

# WORLD RELIGIONS FESTIVAL



**7 P.M. TUESDAY, AUG. 27, 2024**  
**FORUM HALL, GROUND FLOOR**  
**K-STATE STUDENT UNION**



Dow Center for Multicultural and Community Studies

Office of International Programs



# Welcome

Tonight, we gather in this little room in this little town on this little rock spinning around a little star somewhere near the middle of the Orion Arm of the Milky Way galaxy, just one of over 100 billion galaxies in the observable universe, and we will talk, sing, play, and share our visions for what it all means, how it all works, and how we can make the most of our humble little lives.

I am an anthropologist. My job is to put aside my own beliefs, at least temporarily, and try to imagine my way into the life and culture of other people. Of course “other people” does not adequately capture who they really are, at least not for long. Living and traveling with them, they become my dear friends and our bonds become like family. I love and admire them, and I am often awed by their generosity, temperance, and ability to nurture joy and compassion even in the most trying circumstances.

I find myself leaning in, wanting to know more about what animates them, what makes them the spectacular people that they are, and there I find *religion*. I find a rich storyworld offering a roadmap through life (and beyond), astonishing wisdom to guide us along the way, profound virtues that call us to live above our baser instincts, and spiritual practices that can reign in the ego, ease anxiety, and re-shape us into the very best version of ourselves. And all of this lives not just in books and ancient scriptures, but in vibrant living art, poetry, music, ritual, dance, and the very flow of everyday life itself.

This is what we celebrate here tonight.

Some of my dearest friends from all over the world have traveled to be with us tonight and join some of our most esteemed local religious leaders to share the best of their religion’s stories, music, and wisdom. And as we gather together in this little room on this little rock soaring around this little star I invite you to be humble, to listen, to lean in, and marvel at our shared humanity.

What a gift it is to be here together tonight.

*Michael Wesch*  
host and organizer  
Professor of Anthropology

# Overview of Tonight's Program

## Introduction by Dr. Michael Wesch

### Hinduism

Janyam Band - Drs. Bala and Rekha Natarajan  
Dr. Ramasamy Perumal, K-State Agronomy

### Buddhism

Adulsak (Otto) Chanyakorn, College of Architecture  
Monks from the Buddhist Temple of Salina

### Daesoon Jinrihoe

Jay Cha

### Weixin Shengjiao

### Taiwan Wuri Mazu Temple

Chin-Lien Cheng Wu and Po Yuan Cheng

### Judaism

David Marcus, K-State Hillel  
Miriam Edelman, Manhattan Jewish Congregation

### Christianity

"You Say" by Resonate K-State  
Catholicism by Father Gale Hammerschmidt, St. Isidore's Catholic  
Ecumenicalism by Christian Watkins, Ecumenical Christian Ministries  
The Black Church by Terrell Campbell

### Islam

K-State Muslim Student Association  
Dr. Fatma Radhi, Neurologist

### Bahá'í

Bruce Grover, President & Chief Strategist of Cause

### Cao Đài

Canh Tran and Nguyen Tuan Em

**"What Was I Made For" by Resonate K-State**

**Free Reception in the Courtyard just outside the doors**

# Hinduism

All of this world, this universe, and this life came from one source, Brahman. And all of this universe, including you and me, have a divine spark from this original source. But driven by our ego's desires and fears for our self-preservation, we fail to see our essential oneness and divine nature. Many sages have used meditation and other means to see this truth and to share it, but most of us still live in ignorance. And so we are trapped in Samsara, the never-ending cycles of life and death, being reborn again and again, unable to escape from this illusion of separateness.

