship with persons from many faith traditions. It seems counterintuitive, but to be fully engaged in multifaith relationships requires being grounded in one's own tradition or identity. I want to be more Christian in my work, as being more devoted to being like Jesus will make me more patient, humble, kind, loving, and open towards others, especially when those things are difficult. It will also make me more aware and careful in my relationships with others, more able to reflect on my assumptions and when they are showing up in my interactions.

At CA House, we are not about a kind of "it's all good" interfaith work where our differences are glossed over, where people are asked to be less religious so that we might find a common denominator. That requires us to hold our commitments in balance, and it is not easy. We must engage from a sense of wholeness; anything else is less than true engagement. At the same time we have to pay attention to the ways we are asking others to be like us, to

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CA House's Annual Indian Dinner and Silent Auction

The annual Indian dinner and silent auction to benefit activities of the CA House and Multifaith Living Community is scheduled for **Saturday evening, October 15th at Davis Community Church**. The doors of the Fellowship Hall at DCC will open at 5:30 pm to allow you to view and bid on the many silent auction items. Dinner will be served at 6:30 pm.

The Indian dinner prepared by local resident Mary Philip and colleagues has become an annual event. The menu will include Indian specialties such as samosas, chicken and vegetable biryani, sautéed vegetables, raita, rice pudding and cardamom tea. The silent auction will feature vacations, entertainment items, food, art and services donated by Davis businesses and CA House board members.

For more information, to purchase tickets, or to donate items to the silent auction, please contact CA House at (530) 753-2000 or cahouse@cahouse.org. The suggested donation for tickets is \$40 for adults, \$20 for youth/students. ♪



Sikh Community at CA House

BY ANGAD OBEROI, RAVNEET SINGH, AND VIKRAM SINGH

I have totally forgotten my jealousy of others, since I found the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy. ||1||Pause||

No one is my enemy, and no one is a stranger. I get along with everyone. ||1||

- Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji,
Eternal Guru of the Sikhs and a gift to all Humanity.

Since the mid 13th century, the Sikh religion and lifestyle has evolved through times of great religious intolerance and persecution. Thankfully, today we live in a time where religious diversity is respected and even appreciated. An example of this is CA House, where we have been granted the privilege to live in a community where religion and morals are valued. The Multifaith Living Community gives us an opportunity to live within the guidelines of Sikhism while simultaneously fulfilling our obligations to society. Sikhism is a difficult way of life to follow in the present century, with so many negative connotations associated with the "turban," which is part of the Sikh uniform. A Sikh may have difficulties, like some of us did, by being the outcast in other communities. The MLC, however, has had a welcoming atmosphere that promotes this uniqueness and commitment to our faith. Besides this, living with other Sikhs has made our faith grow more in multiple ways.

The founder of the faith, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, instilled three rules that every Sikh should follow. The first is Nam Japo, which means that one should continually meditate and remember God's name. Kirt Karo is the next one, and this means one should live a hardworking family life by earning through honest means and always being truthful. Lastly, Guru Nanak Dev Ji said that we should share our wealth with others, Vand Chakna. Although this is a lifelong journey and we have a long way to go, all of us have made progress in each of these ideals. We have done this by helping with the Sikh Cultural Association, Kirtan Nights, mediation or simran, community service or seva, and learning from each others' life experiences.

Before coming to Davis and throughout our adolescence, our parents and families focused all their energy in making us resolute regarding our faith. This was primarily achieved by having a routine that adhered to the three principles laid out by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. When time came to leave our comfortable spheres of existence called home, the true test of our faith and determination began. The bi-weekly kirtan nights held at CA house offered an opportunity for Sikhs to get together and support each other in their journey toward this religion. These nights where students got together and meditated and sang hymns or shabads became the one night everybody looked

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Welcome to Our 2011-12 CA House Interns

MAHSEA EVANS,
SEMINARY INTERN



Though born on the East Coast, I have found myself wonderfully enthralled with the libations of the seemingly endless possibilities offered from California's conspicuous cup. I am ever enthused by a desire to discover how to best develop and divulge my experiences, gifts, and passions in service to a greater emergence of what Dr. King referred to as the Beloved Community. I am a third year seminarian at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley and an associate minister at Inner Light Ministries in Santa Cruz; an omni-faith spiritual community dedicated to radical inclusivity and social justice.

From performing spoken word in poet's cafes in New York to settling 3,000 miles away in the (non) winter golden lands bordering the Pacific, I am fortunate to have my path lead me to CA House in Davis. I am inspired by its mission to create a multi-faith intentional living community. In a world where our interrelatedness is increasingly inescapable, providing a space to explore creative solutions to mutual concerns by mining our rich religious resources together is imperative. There is also a special healing when we are able to simply sit at a table together and break bread; sharing our stories and our essential humanity.

