

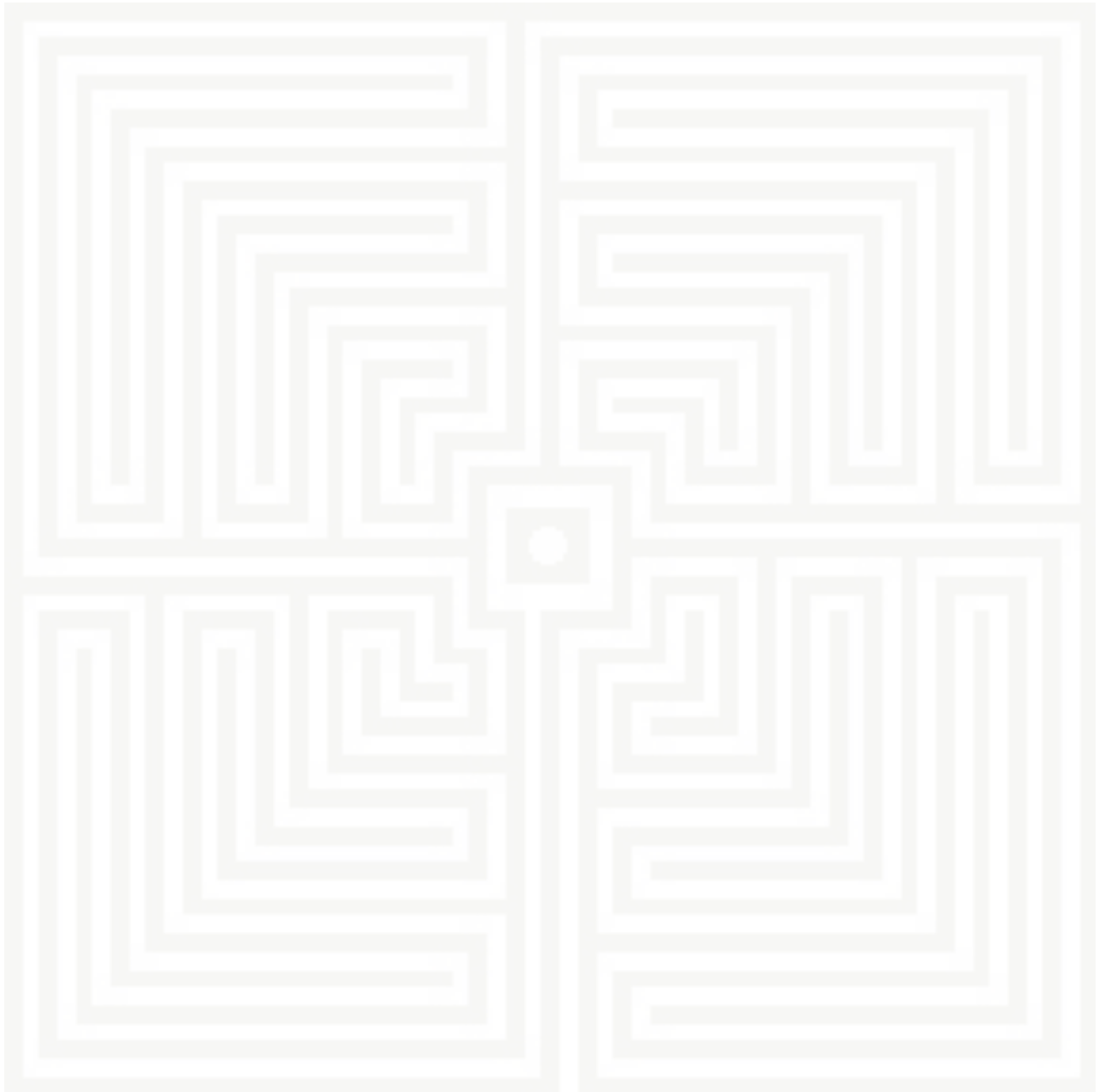


UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

ECUMENICAL CAMPUS Coalition

A Week in the Life of the Ecumenical Campus

August 1, 2009





A Week in the Life of the Ecumenical Campus

Sunday, May 17, 2015

They begin to arrive early on Sundays – some as early as 7:30 am. They linger in the courtyard or pause to buy coffee and croissants around the corner, but they gradually filter in to mingle in the soaring atrium. The sounds of the building stirring to wakefulness resound through the high reaches of the skylighted space, as choir members rush to early rehearsals and church volunteers brew urns of coffee and arrange pastries and fruit on serving platters. By 8:00 am, clusters of folks begin to gather in the filtered daylight that washes over the space. In groups of 2 or 3 or more, their conversation topics range from school activities to travel plans to gardening. Over in the nursery, parents are dropping off children on the way to early services. Another Sunday morning is underway, in many respects no different from any other faith community on the threshold of another day of worship and fellowship.

This is Seattle's Ecumenical Campus, a one-of-a-kind center of faith, service and community. Like most Christian worship facilities, the Ecumenical Campus comes alive on Sunday mornings, yet it is fundamentally unique in its nexus of spiritual and secular community life.

Now a large community of believers is filing in for the start of Sunday morning worship services. What is different, however, is that individually and in family groups they are heading into several different worship spaces at different times. A “rolling coffee hour” will continue through the morning, with waves of people gradually gathering, passing through, and eventually forming into cohorts that head into one worship space or another. There, in luminous, transcendent spaces, multiple worship services are conducted according to the particular traditions of several different Christian congregations.