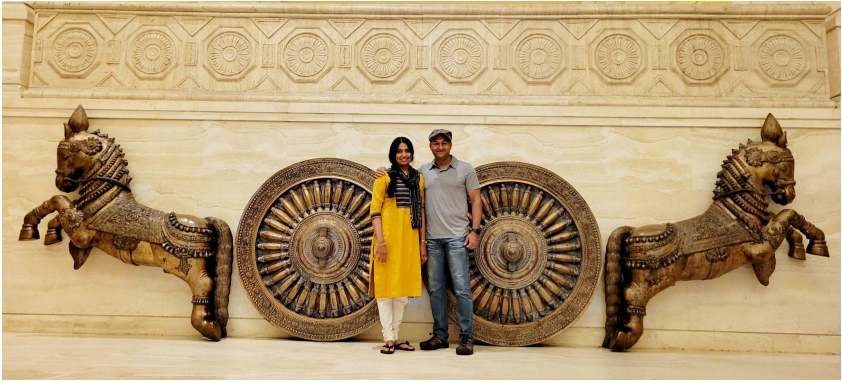
There are many beliefs and practices under the large umbrella of Hinduism, covering hundreds of different denominations followed by over one billion people. The rich texts of Hinduism include the awe-inspiring hymns of the Vedas, the always-relevant wisdom of the Upanishads, and the gripping stories of the Mahabarat and the Ramayana. Taken all together, the rich art, music, and stories of Hinduism create a vision of the universe that is alive with divine power and hundreds of gods and goddesses. But Hindus are not "polytheists" (believers in many gods). Every god or goddess is an aspect or manifestation of the all-encompassing Brahman, the Divine Universe, and our job on earth is to live in harmony with it. The music, stories, and wisdom of Hinduism provide an astounding richness of resources to help us along the way.

There is no single path. Each soul is free to find its own way. Some meditate, some live as selflessly as possible, and others go to the temple to worship. Some believe gods and goddesses are real, others take them as metaphors and allegories.

"Truth is one; The Sages speak of it by many names"

- Rig Veda 1.164.46

## Janyam Band - Drs. Bala and Rekha Natarajan



Rekha, Bala, Advith and Ayavanth Natarajan have been residents of Manhattan for over 20 years, with music being a large part of their lives. Rekha was drawn towards Carnatic music at a very young age, starting veena lessons at the age of eight and pursuing advanced training during summer vacations in Kolkata, India. (The veena is a fretted 7-stringed instrument). Combined with Bala's background in Indian devotional music, this family created the band "Janyam" and enjoys blending a variety of sounds, rhythms and genres in their musical arrangements.

## Dr. Ramasamy Perumal, K-State Agronomy



Dr. Perumal is a Professor at the Department of Agronomy, Kansas State University, Kansas. He earned his PhD in Plant Breeding and Genetics from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), India. Dr. Perumal is the recipient of The Rockefeller Foundation Post-doctoral Research Fellowship on Sorghum Biotechnology (1998 to 2000). Dr. Perumal has 40 years of vast research and teaching experiences in classical and molecular breeding in many cereal crops (sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet). Dr. Perumal has authored/coauthored 120 peer-reviewed journal articles, 16 book chapters and 70 scientific conference abstracts. He studied "Bhagavad Gita" and teaches the same to Indian children since last 15 years. He does regular prayer, mediation and chanting Sanskrit slokas from different Hindu scriptures.

# Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama, the man who would become Buddha, was born into a life of luxury as a prince in ancient India around the 6th century BCE. Sheltered from the suffering of the world, he lived a life of material pleasure until, at the age of 29, he ventured outside the walls of the palace and encountered the realities of aging, sickness, and death.

Determined to find a way to overcome suffering, he renounced his royal life and embarked on a spiritual quest. He learned from many Hindu sages and tried many methods but none of them brought him permanent liberation. Ultimately, Siddhartha concluded that neither extreme indulgence nor extreme asceticism could lead to enlightenment. He adopted the "Middle Way," a balanced approach between self-indulgence and self-mortification. He sat under the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, resolved to meditate until he attained true understanding. Through deep meditation and introspection, he achieved enlightenment.

The Buddha taught that our suffering comes from our selfish cravings and attachments. By cultivating wisdom, living ethically, and practicing mental discipline and meditation we can experience a profound sense of peace, joy, and freedom.

For Theravada Buddhists, the Buddha is just a man who discovered a way to help us find peace and joy. But for Mahayana Buddhists, the Buddha was both human and more than human, and there are many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas existing in multiple realms who can help us on our path.

After renouncing his princely life and attaining enlightenment, the Buddha lived as an itinerant monk, walking through towns and villages with his alms bowl, accepting food offerings from laypeople. It is a way for monks to practice humility and simplicity while connecting with the community, and for laypeople to generate karmic merit for themselves and loved ones through their donations.

## Adulsak (Otto) Chanyakorn, K-State College of Architecture



Otto was born in a rural area of northeast Thailand and spent time as a novice Buddhist monk in the Thai Forest Tradition. Growing up on the farmland of his father, he spent most of his childhood outdoors, and that has influenced him to love Plein Air painting. Otto lets his paintings emerge from quiet observation, with special attention to the relationship between space, atmosphere, and light. Painting, he says, is a meditation.. It's

about being, not just becoming. Simplicity is the goal. Ultimately, the act of painting is the doorway to embodied experience. Otto earned his undergraduate degree in architecture in Thailand and a master's degree in the US. In 2020, he was awarded the Gabriel Prize by Western European Architecture. He was recently awarded The 2023 Drexler Family Diversity Fellowship by The Civitas Institute, based in Seattle, Washington, and Civita, Italy.

