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CYDNEY SCOTT

BU Appoints First Chaplain for International Students

New post may be the only one of its kind in the country

AMID THE SIZZLE AND sauce-drizzled aroma of stir-frying vegetables, four international students cluster around the stove in Marsh Chapel's basement kitchen, preparing their weekly meal together. Their host is, apparently, the only American college chaplain specifically ministering to students from abroad.

Rev. Brittany Longsdorf started in June 2013 as the University's first chaplain for international students, embodying what she calls "a true spirit of hospitality that I think is theologically backed." (Hospitality is both an injunction and a path to reward in the Bible, as exemplified in a

story in Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus offers God's kingdom to those who welcome the stranger.) At BU, Longsdorf's hospitality has been a pleasant welcome mat for Chia Lee (GRS'16) of Taiwan, one of the September dinner's vegetable cooks.

"It feels great to have someone have your back and support you," says Lee, who was beginning her first year at BU. "International students feel lonely sometimes and homesick, and this kind of activity is comforting."

During the weekly Tuesday dinners, students chat about the problems they're having, their successes,

and whether they're finding, in Longsdorf's words, a "place to connect with God on campus."

They also connect with some very agreeable food. "Yeah, veggies!" Elly Cheng (SPH'15) cheers while cooking. "A lot of meals here, like pizza or sandwiches," says Taiwan-born Cheng, "there are not enough vegetables."

International students, notably from China (*see page 24*) and Saudi Arabia, are coming to US campuses in increasing numbers. But while many colleges have denomination-specific chaplains, Rev. Loretta Reynolds, president of the National Association of College and University Chaplains, doesn't know of any other school with a counterpart to Longsdorf.

"I will look forward to knowing how this works for Boston University," says Reynolds, the chaplain at Kentucky's Berea College. "This may become a new college chaplain model."

The new chaplain is a member of the Community of Christ, a 183-year-old, peace-promoting Christian denomination with a quarter of a million members globally. She speaks Spanish and French and can read German and Greek. She's visited more than 30 countries on 6 continents and has lived in India. She says these experiences honed her communication skills with non-English speakers, from reading facial expressions to a comforting hand on the arm to drawing pictures conveying your thoughts. **RB**