By 9:00 am, the early Episcopal Rite of Eucharist is already wrapping up, as the Congregationalists' early service begins at the other end of the Atrium. Half an hour later, the Lutheran congregation starts its service with one of several liturgies that they alternate during the course of the church year, including a moving Taizé service, world music and a variety of other traditional and contemporary liturgies. By 10:00 am, a second, more contemporary Episcopal Eucharist is getting underway, while a much more traditional Episcopal service (based on the 1928 Book of Common Prayer) is beginning in a smaller chapel down the hall. By 10:30 am, at about the time those attending the Lutheran service are beginning to file from their sanctuary back into the atrium, the Baptist service is about to begin around the corner and down the hall, and the Methodists are starting to think about finding their seats for the start of their 10:45 am worship service. At 11:00 am, the Disciples service is beginning, as is the second Congregational service, while those attending the Episcopal services are returning to the Atrium.

During this kinetic ebb and flow of believers, the prevailing sensibility is one of community and hospitality. Members know that they will find themselves in the midst of an inclusive community where they feel loved when they are there and missed when they are elsewhere. Visitors are treated as welcome guests, encouraged to discern their own comfort level, and pleasantly surprised at the vital multigenerational community they find themselves among. As each service begins and ends,



more people merge and disperse into the rolling coffee hour. Occasionally, someone emerging from one service will duck into another sanctuary because the pastor there is preaching on a favorite theme.

The Disciples congregation is having a baptism this morning, and that's always a big event at the Ecumenical Campus regardless of the congregation. At the intersection of the building's two major axes is the baptismal pool, fed by an ever-flowing baptismal font and positioned at the approach to all sanctuaries. It's there to acknowledge that each baptism is a renewal of the entire body of Christ, and not simply a Methodist, or Baptist, or Lutheran event. When there is a baptism at the Ecumenical Campus, we all gather to celebrate and welcome the new member in our midst as daylight streams in from above.