## Venerable Monks of Wat Videsdhammarangsi

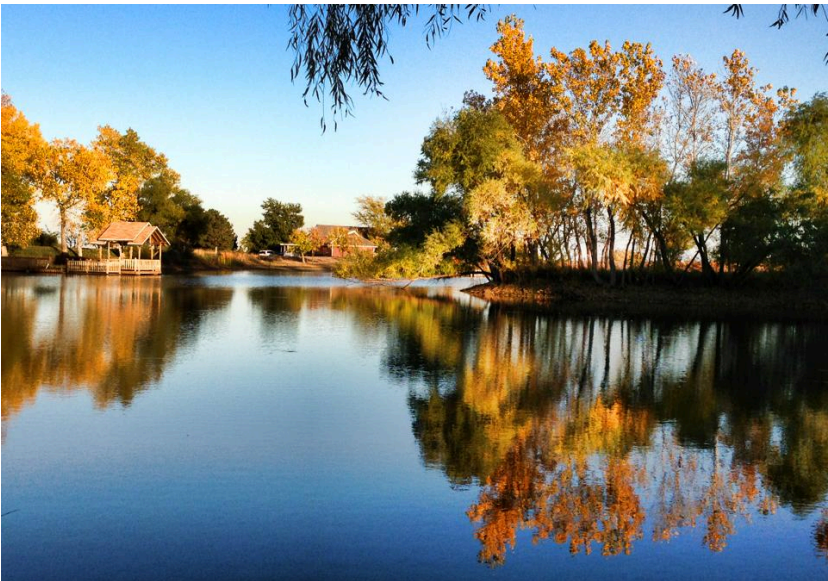


Venerable Jessada Duangan, Venerable Natee Kongtong and Venerable Phakhapol Chaisuwan

## Wat Videsdhammarangsi (Buddhist temple of Salina)



Wat Videsdhammarangsi, also known as the Buddhist Temple of Kansas, is located in Salina, Kansas. It was officially opened in 2009 and serves the spiritual needs of the local Southeast Asian Buddhist community. The temple has become a hub for cultural and religious gatherings, drawing participants from across the region, including states as far away as Texas and Nebraska.





# Weixin Shengjiao

“The mentor of the Weixin School is nature. Natural substances lead people to understand the world. By observing nature and life with heart, people can cultivate themselves.”

The Bagua, or Eight Trigrams, is a fundamental concept in Chinese metaphysics, including I Ching (the Book of Changes), which forms a cornerstone of Weixin Shengjiao’s teachings. The Bagua consists of



eight symbols, each composed of three lines that can be either broken (representing Yin) or unbroken (representing Yang). These trigrams symbolize natural elements and phenomena, such as heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain, and lake, reflecting the fundamental aspects of the universe. The Bagua also highlights the concept of dynamic change, inherent in the natural world and human life. The trigrams and their transformations reflect the idea that nothing is permanent and that change is a constant.

In Weixin Shengjiao, the Bagua is not just a theoretical construct but a practical tool for divination, Feng Shui, and personal development. By aligning one’s life with the natural forces and principles symbolized by the Bagua, followers believe they can achieve greater harmony, overcome challenges, and contribute to world peace.

Weixin Shengjiao was founded by Grand Master Hun Yuan in the 1980s. After a severe illness nearly took his life, Grand Master Hun Yuan dedicated himself to spiritual life. Combining Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Feng Shui, it came to be known as “the heart method of the I Ching Feng Shui.” The goal is to calm the mind, reconcile humanity and nature, and reach a state of harmony. It is practiced not only through meditation but also through art and architecture. Many of the most striking achievements of Weixin Shengjiao can be seen in its monumental architecture that strives for harmonic balance and world peace.

