

PROFESSOR MATTHEW PIERCE is Associate Professor of Religion, Centre College, Danville, Kentucky, where he has been teaching since 2011. Before moving to Kentucky to teach at Centre College, he spent extensive time in the Middle East and Central Asia. He lived and studied in Cairo (Egypt), San'aa (Yemen), and Qum (Iran). During his three years in Iran, he participated in high-level interfaith dialogue meetings bringing together Iranian Shi'a clerics and various Christian leaders internationally. Since moving to Kentucky, he continues to facilitate Christian-Muslim dialogue by serving on the steering committee of Lexington's Christian-Muslim Dialogue (www.cmd.lex.org).

Professor Pierce's scholarship focuses on Islamic intellectual history, hagiography, sectarianism, mysticism, and gender. He teaches a number of courses on Islam, including "Islam in America," "Introduction to Islam," "Sufism and Islamic Spirituality," "Gender and Sexuality in Islam," and "Concepts of the Qur'an." Throughout his courses, he regularly takes students to mosques in the U. S. and the Middle East.

In 2016, Professor Pierce won an international book award (Iran's World Book of the Year) for his first book entitled *Twelve Infallible Men: The Imams and the Making of Shi'ism* (Harvard). His second book, a biography of the Ja'far al-Sadiq, will be published in 2020 (Oneworld). He is currently working on research related to dual-religious identities, specifically analyzing examples of individuals (including himself) who religiously identify as both Muslim and Christian.

Professor Pierce had been a panel-presenter at the brainstorming meeting of interfaith leaders and community activists on May 1, 2016, in Louisville. The interchange which began on that day led to the emergence of *The Salaam Network (TSN)* some months later. Professor Pierce has been a Facilitator of *TSN* programs, particularly in the context of issues relating to Muslim women. He has been bringing his students from Centre College to Louisville to have an in-depth discussion with Professor Riffat Hassan who has been a pioneer in the area of Islamic Feminist Theology. He has also been encouraging his Louisville-based students to attend Professor Hassan's multi-part Seminar on Normative Islamic Teachings Relating to Muslim Women presented once a month at Thomas Jefferson Unitarian Church in Louisville.

Professor Pierce's research interests range from global to local, and for some years he has been interested in studying the Muslim Communities in Kentucky. This summer he started his preliminary research on the subject. In July 2019, he visited Louisville with his Research Assistant to have a detailed conversation about Muslims in Louisville with Professor Hassan.

Professor Pierce organized a meeting of students and faculty at Centre College in March 2020 to share their thoughts about Senate Bill 1 - anti-immigration bill - with Amira Karaoud, photographer and media consultant representing *TSN*.