Welcome to Middlebury!

This week marks the beginning of a new adventure for you and your classmates. Your college years are an exciting time filled with challenges, adventures, and opportunities to learn and grow. A liberal arts education gives you the time and the resources to examine life’s most important questions. Many of these questions by their very nature are religious questions: about the nature of justice and beauty, about ethical dilemmas or the structure of the physical universe. In the context of your education your long held convictions are challenged and new perspectives are encountered. The Office of the Chaplain is here to support you in the intellectual and spiritual journey that is liberal education.

Middlebury College has never had any official religious affiliation. However, when it was founded in 1800, Middlebury, like most other New England colleges and universities, was supported by Christians drawn from the well-established Protestant denominations in the surrounding area. For the first 150 years of its history, Middlebury, again like many other American colleges of the time, required student attendance at daily chapel services. A large number of Middlebury's earliest graduates pursued vocations in Christian ministry or mission work.

Today the College welcomes students from all parts of the nation and the globe who represent a wide variety of religious and cultural traditions. There are no longer any required chapel services, but rather many voluntary occasions for the expression of religious faith and devotion. Academically, the Religion Department offers students the opportunity to study the practice, history, and literature of the world’s major religious traditions and to explore personal spiritual questions.

Come and visit us at the Charles P. Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life located in Hathaway House on the northeast corner of Route 30 and Porter Field Road, next door to the Admissions Office. The building opened in the summer of 2004 and houses offices for the chaplains. The Scott Center also offers a variety of spaces for student use: a living room, library, student leadership workroom, a small kitchen, and a meditation/prayer room. We have wireless network access throughout the building so feel free to bring your laptop and homework. The living room has a keyboard for groups who want to make music and a TV/VCR/DVD for groups that want to watch a movie. These facilities are available for student groups and individuals, and can be reserved through the Chaplain’s Office at ext. 5626. You are also welcome to drop by and explore our facilities anytime during regular business hours.

For those of you looking for religious services this week, we have a list of the local, off-campus faith communities on our web page. A limited number of printed copies are available in your commons office, the narthex of Mead Chapel, and at our office in the Scott Center. Once classes begin, there are Student Religious Organizations, many of which conduct services on campus. You'll have an opportunity to meet them at the Activities Fair and you may also find them listed on the Chaplain's Office web site.
It is also part of our role to work in concert with the Dean of Students, the Commons Deans, the Residential Life Staff, and the rest of the Student Life staff to help provide a supportive, caring environment for all our students. We are available for confidential counseling during our open office hours or by appointment.

If there is any way that we can help make this semester a smooth transition and these years a successful and fulfilling part of your life’s journey, please do not hesitate to let us know. Please drop by or give us a call. Our extension is 5626. We look forward to meeting you and being a part of your life at Middlebury College.

Peace and Blessings,

Laurel M. Jordan ’79, Chaplain of the College
Rabbi Ira Schiffer, Associate Chaplain
Naila Baloch and Beau Scurich, Muslim Advisors and Chaplaincy Fellows
Ellen McKay, Scott Center Program Coordinator

Check out our online brochure, by clicking on the image below: