

Students return to the Lord's fold

By GINA CARROLL
Collegian Staff Writer

Johnstown is Catholic, Altoona is Protestant and State College is pagan — or at least that's the way it's popularly believed to be. Campus and community religious leaders disagree about State College's pagan rating. Religion, however, is back in style in State College.

No one seems to be able to say why religion has enjoyed a return to popularity in the last four to five years. Organized religion was down-trodden during the '60's because of the aversion to institutions prevalent then. But the radicalism has cooled, and organized religion is again popular.

None of the religious leaders interviewed could say why religion was on the rise. Students who were asked also looked stumped. Their reasons for going to churches or to synagogues varied from "my religious fervor" to enjoyment of the music to the love of the prayers "so my parents will think their children go to services regularly."

Many reasons were given for not going to church, though. Tiredness after a long weekend of partying was the major reason given for not going to church and non-interest in religion or lack of output from the service was ranked second by students interviewed.

Community religious leaders seem to have left most of the responsibility of getting students to church to the campus ministries.

"You can't build a church on students," the Rev. Henry Shaffer, pastor of the Assembly of God church in State College, said. "Our family is the community. We invite the students to join our family, but our services are not student-based," he said.

Most of the students who said they use town church facilities said they do so because they live in town. Campus students aren't drawn to the services in town because of the availability of campus services, transportation and the lack of a more strenuous effort to bring the students into the churches.

Attendance at the town churches seems to remain fairly constant — none of the clergymen interviewed said they could discern any trends at any time during the term. But many students said they only went to church during times of stress — when they were having personal problems like during mid-terms and finals, or when they felt they needed a respite from too much partying.

"I like to go every once in a while just to make sure God hasn't forgotten about me," a 5th-term agriculture major said. "I like to think I can go there (to church) after a particularly rowdy Friday and-or

Saturday night and still feel that He hasn't quite forsaken me yet, even though most of the time I forsake Him."

Most of the students contacted said they thought the sermons and teachings of the churches were somewhat challenging to them. "It gives me something to think about," Blanca Rauch (6th-religious studies) said.

"We strive to make the church's teachings intelligible," the Rev. Eugene Gomulka, a priest at Our Lady of Victory Catholic church, said. "We want to make our teachings challenging, not just adapt to current social and political philosophies."

Students and clergy both agree there is rapport, both ecumenical and personal, among them. Father Gomulka said his church has a professional counseling service and employs outside counseling as well, as do most of the other town churches.

Campus ministries usually counsel callers themselves and refer some calls to outside agencies like OASIS, which is run by the Lutheran Campus ministry.

Many of the Christian activities on campus are used to help attract students to join in the church services, according to student members.

"We are also here to provide an opportunity for fellowship and camaraderie

among the students," one Newman Club member said. "But most of the information circulated about our activities is done during the announcement period at Mass, so other students who aren't members don't really know what's going on unless they find out from their friends."

Word of mouth is the primary means of communication used to convey messages of upcoming social events or meetings or Bible study. Some of the churches and organizations also use fliers, mailing lists, newspaper advertisements and posters to announce their meetings.

Not many of the town churches sponsor socials for students. These have been tried in the past and were generally unsuccessful. Some churches have open Bible study sessions for those who wish to participate, as do the campus ministries.

Speculation as to why the social hours weren't successful was focused on bad timing, a lack of publicity, heavy workload for classes and an abundance of social activities available on campus.

The clergy agreed that religious activity among students will probably continue to increase in the next few years. Perhaps this increased activity will eventually explode the myth of State College's paganism.



Search for direction takes varied routes

By SUSAN MUSHENO
Collegian Staff Writer

Interest in spiritual matters appears to be growing at Penn State these days. Indeed, as the Rev. Robert C. Boyer, of United Campus Ministry said, "Students seem to be looking for certainty and direction."

Often students are looking for hope, but receive doctrines of fear and hate, Shelley Hamilton, chaplain for the Metropolitan Community Church, said. "We live in a broken, anguished, insecure world and, having tried everything else, people are turning to spirituality."

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groups are growing in their structure around the principle of "spiritual multiplication," which Ben Blakiston, spokesman for the Navigators, described as "one person learning how to impart his life and what he has learned with others."

While the evangelical groups seem to be receiving more attention, the peak interest in Eastern religions seems to have passed for Western students, according to the Rev. Mr. Boyer. Although students from Eastern countries seem to be very active in their homeland religions, Western students only seem to be interested in certain

pects. Their dress and lifestyle is the same as any other students.

One spiritual group which very definitely changes a person's lifestyle is the Hare Krishna sect. There is an active group living on a farm near Port Royal, south of State College, according to Verena Visser, a University student who visited with the Krishnas for a Speech 200 project.

According to Visser, there's an open invitation for anyone to go to the farm anytime and stay as long as they want. The media accuses this spiritual sect of brainwashing and kidnapping, Visser said, but she added that she came to the conclusion that Hare Krishnas are just very persuasive and people who are impressionable might be influenced by them.