## Daesoon Jinrihoe

Daesoon Jinrihoe is one of the largest Korean new religions rooted in tradition. We believe in the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven (**Sangje**), who incarnated as **Kang Jeung-san** (1871-1909) at the end of the 19th century. As the omniscient and omnipotent Supreme God who presides over all things in the universe's Three Realms - Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, he descended into the human world and carried out the 'Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth' to rectify the existing catastrophic disorder of the world, save the Three Realms, and open up an Earthly Paradise. These Works unfolded into the 'Daesoon Truth (**Daesoon Jinri**)' of the Supreme God, which boils down to the '**Resolution of Grievances and Grudges for Mutual Beneficence.**'

Through a revelation from the Supreme God Kang Jeung-san, the Lord of the Dao **Jo Jeong-san** (1895-1958) initiated our Religious Orthodoxy. After gaining enlightenment to the Daesoon Truth and attaining the Dao in 1917, he established a religious order called Mugeukdo in 1925 based on the teachings of the Supreme God. Additionally, he formulated a doctrinal system consisting of Tenets, Creeds, Aims, various methods of cultivation, ceremonial procedures, and other regulations. These elements continue to guide the lives of our Dao Cultivators even until the present.

The Religious Orthodoxy was later transmitted by the Lord of the Dao to his successor, the Leader of Principle **Park Wudang** (1917-1996). He subsequently reorganized the existing order and gave it a new name, '**Daesoon Jinrihoe**' in 1969.

Daesoon Jinrihoe is a religious order established with the following aims: propagating Sangje's boundless grace and blessings to the world, securing the salvation of spirits and humans, and creating the Earthly Paradise through the Renovation of Human Beings and the Re-creation of the Inner-spirit based upon the eradication of Self-Deception. To embody the principle of the 'Resolution of Grievances & Grudges for Mutual Beneficence' in society, we have implemented Three Major Societal Works - Charity Aid, Social Welfare, and Education - since 1972.

## Rev. Jay Cha (Cha Ik-Je)



Rev. Jay Cha was appointed as an upper clergy of Daesoon Jinrihoe in 2008. In 2013, he joined the Department of Research and Edification, and in 2016, he assumed the role of team leader of the International Affairs Team. Jay has played a pivotal role in organizing significant events such as the ‘Yeosu Eco Forum (2019)’ and ‘the World SangSaeng Forum (2023),’ which convened over 200 scholars and religious leaders from 12 countries.

## Dr. Joo Soyeon



Dr. Joo Soyeon began her religious cultivation at Daesoon Jinrihoe after graduating from high school and has participated in various religious activities. With a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature, she was interested in spreading the teachings of Daesoon globally and began to study Daesoon thought at the graduate school of Daejin University in 2015. She earned her Master's degree in Education View of Daesoon Thought and a PhD in Virtue Ethics of Daesoon Thought from Daejin University. Currently, she is a researcher in the Department of Research and Edification of Daesoon Jinrihoe. For the past week, Dr. Joo has been providing guest lectures on Daesoon Jinrihoe for the new “New Religions” class (ANTH 510) taught by Dr. Wesch.

If you want to have more information, link here.

<https://museum.daesoon.org/eng>



# Taiwan Wuri ShangMu Temple



Mazu is a Chinese Sea Goddess with over 5,000 temples dedicated to her and over 200 million devotees.

Mazu was born as a human girl in 960 CE. After she was born, more than a month passed without hearing any crying, so her parents named her "Mo".

Mazu was different from ordinary girls. She was dignified and courteous. When she was eight years old, her father invited a teacher to come to the family to set up a private school, and Mazu began to read and write.

When she was thirteen years old, the old Taoist priest Xuantong came to her home. The old Taoist saw Mazu's compassion and joy and said "Mo Niang seems to have Buddha nature. If she is cultivated, she can help people in the world." The Taoist began to teach Xuanwei's secret method to Mazu.

Mazu respected it, practiced it day and night, and gradually understood the secrets of the religion. Three years later, she achieved the power to help people and avoid disasters. Since then, Mazu has been rescuing lives and ships in distress in the sea.

If you want to have more stories about MAZU  
Scan this QRcode !



## Chin-Lien Wu



The Taiwan Wuri ShangMu Temple was founded by Senior Sister Wu. In 1993, she was an ordinary housewife who was unable to be cured by famous doctors due to her frail health. Under the guidance of a Chinese medicine practitioner, she became associated with our Mazu. Two years later, she inherited her destiny and began her mission.

For more than 20 years, Senior Sister Wu has been following the instructions of Mazu; helping the world, saving people, and transforming people's hearts. In this period of Dharma ending and moral decay, Senior Sister Wu upholds the spirit of Mazu and the classics passed down by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to purify the troubled hearts of all living beings and soothe the restless hearts of all living beings.

