

Muslim, Christian Roommates find Common Ground at Calvin College

Anika Farhan, a Muslim from Bangladesh; and Katelyn Fuller, a Christian from California; opened their email last summer to discover that they'd been assigned to each other as roommates at Calvin College. Despite their different backgrounds, the two have become friends. Calvin College is owned and operated by the Christian Reformed Church.

Farhan was looking for a smaller college with strong academics, and learned about Calvin while visiting her sister in Grand Rapids, Mich. Although she was aware that Calvin was a Christian college, she applied anyway and was accepted.



ANIKA FARHAN

Roommates Katelyn Fuller, a Christian from California (left); and Anika Farhan, a Muslim from Bangladesh (right); have forged a friendship at Calvin College.

"I always knew I would get a Christian roommate; the religion didn't matter to me," Farhan said. "I wanted an American roommate."

Fuller learned that Farhan was a Muslim when the two connected on Facebook.

"I looked through her info and saw she was a Muslim, and then I messaged her," Fuller said. "We talked pretty much the whole summer. We talked about our faith. We got along instantly."

Fuller wasn't greatly bothered by the religious difference. "It wasn't a huge deal, but it was something to

think and pray about," she said.

For Farhan, the difference of being a Muslim at a Christian college started off as a challenge.

"At the beginning, it was very difficult," Farhan said. "I cried. At one point I thought, 'Should I transfer? What should I do?' It was just a mess, all the workshops, the discussions, going to chapel, constantly praying, the singing, and being the odd one out. I want to learn about the religion, but not participate."

With her roommate's help, Farhan stuck through it.

"Katelyn's support and all my friends' support was like a miracle to me," she said.

Farhan also credits her family, particularly her father. "I'm really close with my dad. He always tries to say, 'Keep your faith strong.' I always have the religious discussions with my dad, why I should follow what we follow. Whenever we talk about it, that makes sense."

Despite their religious differences, both girls credit the experience with helping them develop in their faiths.

"I'm really happy that I chose Calvin and have Katelyn as my roommate," Farhan said. "Coming to Calvin has made my faith stronger."

"It definitely has had a large impact on my faith," Fuller said. "It's made me delve deeper into God's Word and really take Christianity as my own. I would do it a million times over again. It's definitely been a blessing in disguise."

—Christian Bell

Love Quilts

A group that started in order to teach quilting has evolved into a ministry of comfort in Oak Forest, Ill.

Since 2006, women from Hope Christian Reformed Church have made 10 special love-filled quilts.

Their first quilt was made for a little girl who had been in and out of hospitals often in her short life. When the women delivered the quilt in the girl's favorite colors of pink and purple, they left with tears in their eyes. Mary Van Loh said, "Through the recipients' appreciation, we also get wrapped in love."

The quilts are planned specifically for each recipient. For



Julane Bellin and Sharon Aardema display one of their quilts.

example, an avid golfer battling cancer received a golf-themed quilt. A young butterfly-loving woman struggling with lupus

received a butterfly-themed quilt. A personalized label with a Bible verse or poem is sewn onto each completed quilt.

Recipients have included elderly people, those who can't leave their homes, and people dealing with chronic and terminal illnesses. The quilt is usually a surprise, and when it is delivered the quilters pray with the recipient. Two quilts were displayed at funerals, and one was sent posthumously to a daughter.

"We have the time and we love these people. We make the quilts for people who need a hug," explained Lynne Findlay.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung