The joy Sister Evelyn (Mary Louis) Craig, IHM, finds through her ministry of spiritual direction and spiritual formation at Duke Divinity School is readily apparent.

"The chance to learn from and share ecumenically with a variety of denominations drew me to this ministry," she explains with enthusiasm, "and I continue to be inspired by the depths of my own faith tradition. The diversity and respect of those with whom I minister are so encouraging."

Sister Evie is a trained spiritual director who spent 20 years in campus ministry. Following 11 years serving as the vocation/formation coordinator for the IHM congregation, she moved to Chapel Hill, N.C., primarily because of the eight college and university campuses in the area.

"As I got to know people of different faiths and they learned of my background, they invited me to come to their churches to facilitate retreats. It was important for me to attend services in their churches in order to learn their language of prayer and worship. I wanted to show respect for their familiar terms and preferred ways to pray."

Little by little, Sister Evie’s reputation as a retreat facilitator and spiritual director grew, and she was thrilled when the Duke Divinity School called and invited her in. “I could have been at their door before they hung up the phone!” she jokes.

Now in her second year at Duke, Sister Evie works with first-year graduate Divinity students, and she describes her ministry as “facilitating these future ordained ministers to share across denominational lines.”

She is also part of a core team that started “Friends of Christ School for Christian Spirituality.” The school’s purpose is to present the mystical tradition and the treasures of prayer practices that all have a right to, and no one denomination owns. The school aims to supplement what is already offered within their own traditions.

“We met to pray and plan for six months before we launched the school.” Sister Evie recalls. “We value the component of trained spiritual directors that I coordinate as spiritual companions for participants. Our classes are taught by the Ph.D.s. and we continue to pray together as this expands and grows.”

“I call it ‘campus ministry without walls,’ because we don’t have a central location. Different churches loan us space to hold classes and every mainline church in Chapel Hill endorsed our efforts. We’ve heard that others want to replicate this ecumenical effort in other areas.”
“Our focus is an adult learning community that explores the tradition that we all have a right to but may never encountered. We are unleashing a new way to be ecumenical," she continues, "Similarly at Duke, my challenge is to continue to use the language, sense of prayer and ritual and terms that speak to my respect and appreciation for other denominations, while retaining my own spiritual grounding and sharing it with the variety of individuals I encounter.”