Dear JCSU Family and Friends,

During times of intense emotional, mental or physical stress, we search for transcendent meaning:
• Does God have a purpose to keep me growing?
• What really makes life worth living?
• What is my value in the scheme of things?

This often results in a broad set of principles that includes and, yet, goes beyond the boundaries of any one affirmation of faith.

Religious experience takes many forms and has many meanings. It takes us beyond the material world and beyond ourselves. As an institution of higher education, we strive to inspire all students to inquire and search for truth and meaning, not only in the formal study of religion, but also in their own ways. And, when they face difficult decisions and are confused and ungrounded, we want to make sure they have the support they need to grow from these experiences. During these transformative years from youth to adulthood, students at JCSU can find supportive faculty and staff, educational and counseling resources, prayer services and faith-based study outlets and service opportunities to help prepare them for life’s challenges.

We offer our campus resources and experiences in a way that embraces all faiths and helps students to appreciate other cultures of the world in our increasingly complex global society. The Spiritual Life Center is one of our new initiatives designed for this purpose. It helps students put their spiritual gifts into practice through community service and offers prayer time for reflection and meditation and much more. We are not a GPS device, telling students where to turn. Instead, we want them to learn how to navigate their own path through their college years and graduate prepared for a complex world that needs ethical, socially responsible and civic-minded citizens.

Johnson C. Smith University was founded with roots in the Presbyterian Church. Today we are an independent university still rooted in the Christian tradition, though not affiliated with a particular denomination, and open to students of all faiths and beliefs. JCSU encourages our students to engage in a variety of religious experiences. Our challenge is to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse body of students, faculty and staff who represent more than a dozen religious preferences, each with his or her personal definition and approach to spirituality.

Our mission is to provide a learning environment on campus where we can explore and grow – intellectually, physically, socially, culturally and spiritually. As we continue to transform at our growing edge, we want to demonstrate to the world how we can make our campus, community and the world a better place. Spirituality, which leads to understanding and caring about others, is one of the means by which we can let the JCSU light shine across the globe.

I look forward to sharing in this newsletter some of the ways in which we are striving to embrace religion as we celebrate our many blessings as individuals and as a university.

Ronald L. Carter, Ph.D.
President
Shell’s Coaching Puts Faith into Practice

Donnie Shell has taken his approach to mentoring professional athletes off the field and onto campus as director of the JCSU Spiritual Life Center. The former director of player development with the Carolina Panthers first put his faith into practice during his football career with the Pittsburgh Steelers. His mentor was Steelers owner Dan Rooney. “A lot of my passion for community service came from him,” said Shell. He was involved with a prison ministry and several community outreach projects while playing for the Steelers from 1974 to 1987 and won four Super Bowls.

As a spiritual mentor to young adults, he was on the receiving and giving ends with other players, leading Bible study sessions and helping younger players balance newfound fame with their personal lives.

When he retired, Shell thought about coaching football but later discovered he was better suited for another kind of coaching. “I thought the Lord was calling me to be a coach on the field, but later I learned that it was to be a life coach and treat the whole human being – spiritually, intellectually and emotionally.”

He looks forward to giving back through his new position at JCSU and “coaching” students in a way that yields lifetime benefits.

Spiritual Life Center Seeks to Inspire All

The Spiritual Life Center (SLC) at Johnson C. Smith University is helping students of all religious faiths to become leaders on campus and in their community. Director Donnie Shell and Residence Hall Coordinator Octavius Rice are providing the programs and inspiration through missions, community outreach, leadership workshops and mentoring.

The center serves as a resource by identifying opportunities for JCSU to partner with religious faiths and cultures that exist on campus. “Our purpose is to support the spiritual dimensions of students’ lives and help them grow and develop spiritually, mentally and emotionally,” said Shell. To help students achieve spiritual and personal fulfillment, the SLC offers faith-based studies, one-on-one counseling and a performance arts ministry.

Students can also reach out beyond the campus gates to serve in some of the partnerships Shell is forming with neighborhoods, religious leaders and organizations, including the local women’s shelter.