Senior Sister Wu has been a course instructor at Taichung Women's Prison in Taiwan for nine years from 2015. She also has been a course instructor of 「Taoist culture」 at Meishan Yuxu Temple in Chiayi Taiwan , where is a famous temple worshiped Xuantian Shandi by people.

Senior Sister Wu believes that reciting classics and giving lectures are also good ways to promote religious culture. She works hard to promote this kind of thought to people in Taiwan , China , Korea , and now she will go to America and start her next period of Taoist this summer.

# Judaism

Judaism is one of the world's oldest monotheisms. We trace our ancestry to Abraham in the eastern Mediterranean almost 4,000 years ago. Moses led us out of slavery in Egypt and we made an agreement with G-d to live by the Ten Commandments and other rules as described in our founding text, the Torah. Sometimes we are called "G-d's chosen people." But we are not "chosen" for a free ride to heaven. On the contrary, we are chosen to carry the burden of following G-d's special instructions, to pursue peace and justice, and to repair this world (Tikkun Olam).

The Torah asks us to welcome strangers, provide for the poor, and treat animals humanely. We believe that these rules and the values they represent are not good because G-d said them. They are good and that is why G-d said them. Therefore, we do not take them literally. Instead, we believe it is important to use human reason to debate and work to understand how these rules and values can be applied to everyday life in a constantly changing world.

The world's 16 million Jews have a wide range of beliefs, from Orthodox Jews who believe in the divine origin of the Torah to atheist and secular Jews who do not believe in G-d at all but still identify as culturally Jewish with a shared culture, identity, language and a history marked by expulsions, discrimination, and persecution that led to Jews spreading all over the world in a large diaspora.

We come together and remember who we are through a parade of holidays that bring our story to life. At Passover every item on our plate symbolizes some aspect of our enslavement in Egypt. As we eat each item we retell the story, sing songs, and reflect on the meaning of the story for today's world. At Sukkot we eat in tents for seven days to remember our 40 years in the desert. And every Friday night and Saturday we honor the Shabbat, G-d's day of rest.

We do not think that others have to believe as we do and do not seek to proselytize. Nonetheless, Jewish thought has had a tremendous impact on the world. Our core texts and stories are the foundation for the religion of over 4 billion Christians and Muslims. Our ideals of justice, charity, and social responsibility have heavily influenced Western thought. And we were the first to institute a day of rest on the seventh day. So if you like weekends, you're welcome.

## David Marcus



David was born in San Diego, CA where he grew up going to Jewish day school. After attending UC San Diego, where he got his Bachelors and Masters in math, he worked as a software engineer for a few years, before starting his PhD in Mathematics at K-State. At K-State, David is the Student President of Hillel, where he helps facilitate Jewish culture and life on campus.

## Miriam Edelman



Miriam Edelman grew up in the Manhattan Jewish Congregation, and, after working around the world, returned to Manhattan in 2020; she now serves on the MJC Board. Miriam is an organizational psychologist (MSc London School of Economics) interested in voluntary organizations like faith communities, decisions, culture, research, and organizational transformation. Miriam has also for many years taught Judaism, social justice, and ethics to teens and adults. She taught congregational social justice to rabbinic students for seven years, having long been a congregational activist and consultant. Miriam is a member of the Manhattan Women Religious Leaders.

# Christianity

Christianity, a faith with over two billion adherents worldwide, stands as one of the most influential and widespread religions in human history. Rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, Christianity began as a small Jewish sect in the 1st century CE and has since evolved into a diverse global movement. Central to Christian belief is the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ) and the Son of God, whose life, death, and resurrection offer salvation to humanity.

Jesus spread a message of love, compassion, and forgiveness. His radical inclusivity and his challenge to the established religious and social norms attracted both followers and opponents, leading to his crucifixion by Roman authorities around 30 CE.

His resurrection three days after his death is the cornerstone of the faith, symbolizing the triumph of life over death and the possibility of eternal life for believers. This event, celebrated as Easter, is a pivotal moment that transformed Jesus' followers into a fervent movement, spreading his message throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Christianity's sacred texts, the Bible, comprise the Old Testament, shared with Judaism, and the New Testament, which documents Jesus' life and the early church's teachings. Over the centuries, Christianity has branched into numerous denominations, each with its own traditions and interpretations of scripture, including Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism.

Despite its diverse expressions, Christianity remains united in the belief in Jesus as the Savior and in the practice of rituals like baptism and communion, which commemorate Jesus' life and foster a sense of community among believers. Christianity's impact on art, culture, philosophy, and politics continues to shape the world, offering a rich tapestry of spiritual and ethical guidance to its followers.