One week the ecumenical bell choir will be playing for the Congregationalists' service, and the next they'll be across the atrium playing for the Episcopal Eucharist. In April, the choirs of all the congregations joined into one mass choir to sing selections from Handel's *Messiah* for the ecumenical Easter sunrise service. Last autumn they worked together for two months to prepare an evening concert performance of Gabriel Faure's monumental *Requiem* to commemorate All Saints Day, which fell on a Wednesday, and was performed for a very appreciative audience of about 340 people. Accompanied by a splendid small chamber orchestra, the ecumenical choir later reprised selected movements from the piece during two different worship services the following Sunday. Music directors of the various congregations have developed the habit of "borrowing" certain voices when particular selections require resources that may not be available among their own choir members. Last week three tenors in the Methodist choir all came down with the flu, but their music director was able to borrow one tenor each from the Lutheran and Episcopal choirs on short notice. Among the greatest benefits to being collocated has been the great resource that all of the music directors enjoy in sharing choral music libraries with each other.

Today the 44-voice ecumenical children's choir sings for the Lutheran service. This group has been another surprise, having evolved into a magnet for attracting families with young children. At least 16 or 17 families, with a total of nearly 30 young children, have been drawn to Ecumenical Campus congregations because they want their kids to be able to participate in the children's choir. The children's music director (a position established jointly by several of the congregations) is an important part of the story – he's a local musical theatre professional who frequently composes original pieces for the children's choir and really knows how to relate to the kids. He keeps them laughing while getting a great sound out of them. The community shared by the children's choir members is a delight. They rotate among the various worship services several times each year, but the Christmas season is when they really shine!

Of course, the fact that most of the congregations have pipe organs was a challenge for the architects and engineers who designed the facility, but they were able to employ several new and old technologies to achieve the necessary acoustical separation. Engineering strategies like installing flexible ductwork to keep sound energy from being transmitted between worship spaces (and to dampen noise from mechanical air-handling equipment), and putting worship spaces on "floating slabs," succeeded in isolating each space from the acoustical intrusions of others. Double window walls also serve to isolate the worship spaces from exterior street noise. These strategies were important components in the larger effort to create spiritually uplifting worship spaces that have rich,



reverberant qualities for acoustical instrumental and vocal music performance, supplemented with finely-tuned amplification for the spoken word. The latest digital technologies in amplification are light-years ahead of the old microphones and speakers we used to use.

For many of the congregations, the biggest transformation has been the opportunity to worship in sanctuaries designed to gather worshipers around the table of the Lord, rather than sitting in straight ranks of parallel rows like an audience observing rites performed on a stage. That old “Western basilica” model with an altar against the back wall was dismissed by the Roman Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, but it took most of us another 50 years to really integrate the change into our own worship. Now we can’t imagine returning to our old rigid ways.

At first, some of the people feared (needlessly) that the worship spaces would be designed to be “multi-use” assembly spaces, as suitable for a basketball game as a worship service, and thus not very suitable for either. Instead, the worship spaces were designed to be transcendent, spiritually uplifting sanctuaries, with space and light shaped in poetic ways. When we worship together, there is a palpable sense of the gathered community and a sense that the space we are in is a holy place.

And then, when the lessons have been read and the pastor’s message of peace and justice has been heard, when the music and the prayers and the Meal are concluded, we join with the rest of our ecumenical community in fellowship to welcome the visitors among us and begin a new week restored.

We also gather on many occasions for joint worship services, large and small. In fact, we started a process back in 2005 that has led to the creation of a whole church year of ecumenical worship services, in addition to our regular worship schedules. Some of these opportunities to worship together include:

- Mid-week Advent services
- Christmas morning service
- Christmas carol hymn sing
- Feast of Epiphany
- Ash Wednesday noon service
- Mid-week Lenten services
- Open-air Palm Sunday service
- Maundy Thursday service
- Good Friday noon service
- Holy Saturday vespers
- Easter sunrise service
- A special Children’s Sabbath service, where the children are our worship leaders
- All-Saints Day