I am honored to participate in the sublime alchemy that transforms spiritual revelations into a "revolution of values" that impact individual lives and institutions alike. I am grateful for CA House for making this possible. ☞



EMILY PICKENS-JONES,
CHRISTIAN PROGRAMMING INTERN

My name is Emily Pickens-Jones and I am proud to say that I am continuing as the Christian Programming Intern for part of the 2011-2012 year. I am going into my fifth year of school ma-

joring in international relations and minoring in music. After attending two other universities and spending much of my life moving around various parts of California, I found a home in Davis and even more so at CA House.

Now with a year of experience under my belt on the student leadership team and as a resident of the MLC, I am excited

to serve my role while exploring new perspectives in the coming year. Through leading Monday night worship and being part of an incredible staff, I will use my position to help others, especially the new students, to explore the myriad of opportunities found through CA House. In my membership of the United Methodist Church and as the daughter of two progressive ministers, I have been a participant of ecumenical worship and interfaith dialogue throughout my life. This past year at CA House has continued to enrich my religious beliefs in more ways than I can possibly describe. It is a wonderful place for all community members to explore who they are and what it means to live a spiritual lifestyle as a college student.

When I'm not studying or helping out around CA House, I love reading, being a movie critic, traveling, and singing. I have one quarter left in Davis, then in the winter I leave for Tanzania where I will finish up my degree. I look forward to seeing what this coming year has to offer both at CA House and abroad. ☞

TOM ZOLOT, MULTIFAITH
PROGRAMMING INTERN



Hello CA House. I am Tom Zolot and am looking forward very much to being your new Multi-Faith coordinator. I am a senior Linguistics major and live permanently in town in a Unitarian Universalist Co-op. I converted to the open faith tradition of UUism in my senior year of high school and have been involved in the faith since. I currently help run the local Middle School programming at the Unitarian Church of Davis. I also am an avid gardener and craft center fanatic. I grew up nearby in Dixon and came to UC Davis fall 2010.

I am very excited about the possibilities of the next year. I am hoping to be a spark for cross-religious communication and explorations. The Wednesday night events will hopefully become staples in CA house attendee's lives for exploration and growth. We will hopefully throughout the year come together not just for dinner and conversation, but I hope we can look further than the CA house walls, getting into the community with service and open minds. Feel free to email me with thoughts, dreams or criticisms. tjzolat@ucdavis.edu ☞

TATEV TOVMASYAN,
COMMUNITY ASSISTANT

I am overjoyed to be the community assistant for CA House this year. When I moved from Los Angeles last year, CA House became my home and this past year has been one of the most wonderful years that I could have ever imagined.



I met incredible people, was part of some wondrous events and learned from my peers more than words are able to say. Every minute that I spent at CA House, I discovered more things about myself and those around me. I am a fourth year Linguistics and Russian major and thanks to the community members my workload did not seem so terrible. They helped me in any way that a person could be helped.

This year as a community assistant I hope to get to know my fellow CA House members on a more personal level, plan events that will include everyone in the community and will strengthen what CA House stands for. I wish to be more involved with all the volunteer work that the CA House advocates and add my share in helping those who truly need my help. In addition to all the awesome events that will be happening in the community, I have to say that I am the most excited about spending time with all the intelligent and diverse people who reside in our well balanced and peaceful community. ☺

("Sikh Community" continued from page 4)

forward to for the peace and tranquility it offered. More importantly we got an opportunity to educate other members of the community regarding the tenets and practices of Sikhism.

The fact that so many students, often more than 25 to 30, got together for kirtan night was a testament to the importance kirtan has in the hearts of Sikhs. Kirtan, more specifically simran, is an opportunity for Sikhs to attain salvation or liberation. But it is not so easy as to just sit and recite. As told by our Guru Granth Sahib Ji, kirtan with absolute reverence, absolute faith, and absolute dedication is what matters. In the midst of mid-terms, friendship dramas, bicycle failures, and thursday night football games, such absolute dedication was very difficult to achieve. Thus, kirtan night became an event for Sikh students in Davis to grow spiritually in terms of learning how to do simran, how to do kirtan, and how to fulfill the purpose of this human life. It is observed that doing something in a group, or saadh sangat, makes that goal easier to achieve. Kirtan night made it possible for saadh sangat to take place, and became an opportunity for learning, sharing, and most importantly advancing in one's spiritual journey in the midst of college life.

