The Raleigh Wesley Foundation

Recently, The United Methodist Church launched an advertising campaign using the phrase “Rethink Church.” Campus Ministry has been “rethinking church” for a long time and that is true at the Raleigh Wesley Foundation. We truly practice “Radical Hospitality” in that all students have a place around our table. While most of our students are United Methodist, there are some who are not and some who have little or no church background. We are a place that welcomes the stranger (and the familiar) regardless of who they are, what they are, or where they are in their faith journey. Some are drawn by our “gastro-evangelism” but they stay because they find a place to belong. They stay because they are nurtured personally and spiritually and form vital relationships that will continue to shape their lives.

We value our role as a worshipping community. At least once a month, we use our weekly meeting time to share in worship that is diverse and to share in the celebration of Holy Communion. Worship is an important part of our retreats and mission trips as well. Twice a year we lead worship at Fairmont UMC for what we call “Wesley Sunday.” We have also taken Wesley Sunday on the road to other churches in the area.

We offer a number of small group experiences in addition to our weekly meeting; time set aside for Bible study, discussion and spiritual formation. At least twice a year we plan weekend retreats to build community and strengthen faith. This year, we noticed a number of our recent graduates continuing to hang around the Wesley Foundation. So, we combined them with our older graduate students to form a group of their own called “Cling-Ons”; to provide continued spiritual support until they find a church of their own.

Finally, a commitment to mission is also a vital part of our ministry. We believe that our students should be challenged to meet the needs of others through mission and service, both local and abroad. Each year we plan a mission trip, alternating between domestic and international trips, so that our students can be exposed to diverse cultures, lifestyles and environments. By expanding their perspectives, students learn that there are many of our brothers and sisters who are in need and for whom we should be concerned. In May of 2010 we will travel to Mississippi to work alongside other United Methodist churches from the Raleigh District. We have also participated in campus wide service events such as Shack-A-Thon to benefit Habitat for Humanity, Service NC State to help package over one million meals for Stop Hunger Now, and Service Raleigh.

Almost all of these activities happen on another day besides Sunday. At the Raleigh Wesley Foundation, we ARE rethinking church!

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dr. Kirk B. Oldham
Campus Minister