Among freshman students alone, 42 percent frequently engage in spiritually enhancing activities like worship, meditation and prayer.
Spiritual Fulfillment Takes Place on Campus

JCSU provides a number of religious life programs and student organizations that fit diverse beliefs and world views. They include:

- Daily University prayer (Monday – Friday) - available to faculty, staff and students
- Weekly Bible study and prayer service – available to faculty, staff and students
- Spiritual programming, panel discussions and theatre productions (partnering with West Charlotte High School, Northwest School of Performing Arts and Morehouse College)
- Performance Arts Ministry
- Sunday worship service by visiting clergy for faculty, staff, students and community
- Student convocations, annual vesper ceremonies and Lyceum events for campus and community
- Adjunct chaplains and student fellows on JCSU campus - available to faculty, staff and students
- Engaging Adjunct Chaplain Khalil Akbar, who currently serves as the regional chaplain for Western Mecklenburg County with the Division of Prisons
- Prison Ministry - available to faculty, staff and students
- Emerging Men’s Group – Christian male mentoring program
- Foster Care Ministry – Programs and services for JCSU students who have aged out of foster care
- Student clubs: On Fire For Christ and the Unlimited Praise Gospel Choir
Spiritual Life Center Performance Arts Ministry

The Spiritual Life Center’s performance arts ministry seeks to develop students’ gifts and talents so they can exhibit their abilities to students, faculty, staff and community through praise and worship, dance, poetry and acting.

Octavius Rice holds the title of residence hall coordinator at Liston Hall, and is the man behind the performance arts ministry. He has written, produced and directed several plays. The 2010 JCSU graduate directed last year’s play “The Party,” which dealt with the issue of domestic violence. The play was followed by a panel discussion on the topic with the campus community.

His second play on campus, “Perception,” will debut on campus April 23, 2012. The play’s theme focuses on jealousy and temptation and will be directed by JCSU student Shantale Brown. “The Lord put it in my heart to write plays and to minister,” said Rice. Plans are to take the performance arts ministry to the community as part of the center’s outreach efforts.

Another goal of the performance arts ministry is to develop students’ talents through praise and worship. A team of 10 students recently formed to integrate praise and worship into future events on campus. They will perform at Bible studies and different events on campus.

Spiritual Life Center Presents Community Prayer, Bible Study Opportunities

As director of the Spiritual Life Center (SLC), Donnie Shell believes that “God and education are the keys to success.” That’s why prayer and Bible study are woven into the mission of the SLC. Bible study is held in the Jane M. Smith Memorial Church every Tuesday. Leaders include Shell, with guest speakers such as Dr. Ronald L. Carter and Mike Bunkley, former chaplain with the Carolina Panthers. The study theme for the year is “A Closer Walk with God.” JCSU President Ronald L. Carter is leading a three-week series on temptation in March and April. The doors of the church are open during the week for prayer from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. to welcome anyone needing a time to reflect and pray.

Students don’t have to go far on campus to find other opportunities to pray and worship. New Residence Hall has a prayer room open to people of all faiths 24 hours a day. And private sessions in Christian counseling and life counseling are offered to all on campus.

As part of its community outreach efforts, the SLC invites those off campus to come and worship together at the annual ecumenical breakfast. Close to 100 religious leaders and citizens of all faiths, including Islam, Christianity and Judaism, attended the third annual breakfast in September 2011.
Student Assistants to Put Their Faith into Practice

Part of the Spiritual Life Center’s goal is to follow a model of ministry that enables students to minister to other students. To achieve this goal, the center plans to hire two student assistants to serve as spiritual resources for their peers. Their purpose is to provide opportunities for worship, prayer, reflection and dialogue on issues dealing with all religious faiths.

They will be charged with providing leadership through service, example and religious programming. To equip them for this purpose, the assistants will be given opportunities to grow in their own religious and spiritual leadership abilities while learning counseling and program development skills.

Student assistants also will receive the support they need as they explore the spiritual dimensions of their own lives. Such exploration will enable them to grow and develop spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. They will eventually become a great resource as they identify ways JCSU can partner both with local religious leaders and various faiths and cultures on campus.

What better way to build leaders who will excel in the classroom, their careers and the community. During the spring semester of each academic year, the Spiritual Life Center will accept applications for the available positions in the Student Assistants Program, interview applicants for those positions and make appointments to the program for the following academic year.

Spiritual Life Center Increases Staff to Serve Diverse Needs

The Spiritual Life Center is about to expand its service to the campus with three adjunct chaplains of Protestant, Catholic and Muslim faiths.

The adjunct chaplains will provide pastoral care to individual students and the University community as a whole. The chaplains will play an overt role in the school community by leading acts of worship and taking on a less visible role helping students who are undergoing emotional or spiritual problems. This role typically requires a person who genuinely loves people and cares about the struggles and the needs of the University population.

