

Community Ministry Status
For the Ministry of Rev. Barbara F. Meyers

September 2016

Status of ministry since last Report

Notes of Particular Importance

Joys

High-lights

- In August, the Board of the Connections Counseling Center voted to close down the center effective at the end of September. We realized that after trying to keep the organization going for the past almost 2 years we simply did not have the financial and personnel resources needed to sustain the organization in a viable way.

There are many things we can be proud of. During our time open as a center:

- We served many clients with over 1500 first-class faith-based counseling hours. All clients will continue to work with their current therapists in other venues.
- We were credentialed by a number of different insurance companies.
- We had a truly interfaith effort, with people from Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and UU backgrounds as clients, clinicians and board members. And in the process we met many wonderful people from many backgrounds that left us spiritually richer.
- We created a beautiful center with art and books from various religious traditions.
- We trained a number of therapists in spiritually integrated psychotherapy, skills they will take with them to clients they see in the future.
- Some of the groups from our wellness and education center will continue on in other venues.

Of course we are sad at not being able to continue, but we do not regret any of the time and money we personally put into the effort. I am focusing on celebrating what we did well and learning from what we could have done better. Emotionally, I am fine.

Rev. Scotty McLennan, my mentor in the UUMA Entrepreneurial Ministry Program, after he heard my story about how the Center was closing, told me, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Words that I will always treasure. And remember to tell someone else sometime.

- Continue helping care for both grandsons.
- Personal "Calling" to do something about Racism. In discernment on what.

Challenges

- Keeping from being over committed.

Education

Classes, Conferences and Seminars Taken and Planned

- Attended my 4th and last week-long Entrepreneurial Ministry retreat for in Boston August 29 – Sept 2. Another set of inspirational and helpful speakers and exercises. We have assignments to do for the end of the year. My project for the program will need to completely change, as it was based on Connections.
- Attended the *Ministry for the Marginalized* conference in Berkeley on July 20, 2016. Initiated a conversation about racism.

- Attended an excellent webinar: *Mental Wellness during Unemployment for Peers*, by Rachelle Weiss. She says your main job is to keep functioning and staying well. Gives a lot of good advice about setting a schedule and what to do with your time. August 30, 2016.
- Attended Webinar: *Supporting CPS Staff in Direct Advocacy Work*, by Doors to Wellbeing. Practical approach to keeping mentally well while doing advocacy work.
- Attended Webinar: *The Spirit of Bouncing Beyond*, by Lori Ashcroft, sponsored by Doors to Wellbeing. How spirituality facilitates resilience and recovery. Got some ideas for spirituality lessons.

Healing

Counseling Center

Held monthly Board meetings, and many more working meetings. Decided to close the Center effective Sept 30.

Volunteer chaplain at East Bay Stand Down for homeless and at-risk veterans at the Alameda County Fairgrounds, all day Sept 15. Some good conversations. I would do it again.

Started to work with Fremont Unified School District to help students who are under excessive stress.

Reaching Across

Continued compensated job at Reaching Across organization, for quarter-time work. Attend Monday support group meetings, two Interfaith Support Groups per month, a spirituality group once a month, Friday craft days and some Wednesday events.

Support Groups

- Continued co-leading interfaith support group for people with depression and sadness.
- Continued to recommend support group for families of those with mental illness.

Pastoral Associates

- Led the Pastoral Associates meetings and worked with several congregation members as an associate.

Spiritual Direction

Nothing to report

Priestly

- Help lead a worship service on Black Lives Matter on July 3, 2016. Got a very positive response from the attendees, both Methodist and UU

Social Justice

Community Awareness

Mental Health pages on MPUUC web site continue to be widely accessed.

Racial Justice

So far:

- I've joined the national and local NAACP
- I've joined Showing Up For Racial Justice, a group for whites interested in being allies.
- I participate in weekly conference calls with We Say Enough
- I participate in a 3-month weekly Racist Anonymous meeting at Niles Discovery Church

UUA Accessibility Group

- The congregational disability accessibility certification program called the Accessibility and Inclusion Ministry (AIM) program continues its general availability. Five congregations have officially entered the program. I am in charge of implementing this program. I have set up four review teams to follow the congregations through the process.

UUA Addictions Ministry

- As member of the UUA Addictions Ministry, helped run their web site www.uuaddictionsministry.org.