A rich selection of adult forums, Bible classes and fellowship activities are knit into this lively schedule of worshipping separately and together. The Ecumenical Campus congregations have a surprising number of educators, clergy and theologically trained lay members who provide a diverse range of learning and discussion opportunities every Sunday. In one meeting space, you might attend a discussion of the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, led by a retired Lutheran bishop. Elsewhere, you can choose between a forum with the Executive Director of the needle exchange



program downstairs, or the third session in a series comparing the theologies of John Wesley, Martin Luther and John Calvin. By conferring with each other in planning future programs, the Christian education leaders in all the congregations ensure that the offerings will be diverse and timely. Topics range from study of the lectionary readings to discussion of topical political and social matters, and from understanding popular culture to examining the evolving role of the Church in the world. We seek opportunities to better understand others through our interfaith explorations, and we seek to better understand the foundations of our own Christian traditions and those of others.

Meanwhile, our children are having their own ecumenical experience. Before we collocated, some congregations had so few children that those who did come ended up in “one-room schoolhouse” arrangements, with first through fifth graders in the same room, and more teachers than students. Now, most of the congregations participate in our ecumenical Sunday school, meaning that there are usually at least 12-15 students in a separate class for each age group, and the teachers are drawn from all congregations. The students attending Sunday school together every week have learned since preschool age that different people follow different spiritual paths worthy of our respect. They’re growing up more self-aware and appreciative of their own faith traditions as well as the traditions of others.

As for our youth, that’s a remarkable success story in itself. The dozens of middle and high school students shared among all of our congregations constitute a group large enough to achieve the necessary “critical mass” for ambitious collective service projects and for some great social activities. In January, for instance, the high school students organized an Epiphany program for the younger children, with the teenagers acting out the story of the Magi, in costume, and the smaller children fleeing Herod and traveling a harrowing journey to Egypt, where they ultimately encounter the three kings (and many other fascinating characters along the way). I don’t know who had more fun, the small children who got to experience the journey and live the harrowing adventure, or the teenagers who gleefully built the sets, and made the costumes, and got to play nasty highwaymen, Roman soldiers, Bedouins, shepherds, and camels.

The key was having teenagers in large enough numbers that they could participate in a group without having to shed whatever safe emotional distance they want to maintain. The social opportunities are much greater in a group of 20 or 30 than in a group of 6 or 7. This morning, a bunch of them are getting together for coffee at Sufficient Grounds, the espresso bar downstairs, and then gathering in the courtyard to discuss the story of Cain and Abel and what it teaches us about sibling rivalries and other family dynamics. Later they’ll have lunch together (pizza, of course) and watch a film about the Microfinance Movement and its role in solving big cultural challenges in the developing world. Come autumn, they’re planning to again host their Beatles’ sing-along evening in the Dining Hall, to which we are all invited. It’s an annual fundraiser for the women’s transitional housing facility down the street. Last year, the event was so popular they nearly had to turn people away at the door.

That Dining Hall will be busy next Sunday afternoon as the members of our churches gather once again for our bi-annual ecumenical potluck after worship services. The program is going to be a briefing on the role the Ecumenical Parish congregations are playing in the growing interfaith movement in the Seattle area and on the early planning for an interfaith study center at the University of Washington. This is really a monumental achievement, and it is happening here because of the unity embodied by the Ecumenical Parish churches, the lead they’ve taken regionally among



progressive Christian faith communities, and their close working relationship with the Comparative Religion Program in the Jackson School at the University of Washington. In part it was the unified presence of the UDEP churches, so close to the UW campus, which enabled them to connect on the early planning for the Interfaith Study Center. With the resources of the University behind it, along with the enthusiastic support of the UW President, the project has become known throughout the academic and religious communities in the Northwest.