In addition to the kirtan and meditation at kirtan night, there was also another tenet of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's being followed: Vand Chakna. By preparing a meal of some sort for the attendees, Sikhs got an opportunity to do seva, or serve others. Started by Guru Nanak Dev Ji himself to advocate equality, langar is a fundamental concept in Sikhism where anybody of any cast, sex, creed, or religion is given a free hot meal. Whether this was in the form of pizza, enchiladas, an indian meal of rice and daahl (lentil soup) or the plain old cookies and milk, students took turns in signing up for the langar following each kirtan night. Not only did students get a chance to do seva, but this also became a means of attracting more people to attend kirtan night, because as every college student knows a free meal in college is a luxury too good to pass up. In addition this food became a conversation starter for individuals of other faiths who wanted to learn more about Sikhism, or freshmen and other students who had never attended a kirtan night before.



Sikh students gather at the MLC for Kirtan night.

According to Sikhi, the company of other "seekers of truth" is essential for spiritual progress. We consider ourselves very fortunate that we have the opportunity here at UC Davis to get together and form Saadh Sangat. Although this is partly due to having a larger Sikh population here than most other schools, it would not have been possible without cooperation from the CA house staff and residents. Not only did the MLC provide a nurturing environment for us to grow individually as Sikhs, but it also gave the Sikh Cultural Association a place to host Kirtan Nights and other events. We felt very comfortable and at home (with good reason) using this as our venue and the attendees also appreciated the convenience and accepting attitude of the residents. It was also a good opportunity for more people to learn about the CA House. A number of current residents actually discovered the MLC by coming to Kirtan Night and then decided to live here because of how much they liked it. This is a great place for us to live because many of the values in the MLC covenant are shared by the Sikh Faith, such as religious tolerance and working together for the betterment of humanity. In closing, we would like to share a lesson taught to us by Guru Granth Sahib Ji and echoed in the sentiment of every effort to promote a happy and peaceful future: *"Do not utter even a single harsh word; your True Lord and Master abides in all. Do not break anyone's heart; these are all priceless jewels. ||129||"* ☺

“Common Values, Common Word” Campaign Update

BY TED ADAMS, VICE-CHAIR
CA HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



In last Spring’s newsletter the CA House Board of Directors and staff launched our “Common Values, Common Word” Campaign, a fundraising effort that offers a small number of donors the opportunity to make a significant gift to the future ministry of CA House and the Multifaith Living Community, and to leave a legacy for decades to come. We invited donors who responded to this great challenge to suggest a name for one of our six townhouses, and we were delighted that Mary Jean and Andy Burke stepped forward and made the leading gift to the naming campaign.

Now we are pleased to report on further progress. In May the Board of Directors recognized Glen and Barbara Erickson for their significant and ongoing support of CA House. Between them, they have served on the CA House Board for more than 30 (Barb and Glen verified this number) years. Because their financial gifts more than fulfill the major donor criteria for the campaign, they have been invited to suggest a name for one of our six Multifaith Living Community townhouses.

A third effort is underway to honor Reverend John Moore and to remember Barbara Moore for their vital leadership and service to CA House, the Davis community and progressive

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Bishop’s Visit

In May, CA House was proud to host Bishop Warner Brown, Conference Staff person Kelly Newell, newly confirmed youth and their sponsors from around the Cal-Nevada Annual conference for a day of worship and fellowship. After an inspiring worship at Davis UMC led by musicians from The Table UMC in Sacramento (where board member Matt Smith is co-pastor), the group of about 40 persons travelled to CA House for a presentation on our ministry. A tour of the Multifaith Living Community was followed by a delicious dinner utilizing ingredients from the student farm prepared by CA House friend Helen Roland and many students. A great time was had by all and we were delighted to share the wonderful ministry we are doing here with the Bishop and conference youth, several of whom exclaimed, “I would love to live here!”



In front of CA House (l-r) Kristin Reksc, Ashley Symons, Bishop Warner Brown, Rev. Kristin Stoneking, Emily Pickens-Jones, Jamie Fisher.



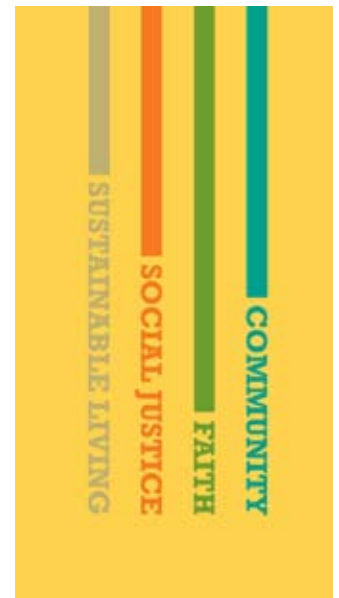
YES, I want to support the ministry of Cal Aggie Christian Association!

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Enclosed is my gift of \$1000 \$500 \$100 Other \$ _____
 I prefer to make an annual pledge of \$2500 \$1200 \$500 Other \$ _____
to be paid in installments of \$ _____ every month quarter year.

Please make checks payable to: Cal Aggie Christian Association.

