The spiritual journey of Cal Poly students

By Jaime Borsuk, Daily Staff Writer

For some Cal Poly students, college life means freedom— an opportunity to break away from parents, and a chance to live life with an agenda all their own. Some stereotypical college lifestyles include cramming for exams, joining clubs and blowing off steam by consuming substantial amounts of beer.

Some students said they search for that truth in ways other than attending church. For others, it's more about personal faith, growth and development. "When people have the choice, they look for the truth themselves."

We feel we did achieve, however, a good cross-section of religion and religious beliefs on Cal Poly's campus. What you'll find on the following pages is at least a starting point for public discussion and private reflection on those issues.

In September 1996, The Christian Science Monitor reported, "The move toward religion on college campuses is broad-based and includes everything from Judaism to New Age to Buddhism. It represents a growing student interest in religion among Americans in general."

In accordance with this report, Cal Poly philosophy professor Judy Saltzman said students have demonstrated high levels of interest in the religious classes offered through the philosophy department. "There's a lot of interest in religious studies at Cal Poly," she said. "In my 22 years at Cal Poly, there have only been three times that the religious courses haven't been filled. Every time we have more people trying to get in."

The department offers classes in Judaism, Christian Origin, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Saltzman teaches most of these classes because a religious studies department doesn't exist at Cal Poly and other faculty members are not available to teach such courses.

To help gauge religious preferences among Cal Poly students, a Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey was administered to first-time Cal Poly students living in the residence halls. The survey is used by colleges and universities nationwide to compare and monitor current trends among students in the country, said Cal Poly assessment and testing director Stephen Lamb.

"It helps provide a snapshot into American Life," he said.

The survey asks a variety of questions about political views and religious preferences. Out of the 1,650 respondents to the survey, the largest amount of students reported they were Roman Catholic (29.8 percent), 26.2 percent reported no religious affiliation, and 15.1 percent reported they were Protestant (see related graph page 4). Although these results are not representative of the entire student population, because of the limited number of respondents, they provide some degree as to the religious makeup of Cal Poly students.

A large number of respondents claimed no religious affiliation, but some people think that college provides these students with the chance to discover their spiritual side. Aaron Wilch, spokesperson for the Campus Crusade for Christ at Cal Poly, said the group has grown in size this year. Wilch said that the increase is possibly due to the amount of students looking for their own sense of faith once they've left home.

"I believe that college is a good time for students to get away from their parents' hold on them," said Wilch, an architecture senior. "When people have the choice, they look for the truth themselves."

Some students said they search for that truth in ways other than attending church. For some it's more about personal faith, growth and development. "I changed a lot when I got to school..."

See BELIEF page 4

Editor's note on today's Mustang Daily Religion Issue

Thank you for picking up today's first-ever Mustang Daily Religion Issue. The idea for this came about during a meeting months ago and we decided spring was a good time to publish such an issue. During three brainstorming sessions, the editors and staff writers of Mustang Daily came up with about 20 ideas for articles we could have written about. What came out of those sessions is in this newspaper. However, as you'll find when reading this, is that we did miss a lot. We probably don't realize everything that we are missing, but with the resources we have, we are simply unable to cover everything that pertains to religion.

We feel we did achieve, however, a good cross-section of religion and religious beliefs on Cal Poly's campus. What you'll find on the following pages is at least a starting point for public discussion and private reflection on those issues.

Religion goes mostly uncovered in mainstream media. It's unfortunate that religion in American media is only mentioned through national events like cult suicides and locally in cases like the satanic-inspired Elise Pahler murder.

Other issues that dominate media's religious coverage include violent extremism, religious persecution and religious conflict. These problems make up such a small percentage of people's daily beliefs, lives and teachings.

In Mustang Daily, some campus events, clubs and individuals are covered. Religion usually ends up on the opinion page when someone is upset about preachers in the University Union or just ranting about a particular philosophy. What we tried to do in this issue is give a representation of the campus' religious people. A good majority of religious practitioners are regular people. They're our friends, family members, classmates and professors who choose to believe what they want and choose to live the way they want within the confines of these beliefs.

