

Macalester Graduating Senior Awarded Second Place in 2013 Presbyterian Outlook Church-College Partnership Award

St. Paul, Minn. – Courtney Nussbaumer '13, a graduating senior from Brookfield, Wis. double majoring in Political Science and Hispanic Studies with a Legal Studies Concentration, has been awarded second place for the 2013 Presbyterian Outlook Church-College Partnership Award. She wrote an essay based on the topic, “How my education at my PC (USA)-related college has prepared me for significant service and leadership.” Over 30 other students from colleges across the country entered this year, and a panel of judges assessed Nussbaumer’s to be one of the top essays.

She will receive \$200.00, an announcement/article to appear in an upcoming edition of the Presbyterian Outlook, and publication of the actual essay in the Presbyterian Outlook 2014 Guide to PC (USA)-Related Colleges and Universities, which will be published in October 2013.

Here is Courtney Nussbaumer’s essay:

It was the stillness that spoke loudest to me that night. As we stood together in the inky darkness, no words were necessary—everything important was spoken in the pure silence waiting only for our souls to pause to listen. My eyes were then drawn to the sole candle fighting bravely against the darkness. As the flame passed from wick to wick, the darkness separated to make room for the warmth of the yellow hue that demanded the eye of every onlooker. We paused only a second more until our voices rose as one in song to attempt the profundity of the silence. Together we moved as our flames guided us toward the oak doors. In a way, this has been my faith journey at Macalester College. As I take a moment to reflect on my four years, I see now how I have received and passed on the light of others. Albeit moments of smoldering and waning, my own flame has caught fire.

Amidst a highly challenging yet rewarding community, I have found myself at Macalester. Outstanding faculty, bright students and diverse backgrounds bring learning and personal growth to higher level. While this environment has encouraged me to question my faith, some of my most cherished memories are those of dialogues with students and faculty of other faiths, perspectives and traditions. Ultimately, these episodes have strengthened and redefined my faith. Perhaps this questioning is the brilliance of a liberal arts college—the examined life is truly worth the effort it demands.

Besides finding personal meaning and identity in my beliefs, my faith has taken on new resonance in community engagement. One of the guiding pillars of Macalester is service to society—my faith has provided me with a platform from which to engage society. This year, for instance, the religious student organization that I lead, Macalester Christian Fellowship (MCF), has been moved by God’s heart for justice. As a result, we have dedicated an entire week to raising awareness on campus about gender and oppression through a 27 hour stand, an art gallery, a speech by a legislator just to name a few of our approaches. Given that



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Minneapolis is the eighth largest sex-trafficking offender in the United States, we have partnered with two community organizations that deal directly with victims of sex trafficking in order to make a difference. Through various partnerships, service has become an integral part of my life so much so that I plan to spend my next year teaching in Chile through a UN partnership program. I look forward to a partnership rather than a one-sided relationship where the light of my experiences and the experiences of the individuals I work with can be equally exchanged. I have been blessed so immensely in my life that I can do nothing else but reflect on my privilege and respond.

As president of Macalester Christian Fellowship, I work closely with our chapel staff and fellow peers. Through interfaith dialogues, multifaith councils and MCF meetings, I have learned to articulate my faith, find assurance in my beliefs and develop a personal style of leadership that will serve me well in my post-college years. These leadership skills have not stayed confined to the four walls of the chapel; rather, I have applied them as a student, an athlete and a musician. On the ground, I have seen MCF grow from 5 members to 30 members during four years—truly, a light has spread around this campus. I have been profoundly encouraged by our members—I am so blessed to have led and walked alongside these friends on our spiritual journeys.

As I look forward in the near future to responding to God’s call for justice in law school, I know that I can look back to my years at Macalester and be reminded of my personal commitment to the commission to “act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”^[1] In every way Macalester has prepared me intellectually and spiritually to serve and to lead. Sustained by the flame of others and by the one true flame, I look forward to sharing my light as well as igniting the light in others.

Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 2,035 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism, and civic engagement. Learn more at [macalester.edu](http://www.macalester.edu) (<http://www.macalester.edu/>)

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[1] Micah 6:8

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