Improved transportation options brought us together this morning. Even with the large new parking garage that we built beneath the new facility, traffic congestion on Sunday mornings was a real concern. Of course, we have the great advantage of being located very close to the entrance to the light rail station at 45th Street and Brooklyn Avenue. That effectively makes each of our congregations the neighborhood parish for thousands of people living within walking distance of any station along the light rail system. In 2020, when the Brooklyn Station is scheduled to open, we plan to really publicize our proximity to the station. Of course, many Metro bus lines already serve the University District, so we've already implemented a comprehensive transportation plan to encourage our existing members to use public transit as much as possible. It's hard to break old habits, though. Maybe the best thing we've done since establishing the Ecumenical Campus was to provide our own circulating shuttle vehicles to transport people to church from the Metro Park & Ride lot beneath I-5 on NE 65th Street. Doing so was much less costly than building even more parking spaces into our garage. Plus, when the Brooklyn Station opens, another one at 65th and Roosevelt will also open, meaning our north-end members can drive to the P&R lot and then take a quick 2-minute train ride to our Brooklyn Station. That will end the need for the shuttle service while adding one more reason not to drive into the U District.

Many of us (and others from the community) will return during the week to attend classes offered by the Questions of Faith Institute. QOFI (typically pronounced "coffee") is the lay school of theology that the UDEP congregations have created - sort of a "seminary for the rest of us." The faculty is drawn from our own clergy, other theologians in our congregations, and educators from such local programs as the ecumenical School of Theology and Ministry (STM) at Seattle University. A high point is the annual QOFI Break, a weeklong Chautauqua-style summer retreat in the University District, making full use of the Ecumenical Campus facilities and neighborhood hotels.

QOFI students also have the advantage of the Ecumenical Campus Theological Library, a wonderful resource created by combining the libraries of several churches. Our librarian and volunteers have worked tirelessly to expand the collection to be a credible resource for QOFI. The library is also open to the general public, and is a very cozy spot to curl up with a book or rendezvous with a friend.

The Ecumenical Campus library is also a quiet study spot favored by UW students, making it an important place where they connect with our lively campus ministry program. With all of our parish congregations actively participating in this ministry, students can connect on several levels. Here at this extremely busy pedestrian intersection, Crossroads Campus Ministry is a highly visible presence to the UW students that stream past our doors. Seven denominational bodies support CCM. Wednesday evening is the time when many of our organized student programs occur, including a shared meal and worship. Food is always central to campus ministry, and we make sure that fresh cookies and coffee are always available in Crossroads Campus Ministry's kitchen.



Monday - Friday

Monday begins downstairs with the early stirrings of the guests at the ROOTS young adult shelter. There were 32 there last night, ranging in age from 18-25. In adjacent space, the staff of several human service agencies arrives to start another week in this campus they share. The feeding programs, clinic services, the art center, the hygiene facility, drop-in center, street youth ministry, counseling services and other programs have all been gathered together into one place, where clients can access a coordinated range of services and resources without spending the whole day packing up, moving from one isolated program to another, unpacking and waiting again.

Over the past week, youth and young adults making use of Ecumenical Campus services and resources have been helping to create a visual aid that will help childcare staff teach children a combined lesson about U.S. geography and service to people who are homeless. Each young person has marked on a map of the United States the city where he or she was born with a pin clipped to his or her first name, so that teachers will be able to show children where the young people served at the Ecumenical Campus come from.

More efficient coordination of services has resulted in a host of benefits to service providers. Perhaps greatest among the plusses is the fact that each of our congregations now has a direct relationship with every one of the agencies. Our feelings of greater responsibility for them translate into more generous giving of time and treasure. For example, many congregation members have individually chosen one at-risk young person who frequents Ecumenical Campus service agencies to meet with over coffee once a week, just for friendly conversation, and have been trained in how to engage “their kid,” how to listen and affirm, and how to set boundaries as needed. Over time, strong one-on-one relationships have developed that help youngsters in need of nurture to sense their own specialness and begin to believe that they indeed have and deserve a viable future. Many members of each congregation volunteer in a variety of other ways, more eagerly than before, and their “ownership” manifests itself in financial support as well as in enthusiastic public advocacy. This morning, it’s also manifesting in the hotcakes, scrambled eggs, rashers of bacon and urns of coffee being served to at-risk youth by church volunteers.