The chaplains will provide a full ministry of pastoral care and spiritual support, counsel and advice. Responsibilities include assessing spiritual needs and assisting students, faculty and staff on how to use their faith to deal with different issues on campus and in their personal lives.

The adjunct chaplains will also provide programming for students, faculty and staff to help them grow spiritually. These key positions will enable the center to better serve students of different religious persuasions, as well as those with no religious affiliation. Another role of the adjunct chaplains includes a community outreach component where they will represent the University at area churches and religious organizations and help coordinate the placement of student volunteer/service groups within churches and the community.
Emerging Men’s Group Seeks to Empower

A group of 17 male students recently went to see the movie “Courageous” then met to discuss issues revealed in the movie. They talked about life, family, faith, integrity and making choices under pressure. This was one of the first activities of the Emerging Men’s Group at JCSU.

The new group, organized by the Spiritual Life Center (SLC) and Office of Counseling Services, empowers male students to become leaders on campus and in their communities. Activities are designed to develop their social, educational, cultural and spiritual competence.

In addition to taking part in active learning, the men can choose to read about pertinent topics in a variety of written material available at the SLC and Office of Counseling Services.

“Our mission is to support and strengthen male students and help them develop life skills for their personal growth,” said Frederick Murphy, director of JCSU’s Counseling Services. “We provide a safe and welcoming environment for all male students of different ethnicities, sexualities, cultures, religions, ages and abilities.”

The group offers:

- An opportunity to earn community service hours
- A connection with a diverse group of males at other area colleges and universities
- Group retreats
- Workshops
- Mentoring opportunities

Donnie Shell, director of the Spiritual Life Center, hopes the new group will unite and empower males on campus, who comprise about 40 percent of the student body. “The goal is to engage our men,” said Shell, who envisions the group helping men learn teamwork and how to become strong leaders in society. Shell said he would like to see students become more aware of the way multicultural males are perceived and how they can change stereotypes, as well as understand the benefits of a healthy and holistic lifestyle.
Rev. Casey R. Kimbrough shared his ecumenical perspective and reflection on the theme “Who’s Your Neighbor” to a crowd of 100 at the annual Ecumenical Breakfast in September. Sponsored by the JCSU Spiritual Life Center, the event drew guests from a variety of religious backgrounds - from Muslims to Christians.

For the past 20 years, Kimbrough has served as pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church of Charlotte. He is also a professor and spiritual life coach. Early in his life, he started out on a different career path by earning a B.S. in mechanical design engineering from Pennsylvania State University. He went on to earn a Master of Divinity degree from Colgate Rochester/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Columbia Theological Seminary.

Guests at the breakfast also enjoyed an invocation by Dr. Maria Hanlin, executive director of Mecklenburg Ministries. The organization serves 90 congregations, including: Baha’i, Center for Positive Living, Christian, Friends, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Latter Day Saints and Unitarian Universalist. Its purpose is to promote interfaith relationships, foster racial and ethnic understanding and inspire collaboration to address social issues. Other highlights of the event included music by the Johnson C. Smith University Choir and interfaith prayers by Imam Khalil Akbar of the Masjid Ash-Shaheed Islamic Center, Rev. Nicole Martin of University Park Baptist Church and Thomas Baldwin, JCSU trustee.
Jane M. Smith Memorial Church Renovations Planned

The Jane M. Smith Memorial Church was erected as a place of worship for students in the Johnson C. Smith University Theological Seminary, but has served the entire campus community for almost 90 years.

While the seminary moved to Atlanta’s Interdenominational Theological Center in 1969, the church continues as a home for worship services and other activities of the University’s Spiritual Life Center.

JCSU is seeking private resources to support major renovations at the Jane M. Memorial Church, which will include replacing the roof, upgrades to the restrooms, the addition of office space, ongoing maintenance and operating expenses.
JCSU Missionary Ministry Focuses on Sustainability

JCSU is seeking endowment funding for spiritual life programming, missionary travel and a student-managed sustainable village on campus and abroad. The village will begin on campus with the construction of a low-cost house and a sustainable, renewable aquaponics garden.

Both the house and aquaponics garden will be designed so that similar models can be affordably constructed by students at sites impacted by natural disasters to assist the populations during recovery. In its initial year, JCSU will sponsor five students to share this technology and engage in ministry activities at the Mahanaim Village in Haiti, helping residents there establish their new community.