They focus their whole life on trying to make peace with their maker. They live their doctrines thoroughly, Visser said. They lead self-sufficient lives, usually on farms, and educate their own children. "Their philosophy is 'if it doesn't have to do with Hare Krishna, then what good is it,'" Visser said.

The Hare Krishnas are seen now and then in yellow robes and the men often have shaved heads except for one small pony tail by which they can be yanked to heaven. The group is devoted to the major Hindu god, Krishna. Indian missionaries brought the Krishna faith to the U.S. in 1966, but they have not been extremely successful in gaining converts, according to Visser.

Another local religious organization is the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). It is a Christian organization that is open to people from every ethnic,

think of ourselves as liberal," Gerald M. Moser, University professor of Portuguese and member of the local Unitarian church, said.

Unitarians usually have an independent nature. "Each member has an obligation to develop his own beliefs," Moser said. Members may be agnostics, humanists, evangelicals, nature worshippers and even atheists. The fellowship's only qualifications, according to the local chapter's constitution, is for members to have "sympathy with its purpose and a willingness to undertake the appropriate responsibility of membership."

Unitarian Fellowship President Barbara Seibel said there was a campus student group in the late 50's and early 60's, but religion wasn't popular among youth then, and the group is no longer together. Today there are probably 10 students among the 200 members who attend the Unitarian Fellowship Church on Ridge Avenue.

If no religion seems to fit your lifestyle, perhaps you can identify with the American Atheists Society, founded in 1963 as the "Society of Separationists" because their main premise was to separate school and business from the church.

Spokesman for the society, Secretary John G. Murray said they have 60,000 family members of their organization. However, he said membership in the organization does not represent all atheists in the country since many people who are in business and politics are afraid of public criticism. Surveys in the past two years show that 25 to 27 per cent of Americans

'They (the evangelical groups) all believe in the need for a personal relationship with Jesus.'

—Sherman Brand,
director, Campus Crusade for Christ

spiritual, social and racial background. Hamilton said its membership is predominately homosexual, but members don't refer to their church as a "gay" church.

"This fellowship is open to anyone with an open heart who is reasonably intelligent," she said.

MCC, which has 30 active members of differing denominations, is fairly liberal in the sense that members don't interpret the Bible literally, and congregation members are encouraged to participate in some services.

"I preach the gospel as I interpret it, but I make sure they (the MCC members) realize that this is what I think, and their perceptions are just as valid as mine," Hamilton said.

The Unitarian Fellowship also has relatively liberal doctrines. "We like to

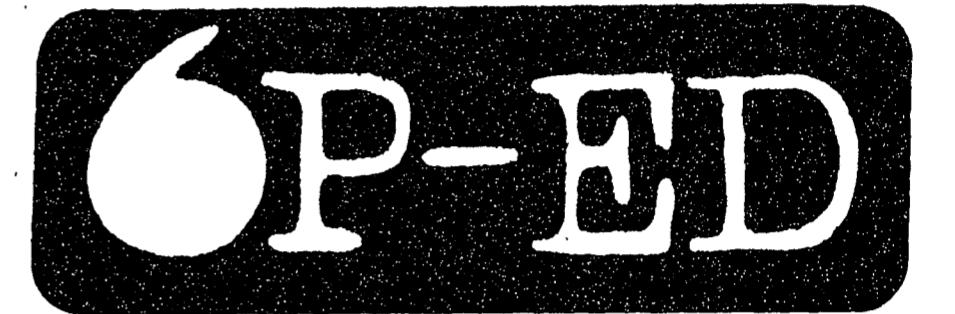
are atheist or agnostic in their views," Murray said.

Atheists, who believe that there is no proof of the existence of God and no need of or use for a god, feel that prayers in schools or government councils are infringing on Americans' rights, Murray said.

Atheism, naturally, is a very independent thing, but there are a number of atheist organizations spread across the nation, Murray said. The closest one to State College, however, is in New Jersey.

Maybe it's time to consider what some of these organizations have to offer.

Whether it is Christianity, Buddhism or atheism; they all involve a commitment to a lifestyle. But it's up to the individual to investigate with care, and with an open mind.



Diverse religious concepts have traditional beginnings

By LUTHER H. HARSHBARGER
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In American society in general and on our college campuses in particular, there are myriads of modern quests for salvation in search for adequate standards of action, personal maturity and social relevance.

There is also a certain pathos in the pursuit of hope in some religious movements which are poor in ideas, rich in sympathy, mystic in piety and literal in ethics.

This is a generation which clamors after meaning in a quest which ranges from "guru fascination" to "Jesus freaks." This new religiosity can be described variously as faddish in quality, traditional in its literalism, restorationist in character and Promethean in its alienation.

Happenings like experiments in new modes of communal living and the yearning for ecstatic and charismatic moments may seem a long way from the time in 1874 when the president of Penn State held a week-long revival meeting and afterwards reported that "all the students were converted," or Frank Buchman's launching of the Moral Re-orientation Movement at Penn State in the teens of the twentieth century. But several of these movements stand solidly in the American tradition of revivalism, especially of the Second Great Awakening of the nineteenth century.