This issue is about those people.
Forum ties community, church on issues

By Rachel Brady
Daily Staff Writer

The Contemporary Issues Forum is a quarterly event that provides an open panel which deals with problems of concern in our society. The First Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo started putting on these forums four years ago, and has received positive response from both audiences and panelists.

"We aim very hard to make it nondenominational," Ream said. "We want to bring the community into our church to learn about the social issues." The two-hour events, held once every three months, have a panel of speakers that focus on a particular topic chosen for that evening. During the first hour, a moderator asks the panel several questions and panelists take turns answering. The second hour allows the audience to ask questions that can be aimed to individuals or the whole paned.

Past panels have had topics like gangs, abuse (child, spousal and elder), the right to die and gay and lesbian issues. Subjects for the forums are chosen by the task force, which is a diverse group of people of all ages.

"It's a real mix of very bright minds and people that are current on issues," Ream said. Audience members usually have two main incentives for attending the forums. "A lot of people come just to be supported in their beliefs," Ream said. "Other people come with the need to know about the subject of the forum." Normally the panelists provide very practical information.

After 10 successes, the task force believes that the forums play important roles for the community.

"The church looks on it as almost an obligation," Ream said. "It's important for someone to take on this obligation of educating. We feel very proud about this obligation and mission." It's nowhere in our teachings," Yanagihara said. "We don't condone that." The last question of the evening prompted the panel to discuss their religions' feelings about Jesus Christ.

"Jesus Christ is God enfleshed," Gordon said. "He lived, loved, suffered, died and rose from death. He is the savior of the world."
Students plan for religious careers

By Monica Phillips
Daily Staff Writer

After four years of college, some students opt to avoid the "real world" and continue school in a master's or doctoral program. Most of those students can expect to join the workforce at a more elevated salary than that of most students who graduated with a bachelor's degree. However, some Cal Poly students have chosen another way of life. They are following a religious career. These students will go on to study at a seminary or a public school offering advanced degrees in religion including the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) supported by U.C. Berkeley.

Students who choose religion as a career must still pay expensive fees for a graduate program, but they will not be reimbursed monetarily.

Psychology junior Melissa Romero had a lot of political aspirations until last March, when she attended a conference on women's ministries and felt an internal nudging to dedicate her life to God. Romero decided that the best way she can help people is by affecting their spiritual lives.

"You definitely have to leave behind the $50,000 salary, but hopefully (the salary) isn't why you're doing it," Romero said. "It's more important to really know someone if you want to affect their life, than just seeing them on Sunday or Tuesday," she said.

Not only is it a life dedication for those who want to become a minister, but also for those who teach and administer.

"Individuals and institutions within the GTU are called beyond themselves as they express their faith in God, love for one another and hope for the future," GTU's home page on the Internet states.

Romero said she feels it is important to continue her education in a seminary after she graduates from Cal Poly, because many people want to know more about religion than what the writings preach.

"The gospel message is very simple, but it is important to know why I believe what I believe," she said.

Cal Poly does not offer a religious studies major or minor, so to pursue a career as a minister students must continue in a graduate program at another university or seminary. At U.C. Santa Barbara, one religious course takes a critical look at the life of Jesus.

"This is one of the most sought-after classes at UCSB and I'm sure it would have a similar interest at Cal Poly," Romero said. "It is important to know what Jesus Christ is now."

Students can take religious studies as a major or minor at UCSB, and they don't necessarily go on to fulfill careers in religion. According to a UCSB website, it is very popular to study religion at another university or seminary. At U.C. Santa Barbara, one religious course takes a critical look at the life of Jesus. Romero decided that the best way she can help people is by affecting their spiritual lives.

"It's easy to influence someone's bank account or their aesthetics, but it's an individual who wants to have a career in religion, but to be the best Muslim he can be.