In a nearby space the staff and volunteers at the University Churches Emergency Fund are arriving to help folks struggling to keep their homes or scratch together the money necessary to pay the deposit on their first apartment since rising out of the ranks of the homeless. The Rummage Sale area stands ready for business, having been restocked over the weekend. At the Ecumenical Campus mental health and chemical dependency counseling is available for those unable to pay, and the needle exchange program continues to provide lifesaving services to some of the most vulnerable in our midst.

Elsewhere in the neighborhood, the guests at several SHARE/WHEEL shelters are already awake and preparing to head out. Some will gather here to visit the drop-in center for homeless women. Started in 2007 by Elizabeth Gregory Home, the drop-in center moved to larger quarters here when the need outgrew the space available at their original location on 50th Street. Many of them will spend part of the day in job searches using resources at the center, and accessing the counseling and referral services available here.



Upstairs, in the office levels, the staff members of several advocacy agencies are arriving for work. The offices of five regional church bodies are located here, too, and the bishops and regional ministers find it very helpful to be able to confer with each other so easily. Organizations like the Church Council of Greater Seattle, the Lutheran Public Policy Office, Earth Ministry, the American Friends Service Committee, and others have found strength in numbers and great advantage in assembling their offices in a single location.

Mid-morning, at the church administrative center, the staff for the congregations and campus ministries gathers for their weekly administrative team meeting. Although each congregation continues to employ its own clergy, church secretary, and music director, others on the staff are employed jointly by all of the partner organizations, including:

- The receptionist who staffs the Welcome Station in the atrium
- The webmaster, who continuously maintains and updates all of our websites, and also serves as our on-site network administrator
- The wedding/memorial service coordinator
- The parish nurse
- The nursery manager
- The children's music director
- The librarian

Not all of these shared staff work full-time, but their availability makes a huge difference for our pastors and secretaries who have been able to shed many chores that distracted them from doing their work in ministry. Pastors and their staff can focus on what they do best – ministering to the members of their congregations, and collaborating with lay leaders (and each other) in the planning of our ecumenical programs and outreach efforts. By sharing first-class professionals to execute on important operational tasks, the congregations achieve real efficiencies and enjoy resources they couldn't otherwise afford.

Attending the administrative team meeting are staff members of the Ecumenical Campus LLC, the entity that owns and operates the facility on behalf of the congregations and campus ministries. A tax exempt Limited Liability Company, it is owned jointly by the congregations and campus ministries (the "Member Organizations") who pooled their equity to build the Ecumenical Campus. They each own a share of the LLC in proportion to their investment. The LLC, in turn, owns the facility, shielding the member organizations from liability and employing professional property management staff to operate the facility on their behalf. The LLC staff answers to the LLC board, which is made up entirely of representatives appointed by the member organizations.

This week as usual LLC staff specialists, who understand the business of managing buildings (including maintenance, security, and operation), are working hard to market the Ecumenical Campus to outside users. These users pay well to use our sanctuaries, classrooms, meeting rooms and dining facilities when the congregations aren't using them. The LLC staff is very good at filling the building with lively activities and generating income to pay for building operations, including utility costs, insurance, custodial and security staff. This year, our congregations and campus ministries were pleased to see how much income (in excess of operating costs) got distributed back to the churches and campus ministries, to be put toward their outreach missions. With the revenue from our large parking garage, and the rent the LLC earns from office and retail tenants, the income really adds up.



Event scheduling is always among the highest priorities at the Monday administrative team meetings. Since our beautiful worship spaces have been designed to also work really well for secular events, there are always new upcoming events to discuss. Our congregations have busy activity calendars, too, so great communication has to be maintained between the LLC folks and the staff of the churches. They've gotten into a routine that works very well, but it means everybody has to be good at "looking down the road" and anticipating upcoming needs. Since a lot of the church activities take place in classrooms and meeting rooms, it's fortunate that we have a significant number and variety of such spaces. These rooms are frequently rented to outside users, but always with the churches' needs taking precedent. Where the LLC is able to find a lot of rental availabilities is with the sanctuaries and dining/reception facilities, which have been designed to be suitable for secular events, as well as for the churches' worship and fellowship needs.