## **Christian Watkins**

Executive Director/Campus Pastor,  
Ecumenical Campus Ministry (ECM at Kansas State)



Rev. Christian Watkins serves as an ordained minister and Executive Director of Ecumenical Campus Ministry (ECM) at Kansas State University. She loves to be a part of communities that care about the world and strive to make a positive impact. Besides ministry, Christian produces independent films and is finishing her dissertation on political violence in local elections. Vocal music is her other lifelong passion.

## **Father Gale Hammerschmidt**



Fr. Gale Hammerschmidt was born and raised in Hays, Kansas, and graduated from Thomas More Prep-Marian High School. He attended Kansas State University where he received a degree in secondary education. Fr. Gale spent nine years in Manhattan, Kansas at Msgr. Luckey Jr. High School as a history teacher and coach. From 2005-2012, Fr. Gale studied at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver, Colorado. In 2012, Fr. Gale was ordained a priest and is currently the pastor of St. Isidore's Catholic Student Center at K-State. Prior to

this assignment, he served as a priest in Junction City and Salina.

# The Black Church

The Black Church, a cornerstone of African American life and culture, emerged as a powerful institution during the late 18th century. Born out of necessity and resilience, it provided a sanctuary and a voice for slaves as well as free Blacks who faced racial discrimination and segregation in predominantly white churches.

At its core, the Black Church has always been more than a place of worship. It served and continues to serve as a community hub, offering spiritual sustenance, education, and a sense of belonging. During the era of slavery, it became a beacon of hope and a clandestine space for planning resistance. Stories like Exodus inspired powerful spirituals like "Go Down Moses" that invokes the refrain of Moses speaking firmly to Pharaoh, "Let my people go."

As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the 20th century, the Black Church continued its role as a pivotal force for social change. Leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. galvanized support from the pulpit and protestors bravely faced violent resistance with a sense of God on their side. As they walked to the jail in Birmingham to protest the imprisonment of Martin Luther King, they sang "I want Jesus to walk with me." Their faith sustained them in the face of extraordinary violence and brutality. As civil rights leader Andrew Young said, "Nobody in their right mind would have do some of the things that we did, but we did it because we were caught up in the spirit."

Music continues to be an essential element of the Black Church. It creates a vibrant emotional energy that envelops the Word with a power to heal, empower, and unite worshippers. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. has noted, "music is really the language of the Black Church. Spirituals and gospels are woven into the foundation of the church." This dynamic worship style, characterized by spirited gospel music, dynamic sermons, and active congregational participation, reflects deep cultural roots and has a profound impact on its members that extends beyond the worship service itself. The Black Church offers community support, develops educational institutions, supports civil rights initiatives, and creates a platform for African American voices in the broader societal discourse.

## Terrell Campbell



Terrell Campbell, 24, is a native of Long Island, NY. He is presently a doctoral student in the Department of Chemistry at Kansas State University. When not invested in his studies, Terrell serves as the Minister of Music at Bethel AME Church in Manhattan, KS. He also serves as an active member of the community through his involvement in the NAACP both locally and at the state level where he serves as the 1st VP of the State Youth and College Division.

Additionally, Terrell serves as a mentor to many in organizations both on and off campus.

# Islam

Islam, a beacon of peace, kindness, and unity, illuminates the hearts of two billion people around the world. At its core, Islam means 'submission' to the will of Allah, the One true God, fostering a harmonious relationship between the Creator and His creation. This religion is not only a spiritual path but also a comprehensive way of life, guiding individuals to live with integrity, compassion, and mutual respect.

Central to the faith is the Qur'an, the final divine revelation, which serves as a completion and conformation of the scriptures that came before it—the Torah and the Enjil (Bible). The original sacred texts, revered in Islam, are seen as integral chapters in the grand narrative of divine guidance. The Qur'an, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), confirms and preserves the messages brought by earlier prophets such as Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them). It is a testament to the unity and continuity of God's message to humanity, culminating in a final, complete, and unaltered revelation.

The message of Islam emphasizes peace—both inner peace and peace with others. The greeting "As-salamu alaykum" (peace be upon you) is a constant reminder of the importance of spreading peace in every interaction. The Qur'an and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) frequently advocate for kindness, urging believers to treat others with respect and compassion. The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) life is replete with examples of mercy and benevolence, serving as a model for Muslims to emulate in their daily lives.