"If you're committed, then that's how you show others," he said.

"If you're committed, then you show others," he said. "To work on ourselves and build a bridge between other communities. Third, and most importantly, there's a lot of ignorance and misunderstanding."

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"The gospel message is very simple, but it is important to know why I believe what I believe," she said.
Lofty aspirations for a small garage band from the musically-sleepy San Luis Obispo. "We're so much in love with God," Wells said. "He's just like a big dad to us. He's what keeps us going and he's what gives us the power to play what we play."

But, here's the kicker: Noggin Toboggan, as prepared as they are to single-handedly conquer the county in God's name, are one of an army of bands that include up to 40 tightly coupled CPUs, 8 GB of RAM, 256 I/O channels, and multiple banks of insurance databases, and by Fortune 200 companies.

"We are bold," said Antonye Holyde, lead singer and guitarist for Mercy Cafe. "But we aren't bold in a cram-it-in-your-face manner. We believe what their parents believe, but when they get to school they get the chance to think on their own."

Mercy Cafe is exactly this. The mighty Tobogganers joined fellow San Luis Obispo-area punk outfits Soul Doubt and Watashi-Wa, as well as three out-of-town crews from Southern California and the Bay Area.

One self-proclaimed religious belief is the heart and not enough attention. People are much more into celebration and much about the heart and not enough attention. They are going to be big.

Meanwhile, Noggin Toboggan released a CD at Saturday's concert and, according to Smith, several Christian labels are courting Soul Doubt.

“They're ready for the big time,” Smith said. “They are going to be big.”

Perhaps Smith's words ring true for the entire Christian music scene in San Luis Obispo.

BELIEF from page 1

because I lived on my own," said Kellie Couch, a biochemistry junior. "Students in high school just believe what their parents believe, but when they get to school they get the chance to think on their own."

Couch, who is Christian, said that she tends to focus more on her personal relationship with God rather than whether or not she attends church services. Whether their religious curiosities are satisfied in the classroom, at church or within themselves, Cal Poly students may find it difficult to be spiritually stimulating.

All people are equal in the eyes of God. We're more inviting. It's like asking people to come see a really awesome sunset.

Holyde, who is also a pastor and high school teacher, said his band prefers to foreground the political side of life when writing lyrics.

"We're not very political," Holyde said. "We're much more into celebrating and inviting people into that. Politics cloud the issue of Jesus Christ. People are much more intrigued by Him as a person."

Having played together for more than two years already, Mercy Cafe has one self-released CD under its belt and is currently considering the idea of a record label relationship.

"We run into two different problems with record labels," Holyde said. "One is that they like the music but want to change the ministry. The other is that they are too focused on the ministry. They care too much about the heart and not enough about the art."

1996 Freshmen Religious Preferences

Based on a 1,639 responses to a survey of freshmen, here is a breakdown by percentages of self-proclaimed religious beliefs:

- Roman Catholic: 29.8
- Episcopal: 1.8
- None: 26.2
- Buddhist: 1.7
- Presbyterian: 15.1
- United Church of Christ: 1.0
- Lutheran: 5.4
- Eastern Orthodox: 0.9
- Baptist: 4.5
- Islamic: 0.4
- Other religion: 3.7
- Seventh Day Adventist: 0.3
- Methodist: 2.6
- Quaker: 0.1
- Jewish: 1.9

- based on the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, Cal Poly
Local Christian Scientists rely on faith, not medicine for healing

By Stacey L. Johnston
Daily Staff Writer

Most people visit a doctor when they get sick. Christian Scientists rely on the power of God to heal both physical and emotional illness.

"You can't say that God is all powerful and then use medicine because one would deny the other," said Lillian Bush, a Christian Science practitioner in Arroyo Grande. "They would be at counter purposes. You'd be believing that there are two different powers."

Bush is listed in The Christian Science Journal, which publishes the names of practitioners throughout the United States and the world. When a problem arises, a person contacts a practitioner who has achieved his or her status by presenting three affidavits from people whom they have guided to a successful healing.