Other

Books Read

- *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, by Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D., Penguin Books, 2015. Excellent book about trauma and how people heal from it. Dr. Van Der Kolk uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments—from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama, and yoga—that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain's natural neuroplasticity. The real deal. **Highly recommended.**
- *Trauma Stewardship – An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*, by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009. A helpful guide for managing the traumatic stress of people who care for others.
- *Spirit and Trauma – A Theology of Remaining*, by Shelly Rambo, Westminster John Knox Press, 2010. Academic theological treatment of trauma and what it does to the spirit.
- *Trauma and Grace – Theology in a Ruptured World*, by Serene Jones, Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. Another theological treatment of trauma and spiritual issues.
- *The Third Reconstruction: Moral Mondays, Fusion Politics, and the Rise of a New Justice Movement*, by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Beacon Press, 2016. The charismatic leader Rev. Barber says that the current racial justice protests constitute a new civil rights movement that will elevate the rights of all peoples who are now downtrodden. **Recommended**
- *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates, Spiegel & Grau, 2015. This book, beautifully and meditatively written as a letter to his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates explores what it is like to be black in America, especially a black man. His main thesis is that Americans have built an empire on the idea of “race,” a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men. The book has justifiably received many prizes. **Highly recommended.**
- *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Haymarket Books, 2016. A passionate historical look at the various impediments to the liberation of black people. Maintains that a complete change in the capitalist system is necessary. Not impressed with Barack Obama.
- *The Wisdom of a Meaningful Life: The Essence of Mindfulness*, by John Bruna, Central Recovery Press, 2016. A very helpful approach for uncovering what gives life meaning using mindfulness. Several suggested exercises. Was happy to have time to talk to the author when he was visiting Newark.
- *Composing a Further Life – The Age of Active Wisdom*, by Mary Catherine Bateson, Knopf, 2010. The author, the daughter of Margaret Mead, and a scholar herself, posits that with increasing life-spans, there is now the possibility of a new active life stage after retirement, the age of Active Wisdom, finding new meaning and new ways to contribute, composing their lives in new patterns.
- *The Road to Peace – Writings on Peace and Justice*, by Henri Nouwen, edited by John Dear, Orbis Books, 2003. A collection of writings of the Dutch priest Henri Nouwen. The chapters on racial justice and his life in the *L'Arche* community with people who have mental disabilities meant the most to me.
- *“Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People” – And Other Myths About Guns and Gun Control*, by Dennis A. Henigan, Beacon Press, 2016. Excellent, well-reasoned discussion of the fallacies behind the bumper-sticker logic of the NRA. **Recommended for anyone interested in sensible gun control.**
- *Blood on the Tracks – The Life and Times of Brian Willson, a Psychohistorical Memoir*, by S. Brian Willson, PM Press, 2011. The story of Brian Willson, a UU who lost his legs when a train carrying weapons for the war in Nicaragua ran over him at the Concord Naval Weapons Station in 1987 when he was praying on the tracks as a protest to the war. A sweeping indictment of the American way of life

which he contends has killed many in other parts of the world to satisfy our ever-increasing appetite for consumer goods and power.

- *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, by Nicholas Carr, W.W. Norton & Company, 2010. Interesting exposition of how the Internet reroutes vital paths in our brain and diminishes our capacity for contemplation and decreases our access to wisdom.

Personal

- Need to continually work at life balance, stress and depression management. This is going successfully and is sometimes easier than others. Trying to learn how to make stress an ally.
- Work out at 24-Hour Fitness 2 times a week. Trained training for a half-marathon for the Heart Association. Ran in that half-marathon and a subsequent 10K.

Other

- Met with Community Ministry Advisory Committee regularly
- Monthly status meetings with EqUual Access
- Visit my spiritual director and my psychiatrist regularly.
- Attended MPUUC Board meetings and NAACP meetings.

2015-16 Development Plan

Area	Plans	Time line	Measurement	Status
Continuing education:				
Take one or two classes a year	Investigate classes to take in this year	Ongoing- Identify classes	Take classes by December 2016	Fred Pryor Seminar Mar 3
Attend GA in person or virtually	GA in June	June 2016	Event attended	Attended June 29-26
Attend Mental health seminars / conventions	Attend at least one local / state mental health convention in next year	Chosen by March 31	Attended by Dec. 2016	Have attended several webinars
Help in starting new counseling center	Attend meetings as member of the board of the new center	Throughout 2016	Center is on a sound financial footing and self-sustaining.	Board decided to close center.
Areas for growth in the next 2 yrs:				
Disability Credentialing Program	Lead the group which will administer the AIM certification program for UUA congregations.	On-going	New congregations sign up for the program	5 congregations have signed up.
Spiritual Direction	Continue to grow Spiritual Direction practice	On-going		Nothing
Long term possibilities				
Plan for sabbatical	Plan for ministerial sabbatical of 6 months	Don't know when	Rethink this after Zach is older and Connections is well established.	