*“O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.”*

- Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13

## **Dr. Fatma Radhi, Neurologist**



Dr. Fatma Radhi, MD is a neurologist in Manhattan, KS and has over 32 years of experience in the medical field. Dr. Radhi has extensive experience in different conditions that affect the brain and nervous system . She graduated from University of Baghdad College of Medicine, Iraq in 1991 and finished her neurology residency from the University of Texas Medical branch in 1998. .She is affiliated with Ascension Via Christi

Hospital and Stormontvail health in Manhattan Kansas

## **Mohammad Eiliya Davoudi**



Hi there! My name is Eiliya, and I am a Persian American student here at Kansas State. I'm currently majoring in Chemistry with a minor in Anthropology. In short, I go head over heels for sushi and I'm in love with soccer. I'm always happy to meet new people and have the firm belief that we all have a set of gifted skills unique to us that can change the world, it's only a matter of if you're willing to use them.

# Bahá'í

*"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."*

*"Let your vision be world embracing, rather than confined to your own self."*

*"Let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path."*

*"The best beloved of all things in My sight is justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me."*

The Bahá'í Faith is a world religion founded in 1844 whose purpose is to unite all the peoples of the earth in one universal cause. The traditions of nearly every people include the promise of a future when peace and harmony will be established on earth and humankind will live in spiritual and material prosperity. Bahá'ís believe Bahá'u'lláh is the latest in the series of divine Messengers Whose teachings will enable humanity to build a world where unity, love, justice and peace redefine relationships among individuals, communities, institutions and nations.

Bahá'ís believe in a loving God Who has, from age to age, sent Messengers to humanity to provide spiritual guidance and laws that empower individuals to transform their inner lives and their external conditions. The oneness of humanity is a central Bahá'í teaching. Realization of this principle is both the goal and operating principle of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation. This concept of oneness celebrates the diversity of humankind as a strength, a source of learning, and a promise of peace.

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and laws include freedom from prejudice, the equality of women and men, the agreement of science and religion, daily prayer and meditation, universal education, the inherent nobility of every person, the progressive revelation of religious truth, and the centrality of justice to all human endeavors. Bahá'u'lláh elevates work performed in the spirit of service to worship and establishes patterns of governance at the local, national and international level to channel these teachings for the betterment of all.

Today, the Bahá'í Faith is the second most widespread religion in the world. Bahá'ís live in every state, territory and nation, and are dedicated to translating their Faith into action through community building, social service and contributing to social discourses.

Learn more at [bahai.org](http://bahai.org) and [bahai.us](http://bahai.us).

## **Bruce Grover, President & Chief Strategist of Cause**



Bruce was born into a Bahá'í family and became a Bahá'í at age 15 while living in India, where he experienced the beauty of Hindu, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Jain, Sikh, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Bahá'í teachings. Since childhood, Bruce has seen the power of translating a belief in the oneness of humanity into action through community service in India, Ghana, Argentina, Israel and the U.S. As his career in purpose-driven branding and communications blossomed in New York City, Bruce and his family chose to live in some of the City's toughest neighborhoods to

support the spiritual empowerment of children, youth and families. In 2016, Bruce and his family moved to Manhattan, where his wife Kate Digby took a faculty position in the K-State dance program. Today, the family hosts children's, youth and family service-learning activities in their home and neighborhood, and remains fascinated by the Baha'i concept of "unity in diversity" as a foundation of creating peace, understanding and love among peoples and nations. Bruce has held local and regional elected and appointed leadership roles, and today continues his professional life with Cause ([cause.us](http://cause.us)). Bruce is an active member of the Manhattan NAACP.

## Cao Đài

CaoDai is a universal faith with the principle that all religions have one same divine origin, which is God, or Allah, or the Tao, or the Nothingness, and are just different manifestations of one same truth. Their altars feature Buddha, Lao Tzu (Taoism), Confucius, Jesus, and other figures from the major world traditions. Their sacred texts highlight many of the wisest teachings and best practices from the world's traditions. They emphasize that all religions speak of one fundamental goal: to bring love and justice to all people of the world.

This rich synthesis of the world's religions took root in Southern Vietnam where the Mekong River meets the Pacific Ocean, a busy crossroads of cultural flows from east and west that brought together elements of all of the major world religions. It was here in the 1920s that God and other spirits started communicating to people through spirit messages, revealing a vision of the cosmos and the afterlife that integrated elements of all of the world's religions into one.