Here's a sampling of some of the academic, civic and cultural events scheduled for the coming week:

Event Description	Space	Day	Date	Event Time
UW Health Care Panel Discussion	Disciples Sanctuary	Mon	5/18/15	12:00-14:00
Chamber of Commerce Luncheon	Dining Hall (West)	Mon	5/18/15	12:00-13:30
Seattle Boychoir Rehearsals	Choir Rooms 1, 2, & 3	Mon	5/18/15	16:00-18:00
Suzuki violin school	Classroom 2G	Mon	5/18/15	16:00-17:30
12-Step Meeting	Classroom 4A	Mon	5/18/15	19:00-21:00
UW Bookstore: Author Reading	Methodist Sanctuary	Mon	5/18/15	19:30-21:30
UW Piano Recital	Episcopal Sanctuary	Mon	5/18/15	20:00-21:30
King County Leadership Summit	Atrium & Dining Hall	Tues	5/19/15	08:00-12:00
Kiwanis Luncheon	Private Dining Room A	Tues	5/19/15	12:00-13:30
Berner/Olson Wedding	Lutheran Sanctuary	Tues	5/19/15	18:00-19:30
World Music: Music of Senegal	Congregational Sanctuary	Tues	5/19/15	19:30-21:30
Berner/Olson Wedding Banquet	Dining Hall (East & West)	Tues	5/19/15	19:30-23:00
Sound Transit Planning Forum	Atrium & Dining Hall	Wed	5/20/15	09:00-18:00
Seattle Boychoir Rehearsals	Choir Rooms 1, 2, & 3	Wed	5/20/15	16:00-18:00
12-Step Meeting	Classroom 4F	Wed	5/20/15	19:00-21:00
Lecture: Parenting Psychologist	Lutheran Sanctuary	Wed	5/20/15	19:00-21:00
Poetry Reading	Baptist Sanctuary	Wed	5/20/15	19:30-21:00
Jackson School Honors Luncheon	Dining Hall (East & West)	Thurs	5/21/15	11:30-13:30
UW / City of Seattle Forum	Dining Hall (East)	Thurs	5/21/15	15:00-18:00
Concert: Classical Guitar Duo	Disciples Sanctuary	Thurs	5/21/15	19:00-21:00
Debate: US-Middle East Relations	Methodist Sanctuary	Thurs	5/21/15	19:30-21:30
Chamber Symphony Concert	Congregational Sanctuary	Thurs	5/21/15	19:30-22:00
Interfaith Conference Exhibition	Atrium	Fri	5/22/15	09:00-18:00
University Lions Club Luncheon	Dining Hall (West)	Fri	5/22/15	11:30-13:00
Seattle Boychoir Rehearsals	Choir Rooms 1, 2, & 3	Fri	5/22/15	16:00-18:00
Campus Ministry Poetry Slam Finals	Dining Hall (East)	Fri	5/22/15	19:00-21:00
Rick Steves: Lecture on Pakistan	Disciples Sanctuary	Fri	5/22/15	19:30-21:30



Seattle Peace Chorus	Methodist Sanctuary	Fri	5/22/15	20:00-22:00
Civil Service Exams	Classrooms 2A, 2B, 2C	Sat	5/23/15	09:00-11:30
All-day Cello Society Festival	Congregational Sanctuary	Sat	5/23/15	10:00-17:00
Saturday Family Concert Series	Lutheran Sanctuary	Sat	5/23/15	14:00-16:00
Allied Arts Gala/Auction/Dinner	Atrium & Dining Hall	Sat	5/23/15	17:00-22:00
Vocal Chamber Ensemble	Episcopal Sanctuary	Sat	5/23/15	20:00-22:00
Late Night Cinema: "Citizen Cain"	Youth Ministry Theatre	Sat	5/23/15	21:00-23:30
Taizé Service	Congregational Sanctuary	Sat	5/23/15	21:30-22:30
Worship, Fellowship & Education	All	Sun	5/24/15	07:00-13:00
Bi-Annual Ecumenical Potluck	Dining Hall (East & West)	Sun	5/24/15	12:30-14:30