Mahanaim is a 22-acre property owned by Haiti Missions Service, located 30 miles northwest of the capital of Port-au-Prince. The property is on the side of a mountain within a watershed. A freshwater stream flows through the property. Through environmental restoration, it has the potential to become green, lush and fertile. Following the earthquake, the Haiti Missions Service offered its most effected church members temporary shelter in Mahanaim. Approximately 5,000 people were taken out of the chaos of the capital and cared for at the camp. In search of a long-term solution for its people, the Haiti Missions Service decided to create a permanent, self-sustaining Christian community on this site.

JCSU and a group of Charlotte leaders have also partnered with Haiti Missions Service to design a traditional town square in Mahanaim that would be built around a church. The roof of this new sanctuary in Mahanaim is being salvaged from the church, Chapelle Evangelique de Delmas, that was destroyed in Port-au-Prince during the earthquake. Initially, this new church structure will be a pavilion with steel posts supporting the roof. Over time, the walls and interior components will be added. With ongoing programmatic funding, JCSU proposes to sponsor a student group to conduct ministry activities targeting rural communities in developing countries like Haiti each year.
Choir Provides Inspiration for all Occasions

Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.
(Ephesians 5:19)

According to Dr. Shawn-Allyce White, assistant professor of music and director of choral activities, there are many styles of music that enable us to enter the presence of God. The Johnson C. Smith University Concert Choir is committed to helping people experience spiritual inspiration through music.

One of the signature musical events is the annual Christmas Vesper Service where the choir performs sacred music and hymns such as And The Glory of the Lord, O Come All Ye Faithful, Go Tell it On The Mountain, Every Time I Feel the Spirit and Ride On King Jesus. The concert choir also performs spirituals and inspirational songs including Rock-a-My-Soul, Old Time Religion, Be Still and Know and Precious Lord during University events such as Opening Convocation, Honor’s Convocation, Founders’ Day, Baccalaureate and Commencement services. All of the songs are uplifting and affect the human spirit.

The Johnson C. Smith University Concert Choir took their music on tour this spring to present a diverse selection of music, including classical, sacred, musical theater, spirituals and contemporary gospel in the following cities:

- First Baptist West Church, Charlotte, N.C.
- Zion-Olivet Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S.C.
- Northminster Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S.C.
- Church of the Redeemer Presbyterian, Washington, D.C.
- Rendall Memorial Presbyterian Church, New York, N.Y.
- Covenant Presbyterian Church, Durham, N.C.
- Myers Park Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.
Tony Dungy Lends Support to JCSU

Tony Dungy visited campus last May to help raise funds to cover medical, clothing and other student needs identified through the Spiritual Life Center. He joined forces for the effort with the Charlotte Touchdown Club, which provides scholarships to local high schools and universities.

During his visit, Dungy met with Dr. Carter, trustees, administrators and students at a reception in his honor where he also signed copies of his two books: Quiet Strength and Uncommon. He also met with West Charlotte High School student leaders to encourage them to do the “uncommon thing.”

Dungy joined the Colts in 2002 after serving as the most successful head coach in Tampa Bay Buccaneers’ history. He has also held assistant coaching positions with the University of Minnesota, Pittsburgh Steelers, Kansas City Chiefs and Minnesota Vikings. Before becoming a coach, Dungy played three seasons in the NFL. He led the Indianapolis Colts to Super Bowl victory on Feb. 4, 2007, the first such win for an African-American coach. Dungy established another NFL first by leading his teams to the playoffs for 10 consecutive years. He retired from coaching in 2008 and now serves as an analyst for NBC’s Football Night in America. He and his wife, Lauren, are the parents of seven children.

Donnie Shell, a longtime friend of Dungy’s for more than 30 years, said “This is another occasion where Tony is giving his time to make a difference in young people’s lives. His foundation has a goal to reach out to help and encourage people in society who need assistance.” Shell and Dungy are among several football greats who support one another’s philanthropic efforts. For example, Shell traveled to Pittsburgh on April 13 to roast Dungy in order to raise funds for the Mel Blount Youth Home. Dungy has been involved in a wide variety of charitable organizations, including the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action, Mentors for Life, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, the Prison Crusade Ministry and All Pro Dad.
“God and Education are the keys to success.”
- Donnie Shell and Octavius Rice

Spiritual Life Center

Office Hours
Monday- Thursday
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Wednesday
2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

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