According to Grace Holmes, an attendant at the Christian Science Reading Room on Garden Street in San Luis Obispo, the healing process begins with a conversation in which the practitioner helps the troubled to clear away fear to allow God's healing to take place.

"The main thing is overcoming the fear of the problem," said Maysel Weyer, librarian at the Christian Science Reading Room.

"We're not excommunicated from the church because we go to a doctor," Bush explained.

Holmes and Bush both said that physicians are respected and that their work is valued.

For Holmes it seems to be working. Now in her 80s, she has been a Christian Scientist since the age of 14. She said the only time she has been to the doctor since then is to give birth to her children. She appears to be in fine health.

"Fear tends to be the basis of every problem, even physical."

"When false beliefs and fears are cleared away, then God is present and the healing begins," said Holmes, adding however, "If there isn't a healing in Christian Science and they decide otherwise (to see a physician), we never try to stop them."

"Doctors are needed for people who can't rely on God," Bush said.

"Doctors are needed for people who can't rely on God," Bush said. But for Christian Scientists, Holmes said, "We use Christian Science as our solution to every problem."

"Doctors are needed for people who can't rely on God," Bush said.

Holmes recalls a time when her young daughter's skin was covered with impetigo, a contagious pustular eruption of the skin. Within 48 hours of contacting a practitioner, her skin was perfectly clear.

"Doctors are needed for people who can't rely on God," Bush said.

The practice of Christian Science among children is an area in which the church often comes under fire.

According to Holmes, as soon as they are capable, which she said is usually at about 12, children can make their own decision on whether to rely on a physician or practitioner.

Bush said that not enough understanding of the healing power of God, too much fear, and strong opposition from a person's family can inhibit healing.
ATHEISM  

Christian school until sixth grade, but became increasingly atheistic with time. "Being at a religious school, you're taught a certain way and its reinforcement after you get out of that type of an environment," Gardner said. "You see a bit more of the real world and you're sort of allowed to have your own beliefs. As I explored my beliefs, I realized... I didn't believe in God anymore."

"...We are not here to be converted to religion or to convert you from yours if it fulfills a need and you have no questions," AU's mission statement reads.

One of the ways AU demonstrates its beliefs is through protests. One such protest was held recently at the February 24 Morro Bay City Council meeting. Here, Harold Hallakken represented AU by opposing the idea of the council starting each meeting with a Christian prayer, a practice recently re-instituted by Kathy Novak, Morro Bay's newly elected mayor.

"I don't believe we're violating the separation of church and state," Novak said. "I don't see anything wrong with having a prayer at the beginning of the meetings. There's many meetings now that are opened with an invocation. I think that asking for a prayer about the decisions to be made is nice."

A vote was originally taken a few months ago when Novak first tried to re-institute the prayer and passed by a 4-1 margin. Councilwoman Janice Peters voted against the prayer because Christianity was the only religion represented.

"When AU finished their presentation, the city council defended their practice and held a vote on whether or not to table, or side-line, the matter. The vote passed by a 3-2 margin, so the item can now only be retabiled by a majority vote."

MORMONS  

answered San Francisco, Lineberry asked if he knew that Steve Young, the quarterback, was a member of their church. "They are very friendly with their smiles," Situ said. "I always just open the door. I have a lot of friends who are Mormon."

"I don't take offense. It isn't they don't like, it is the message," Lineberry said.

CLUBS  

members come in and don't have a very strong walk with God but then really blossom." Mangels said he came to know Christ his first year at Cal Poly with the help of his wife, Emily. He joined the fraternity in 1994 and said finding enough time to spend with the fraternity brothers is his biggest struggle.

AGO is a national organization with 10 chapters. It's recognized as a campus club but is not administered through the Student Life and Activities office as other fraternities are. Mangels said the pledge process is different from other greek fraternities because of the organization's nature. As part of the initiation process, members must write a faith statement. This is intended to challenge pledges to grow in their faith and to see if they want to get involved. It also helps identify each member's Christian values and is helpful in determining leadership positions.