Out in the courtyard park, the sun is climbing in the sky and regulars are occupying their usual spots. This public open space is a favorite hangout for many. There are quite a few older folks who enjoy this corner of the city, and we encourage them to linger. Workers from the bank building across the street like to get their coffee from the espresso shop at the edge of the courtyard. Now that more people are living in the U District, parents like to come by and let their little ones visit the bakery here, where there are always free cookies for small children. The Daily Bread is a wonderful owner-operated shop, and the UW students that stream past this location every day can't get enough of the fresh croissants and baguettes. In a special arrangement that was part of its lease, Daily Bread provides fresh loaves of bread to the Ecumenical Campus congregations for their communion services. At Sufficient Grounds (the espresso shop next door) the bakery's muffins and sweet breads are served alongside steaming espresso drinks made with sustainable shade-grown coffee.

Children from several neighborhood childcare centers (including the two that are here) stop by in groups on their walks around the neighborhood. The older folks that are here visiting the Ecumenical Campus Senior Center love to watch them as they skip about the courtyard nibbling on cookies from the bakery. With the Senior Center abutting the edge of the courtyard, there are always people in the park and many more eyes looking on, so it's a particularly safe environment for everyone. (It also doesn't hurt that we provide a small storefront space around the corner where the Seattle Police bike patrol officers have their neighborhood "comfort station" and bike storage.)

As UW students play at a giant chess board on the pavement in front of the coffee shop, and a few older gentlemen engage in a rousing checkers tournament at nearby tables, the Ecumenical Campus wedding planner walks through with a couple of graduate students to discuss their upcoming ceremony, scheduled to take place in the courtyard in June. For such events, the courtyard is temporarily secured with gates, which also happens every evening at dusk. Since the courtyard is owned and operated as part of the Ecumenical Campus, we are able to secure it for special events and at night. Most waking hours, however, it is open and welcoming - a gift to our community. Along one edge, Ecumenic Alley runs alongside, providing access for delivery vehicles, but mostly serving as a sort of European mews or lane, with small abutting shops, like the florist, the gelato shop, and the barber. My favorite shop is Creative Juices, where they make great smoothies and fresh-squeezed juice drinks.



Saturday

Every Saturday evening, folks from our congregations and campus ministries, from all over the neighborhood and from the greater Seattle area gather in our largest sanctuary for a weekly Taizé service, centered on the meditative chant of the monastic Taizé community in France. It's a beautiful service, sometimes compared to the Sunday evening Compline service at St. Marks Cathedral. In Taizé, however, everyone is welcome to join the singing, uniting in one voice:

“Veni sancte Spiritus”
“Holy Spirit, come to us”

The Taizé service is a palpable embodiment of the unity we are called to. Developed in France in the 1940s by Brother Roger Schutz, it is conceived to encourage reconciliation among Christians. The repetition of the music, the silences, the prayers and the contemplative attitude of the hundreds in attendance make for a transcendent experience. Through repetition, the meaning of the words goes deeper and deeper as they are sung. We hear the scripture readings, we join in the Lord's Prayer, and together we feel the Spirit reach into our hearts.

Tomorrow morning, thousands will return to the Ecumenical Campus for another Sunday of worship and fellowship. The unity of the body of Christ is thriving in this place, and we serve as a sign of that unity. Churches across the country are taking note of the model we have built here - a new way to be Church in the 21st Century.