In line with the Abrahamic traditions, the Cao Dai believe in an all-powerful God who offers grace, forgiveness and everlasting life, while in line with Eastern traditions, the Cao Dai believe we are all imbued with a divine spark from God, and that we can use prayers, chants, and meditations to quiet the mind, dissolve the ego and recognize our essential divine oneness with God. As in the Abrahamic faiths we can go to heaven and live in paradise, but following Eastern traditions, this journey must take many reincarnations, with each life being the result of karma built up over previous lifetimes. Life is a "school for the soul." Karma does not just give us "what we deserve." It gives us "what we need" to learn and grow spiritually so that we can lose our ego and re-unite with God.

The Cao Dai have approximately 6 million followers with temples all over the world, including one in Wichita, Kansas.



## **Nguyen Tuan Em (“Em”)**



Nguyen Tuan Em is a doctoral student at the Graduate Institute of Religious Studies at Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan. He has been a dedicated assistant to Priest Tran Quang Canh, a former president of the Cao Dai Overseas Missions, for the past decade, and served as an official representative of the Cao Dai Religion in Taiwan from 2020 to 2024. Tuan Em has gained popularity as a scholar in recent years, particularly within academia specializing in Cao Dai studies. His research interests focus on Cao Dai rites, spirit possession, and cosmology.

## **Priest Tran Quang Canh (“Canh”)**

Director of Cao Dai Overseas Missions 1998-2022



Priest Tran Quang Canh is a retired dignity of the Cao Dai Sacerdotal Council in Tay Ninh, Vietnam, and a popular figure among academia for the last thirty years. Serving as President of the Cao Dai Overseas Missions from 1998 to 2022, he revitalized the Overseas Missions of the Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See in Vietnam after 1975, making Cao Dai a melting pot for researchers and scholars worldwide. One of his notable achievements was the establishment of the Association of East Asian New Religions. He is also a strong advocate and promoter for the inclusion of Cao Dai as a subject of study in tertiary education, such as at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh; the University of Vienna, Austria, and the University of Missouri and Kansas State University in the US.

# Resonate K-Sate



Resonate A Cappella is a new student-led A Cappella group at Kansas State University. After officially launching in January 2024, Resonate has made a name for themselves in the Manhattan community by working in partnership with Wareham Hall, recording and producing several music videos, and putting on their debut concert at University Christian Church. Resonate is dedicated to forming lasting connections, enhancing musicality, and positively impacting our community in pursuit of exceptional performance.

You can learn more about Resonate on Instagram [@resonateksu](https://www.instagram.com/resonateksu)

## Michael Wesch

Host & Organizer

Professor of Anthropology



After graduating Kansas State University in 1997, Wesch received the prestigious Jacob K. Javits Fellowship and the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and studied anthropology at the University of Virginia. For his doctoral research he spent two years living in a remote rainforest village of Papua New Guinea studying local beliefs about witchcraft and the

ancestral mother and the impact Christian missions, books, and writing might have on these beliefs. This research helped him anticipate the dramatic cultural impact social media would have on society and culture. His subsequent videos on technology, culture, and education have been viewed over 20 million times, featured at several international film festivals, and won several major awards, including the Wired Magazine Rave Award, the John Culkin Award for Outstanding Praxis in Media Ecology, and he was selected as a National Geographic Emerging Explorer.

Wesch is also a winner of the prestigious US Professor of the Year Award from the Carnegie Foundation. The Kansas City Star called him “the prophet of an education revolution” and the New York Times listed him as one of 10 professors in the nation whose courses “mess with old models” and added that “they give students an experience that might change how they think, what they care about or even how they live their lives.”

Since 2018, Wesch has turned his focus back toward religion and now spends most of his time learning languages and traveling the world to document religions as they are actually lived and experienced in ordinary life.

You can follow him at [youtube.com/mwesch](https://www.youtube.com/mwesch) or read his free Cultural Anthropology textbook at [anth101.com](https://anth101.com).

## **Special Thanks to our Financial Sponsors**

- Union Program Council
- Dow Center for Multicultural and Community Studies
- K-State Office of International Programs
- Daesoon Jinrihoe
- Weixin Shingjiao
- Cao Đài

## **Special Thanks to our Organizational Sponsors**

- ARETE: The Alliance for Religious Exploration, Tolerance, and Education
- K-State Anthropology Club

**Learn more about the World's Religions  
and earn the K-State Religious Studies Certificate.**

**More information:**



**Join ARETE for more open discussions  
and explorations of different religions:**