CA House ♦ Cal Aggie Christian Association ♦ 433 Russell Blvd. ♦ Davis, CA 95616
Phone: (530) 753-2000 ♦ Fax: (530) 753-0132 ♦ cahouse@cahouse.org ♦ www.cahouse.org



Call to Ministry: Dedication to a Life of Faith

EMILY PICKENS-JONES,
CHRISTIAN PROGRAMMING INTERN

"I don't want to tell the scripture, I want to be the scripture."

– Rev. Lois Dejean

Rev. Dejean's words just couldn't get out of my head as I shoveled dirt in the hot 100° weather and 2000% humidity. "What does that mean to me?" I struggled with this question while picking up broken bottles and old cans in an empty lot. The 9th ward in the city of New Orleans is still struggling after hurricane Katrina. In a city that has had such pride in its culture, I was saddened to see it warped with increasing poverty and disaster. But that is why the Fund for Theological Education knew it was the perfect place to hold a conference for young people called to ministry.

For years, FTE has provided fellowships for young leaders from around the country who feel that they are meant to serve and renew the church. When Kristin recommended that I apply, I had no idea what to expect. My decision to pursue a vocation in ministry was still relatively new to me. Through my time in New Orleans and the training I received, I am now fully confident in my decision to pursue a dedicated life of faith.

Emily Pickens-Jones is one of 40 undergraduate students from across the nation to receive a prestigious Fund for Theological Education Fellowship. This fellowship recognizes exceptional promise in those considering professional ministry.

The week I spent in New Orleans was designed to create a framework of the spiritual practice of service while exploring our own vocations. From what I have been taught by the ministers in my life, I believe that I should live each day pursuing the questions of who am I created by God to be and what am I called by God to do. So much of the city had not been rebuilt and some areas felt deserted. But the residents of communities that remained were dedicated to the idea of a fresh start. We heard countless stories from the aftermath of Katrina. Religious organizations and non-profits are continuing to work tirelessly to create a new story for the city. Of course this does not come easy. The endless work of rebuilding continues and old ideologies of racism and classism are resurfacing which create a tireless battle for those who wish to move on.

Through our experiences, we were given tools for opening up conversation in this setting through story telling, theological reflection, and pursuing a call towards taking action. We made the connection that there is also endless work and many things to be done in the church, many of which we are already doing at CA House. I could write so much more about all I learned through my experiences with FTE. It was a transformative part of my life where I grew within myself and with God that I will be eternally grateful for. ☞

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fit a mold that is specific to our own tradition. In community, we work towards holding all these things together in harmony.

What we have seen in the last 3 years of the MLC and in the many years of this ministry is the power of relationships to change us. We are willing to take risks when we know one another, and the social norms that we find ourselves a part of fall away, if only for just a moment. To truly know each other, we must be honest about who we are. In community, much like our families, we are bound together whether we like it or not. Space is made for forgiveness, which is essential because none of us are ever going to get it exactly right, especially in our relationships with one another.

In our programming this year, we intend to focus on strengthening our community of communities, empowering students and opening up space that each person may be faithful to who they feel called to be. We have new opportunities for small group sharing with trained mentors, a weekend retreat in Napa Valley to open the academic year, and new service activities through the campus wide Interfaith Service Challenge, initiated by President Obama, which CA House is leading on the UC Davis campus. We move forward, always learning from experience, buoyed by faith, sustained by grace. ☞



("Common Values, Common Word" continued from page 6)

Christianity in Northern California. John served as Campus Minister at CA House from 1968 to 1972, and he and Barbara made Davis their retirement home after distinguished ministries in California and Nevada. In June an initial gift of \$10,000 was pledged by a current CA House Board member to begin the funding drive, which endeavors to realize the campaign goal set for each townhouse. Information soon will be available on ways that many of you can participate in this effort to honor Barbara and John.

The goal of the "Common Values, Common Word" campaign is to raise \$300,000 in gifts that support CA House and its programs, and to date we have realized \$110,000. Naming opportunities remain for three of the townhouses and we invite donors who respond to the challenge to suggest a name for these townhouses. Kristin and members of the Board of Directors would welcome the opportunity to talk with persons or families interested in taking part in this exciting effort. ☞



CA House
433 Russell Blvd.
Davis, CA 95616
(530) 753-2000
cahouse@cahouse.org
www.cahouse.org

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Gift Fair Open House

featuring local artists & Fair Trade gifts
Saturday, November 19th
1-4 pm - CA House

Weavings + Jewelry
Silk Scarves + Photography
Paintings + Beeswax Candles
Fabric Collage



Fair Trade gift items from
Ten Thousand Villages

*Feel good about your holiday shopping-
local musicians, hot cider & gifts that give twice!*

All Holiday Party

Wednesday, November 30, 6:00 pm at CA House
You are invited the CA House
Holiday Open House -
Come celebrate the winter holidays of many faiths.