This can be seen in two ways. It is not always understood that tradition starts by being radically upsetting, representing radical change in thought, behavior, manners and morals inspired by a future hope. It is a way of making the past relevant to the present and to provide a means whereby personal appropriation becomes possible.

This concern manifests itself in the awakening of interest in the myths, symbols and rituals of living religions. American culture and the University itself are singularly barren of meaningful rituals and symbolizations. Why not cut entirely free of any appeal to the past and concentrate rather upon the contemporary world and experience?

What could be more irrelevant, for

example, than University convocations or the age-old office of the liturgy? Yet, by these seemingly incongruous acts of marching in an academic procession in academic regalia, kneeling in a cathedral chancel and chanting antiphons, people have spoken across the generations concerning their own responses to the mystery through which they found themselves and gave meaning and direction to the whole of human life.

Traditions grow through this succession of generations reaching out their hands to each other in the same spirit spanning the ages. This means a return to one's sources, although each generation has to understand anew the meaning of these crucial works and symbols.

A radical shift has been taking place in the last 20 years in the scholarly enterprise in religion. Until recently, religious studies were among the fastest growing disciplines, especially in state universities. This development is a remarkable event in the history of American education and scarcely could have been anticipated.

Religious studies, in the context of public education, are relatively new. In this context, religious studies are public and cultural enterprises, not esoteric ones. Moreover, religion as a human phenomenon is studied widely in this University as subject matter in many disciplines.

At the very least, the existence of religious studies' courses and students' interest in their study alter the circumstances in which beliefs are learned and commitments expressed. It means that the process by which belief is informed and acted upon is that of serious inquiry and testing. This can lead to commitment or non-commitment, but in any case, to better informed choices.

So I see these "happenings," though seemingly disparate, as curiously related. It may well be that interest in all of them springs from personal probing and searching for self-identity in a chaotic world and from a profound sense of the disproportion between the prevailing myths and the prevailing sense of life which seeks a sense of place.

Moral values and PSU lifestyle may conflict

By KAREN EGOLF
Collegian Staff Writer

"But all my friends get high every weekend."

"My roommate's sleeping with her boyfriend, but they're going to get married anyway, so what's the difference?"

"I used to go to church every Sunday, but not now."

For most students, coming to college means starting to live an entirely different lifestyle. And with that new lifestyle comes a questioning of traditional values and beliefs that a person has held throughout his life.

"This is common and desirable," David Brown, clinical psychologist at the Mental Health Center, said. "Growth and maturity arrive out of conflict."

Even so, many students are troubled by this uncertainty and question not only the change in their values, but also the change in themselves.

"Most students' values and ethics aren't formed anyway," Brown said, "and tentative values do undergo some kind of challenge, and then changes and modifications."

Problems arise from students' needs to fit in with their peer groups, according to Jo Ann Farr, associate professor of psychology. In trying to fit in, they sometimes feel that their value system is being threatened, she said.

If students find the values they hold being challenged, they must ask themselves if these are values they wish

to hold, the Rev. John Wenzke of the Lutheran Campus Ministry said.

Problems can arise when a person's actions conflict with his value system.

"Anxiety is the result of doing a behavior in conflict with one's value system," Farr said. People should think before taking action and check out if this behavior coincides with the values they hold, she said. They must decide if they're really willing to accept responsibility for their behavior.

"Values and ethics and attitudes are supposed to be useful in here-and-now situations," Brown said. "Taking in values from childhood is much more destructive than having them challenged or questioned."

Students also question religious beliefs and organizations. Many people come from a home environment where religion is stressed, even slightly, to the University, where religion is diversified, and atheism is common.

"At home, Sunday Mass is a must," Father Leopold Krul, chaplain of the Newman Student Association, said. "Up here, you hear from all angles that it isn't."

According to Farr, religious values can generate conflicts when people aren't sure why they're doing something. Problems arise when they don't know if they're doing it because they feel it's

Students may naturally question childhood beliefs



right or because some religious authority tells them it's right.

If the person says he knows what he is doing is right, then he's saying he knows who he is and he is accepting respon-

sibility for his actions, Farr said. If he relies on the institution to tell him what to do, then he accepts no personal responsibility.

"It's one thing to give a person a set of

who want their children to be exactly as they are.

"A child finds new values or lifestyles and some of them (parents) tell the children they can't come home," he said.

Many parents send their children to school so they can eventually get a good job, buy a home and support a family, Weller said. Often the children find out what life is all about and decide to do something they think is more satisfying and worthwhile for themselves.

College is a time to evaluate one's values and to question what one wants from life.

"Values don't change drastically," the Rev. Robert Boyer of United Campus Ministry, said. "Most people go through a rebellious period, but most end up behaving quite a bit like their families."

The Rev. Mr. Boyer said he would like life to be more free and revolutionary, however. He said he would like to see people working for peace, justice and brotherhood and, to do that, society must change. He said Christianity is one way to achieve this, as any organized religion is a means to this end.

"One can, hopefully, find through it a way to relate directly to fundamental values," the Rev. Mr. Boyer said.

Everyone must decide for himself what he believes and what he values. As the Rev. Mr. Wenzke said: "The University is a time and place where people begin to explore and decide for themselves what values they want to hold."