The fraternity owns a house on Osos Street, where members live. A "little sisters" organization with around 1,200 members. A vote was originally taken a few months ago when Novak first tried to re-institute the prayer and passed by a 4-1 margin. Councilwoman Janice Peters voted against the prayer because Christianity was the only religion represented. When AU finished their presentation, the city council defended their practice and held a vote on whether or not to table, or sideline, the matter. The vote passed by a 3-2 margin, so the item can now only be retabiled by a majority vote.

MORMONS from page 8  

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CARERE from page 3  

leaders, though. At United Church in San Luis Obispo, the minister receives a housing allowance which is non-taxable. It is an income which may seem lesser than it actually is. Ministers usually receive a housing allowance or live in provided housing, but that depends on the socio-economic status of the town.

The Unity Church Christian Church requires ministers to attend continuing education courses in religion before they apply for acceptance to the ministry program, which is a two-year school in Missouri. The church currently has two full-time paid positions: an executive administrator and a minister. Other part-time paid positions include bookstore manager, youth education director and music director.

Other members of San Luis Obispo have found ways to volunteer their time to support a religious cause without attending a graduate school for religious studies. Bill Ballatore, a broker for an insurance company, is the founder of Christian Ministries Outreach, a non-profit organization in San Luis Obispo. He volunteers his time to bring information to those who have turned their backs on God.

"I want to restore people to have faith in God, Christian Ministries Outreach organizes concerts and creates events to bring spiritual awareness to people's lives."
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IN THE BLEACHERS
By Steve Moore
MUSTANG DAILY
TUESDAY, MAY 20, 1997

8

Clubs bring religion closer to students on campus

By Kristin Hall
Daily Staff Writer

Cal Poly campus has spirit. There are approximately 18 religious clubs on campus ranging from Jewish to Catholic. Some clubs are specialized like Korean Christian Fellowship while others are non-denominational. Some are centered on campus, others are not. All the clubs are set up through the Campus Ministers' Council, an activities division of Student Affairs.

The clubs vary in size from five members to more than 1,000, and each has its own unique history. One of the largest clubs on campus is Poly Christian Fellowship (PCF). It has more than 350 active members and is completely student-led and funded. The club is part of a national organization called Intervarsity that came to Cal Poly in 1946. Before Intervarsity recognized PCF on this campus, the students had to fulfill the requirement of starting their own prayer meeting. Once prayer was established, Intervarsity sent staff members from Wisconsin to help start up the club.

Eric Olds, an agricultural engineering senior, is the club’s chapter coordinator. He heads the leadership team and is the club’s representative on campus and in the community.

The club’s size is an advantage for its members. Olds said, since there is such a variety of people involved and so many opportunities to get to know. He attributes the club’s success to its focus on prayer.

"We desire to grow in our racial diversity and are totally open to suggestions on how we might become more welcoming," Olds said. "We want to reflect the diversity in God’s Kingdom."

The biggest challenge the club faces is recruiting students of different ethnicities, Olds said. Members come from all types of Christian denominations but the club lacks ethnic diversity.

"We desire to grow in our racial diversity and are totally open to suggestions on how we might become more welcoming," Olds said. "We want to reflect the diversity in God’s Kingdom."

"I've seen people grow a lot in their personal relationship in Christ," he said. "Some new students move into the dorms. Olds said this surprises the incoming students and makes them feel welcomed.

"We are not here to force you, it has to be your desire to know," Lineberry said. "We don't expect you to believe this, but we want to share our message." Calder agreed.

"They are no worse than telemarketers," Calder said. "As long as they don't jam their foot in the door.

"They are happy commercials," Calder said. "There are a lot of rumors about the church. We try to give everyone the opportunity to see what we truly believe in," Williams said. "I want to share what I have found to give me direction and purpose in life."