

Community Ministry Status

For the Ministry of Rev. Barbara F. Meyers

March 2012

Status of ministry since last Report

Notes of Particular Importance

Joys

- Helping care for my grandson Nathaniel (Natey) King one day a week
- Made headway on a previous concern about getting more of the congregation to interact with the mental health ministry by:
 - Teaching a well-received 4-session mental health class
 - A weekly column in This Week on the Peak
 - Scheduling a mental health movie night March 17 with “*The Soloist*”
 - Crafting a statement for the regular Sunday liturgy on support for the ministry
- Leading effort to create a congregational disability accessibility certification program.
- Recent Alban Institute book *Amazing Gifts – Stories of Faith, Disability, and Inclusion*, by Mark Pinsky, profiles me and my ministry.

Challenges

- Concerns about the TV Show

Education

Classes and Seminars Given

- Taught a four-session class at MPUUC entitles “Mental Health and People of Faith” on Tuesday evenings in February. Classes had 6-8 attendees. Well received.

Classes, Conferences and Seminars Taken and Planned

- UUMA Webinar on Feb 9: *An Introduction to Gathered Here*. Gathered Here is a way of sharing UU aspirations, vision using appreciative inquiry. Webinar was taught by Gary Smith, Rev. Nate Walker, and Amanda Trosten-Bloom. The goal of the program is to harness the best of our UU faith by 2-hour conversations telling stories, and articulating their visions for a congregation and for UUism. On the UUA website www.uua.org/gatheredhere has information about the program.
- SAMHSA webinar "*Breaking the Poverty Cycle: Creating Social and Economic Opportunities*" held on 02/28/2012. Presentation on how poverty affects people with mental health problems, and how people can become trapped in poverty. Some hopeful examples of how some can overcome this cycle.
- SAMHSA webinar “*Negotiating Medication Concerns / Talking with Your Healthcare Provider*” March 15, 2012. Good information for consumers about how to talk to your psychiatrist about meds.
- National Spinal Cord Injury Association Webinar on *Domestic Violence and Disability* on 03/26/2012. Sadly, people with disabilities are more likely to be victims of domestic violence by their loved ones and caregivers. The problem, programs and services for disabled people were described.

Healing

Counseling Center

With a group of 4 others, helping to design a counseling center to eventually be affiliated with our congregation. So far, we’ve decided it will be a combination of a traditional counseling center, a healing and spiritual center, and one of the participants in wrap-around services for seriously mentally ill people.

Reaching Across

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

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

- Prepared training materials on “*HIV/AIDS*” for Pastoral Associates at their monthly meeting.
- Training of PAs scheduled for May 12
- Visited Jeanette Berman’s family as she lay dying. Presented a eulogy at her memorial service March 10.

Mental Health Committee

- Sponsored a workshop on handling holiday stress. The workshop was excellent, but there were only 5 attendees. Need to find a more effective way to get people to attend.

NAMI Alameda County

- Attended a planning meeting for NAMI Alameda County to decide how to split the organization from the Mental Health Association of Alameda County, and to decide on priorities of the new organization.

Community Ministry

- Serve as mentor to two community ministers as they navigate through their preliminary fellowship. It is a 3-year commitment for each person. One person has finished her second year, and the other has finished her first year.

Spiritual Direction

- Have two spiritual direction clients. This is very fulfilling work for me. I would like to have 4-5 clients
- Worked with Wayne Lowe to learn how to get an effective web presence for my spiritual direction practice. Considering re-design of this part of my web site.

Priestly

- Worship leader on January 9 at Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church in Hayward, on the subject of “Mysticism”. Enjoyed learning and performing a Tai Chi form as part of the service.
- Volunteer chaplain for the Regional Sub Committee on Candidacy on October 15.
- Gave the eulogy at the memorial service for Jeanette Berman.

Social Justice

Community Awareness

- *Mental Health Matters* Public Access TV Show
 - In March, taped shows on “*Crisis Intervention Training*” a program for police to learn about mental illness, and “*Peer Run Respite Centers*” places where people with mental illness can go to get help from their peers. My co-producer taped shows on “*A music group for teen consumers*”, and “*Children’s diagnosis and medication*”.
 - Shows broadcast in most of Alameda County on Comcast TV as well as viewable on the internet.
 - Plan to try new “focused story” format in the summer or fall.
- Mental Health pages on MPUUC web site continue to be widely accessed.

- My personal and professional story is included in a book: *Amazing Gifts - Stories of Faith, Disability, and Inclusion* edited by Mark Pinsky, Alban Institute, 2012.
- Interviewed by Tom Rockwell, director of exhibits at the *Exploratorium*, about upcoming exhibits planned in the field of mental health. He had found my “excellent public access TV series” on the net and wanted to find out about it and about who is doing what in mental health locally.

UUA Accessibility Group

- Leading effort to create a congregational disability accessibility certification program. Core team in place. UUA will pay for an in-person planning session in June.
- Continued to maintain the website for the new UU accessibility group *Equal Access* www.equalaccess.org

UUA Addictions Ministry

- As member of the UUA Addictions Ministry, participated in an effort to draft a new mission statement for the organization. Also helped run their web site.

Occupy Fremont

- Merged efforts with others in Fremont to form an Occupy Fremont group that meets once a week for a General Assembly, and once a month for a larger, decision making assembly. A number of progressive issues have been discussed. Attended Occupy Faith national meeting in Berkeley organized by Rev. Jeremy Nickel and others on March 21. Met lots of people and was exposed to a lot of inspiring ideas.

Other

Books Read

- *Many Forms of Madness: A Family's Struggle with Mental Illness and the Mental Health System*, by Rosemary Radford Reuther with David Reuther, Fortress Press, 2010. Written by a renowned feminist theologian who is the mother of a son diagnosed with schizophrenia, this is a very clear-eyed look at her son's life, the mental health system and what it would take for the system to really work. Poems and essays by her son are also included. Excellent! I recommend this one to anyone trying to understand or improve the system, what works, what doesn't, how to fix it and why.
- *The Addictive Organization – Why We Overwork, Cover Up, Pick Up the Pieces, Please the Boss and Perpetuate Sick Organizations*, by Anne Wilson Schaef and Diane Fassel, Harper & Row, 1988. Insightful application of the classic lessons of addictions work to organizations.
- *Ministry with Persons with Mental Illness and Their Families*, Edited by William Meller, Robert Albers, Steven D. Thurber, 2012. A book with chapters about various mental illnesses each written by a different author with mental health and/or theological experience. A good guide.
- *I Wish You'd Tell Me – A tool box of answers to the question, “What can I say that will help?” when the one you love is bipolar*, by Alysse Adularia. We read this as a reading group at Reaching Across. It has some very helpful suggestions for dialog with a person who is bipolar and is experiencing difficulties of various sorts.
- *Disability Advocacy Among Religious Organizations: Histories and Reflections*, Albert Herzog, Jr. Editor, The Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006. Good overview of what different denominations have done to make congregations accessible.
- *Dancing with Disabilities – Opening the Church to All God's Children*, by Brett Webb-Mitchell, United Church Press, 1996. An impassioned, reasoned, theological and Christ-centric look at the gifts that disabled people have to offer everyone: perseverance, patience, hospitality, challenging assumptions, border crossings, creativity, unpredictability, and the mutual nature of dependence.
- *Amazing Gifts – Stories of Faith, Disability, and Inclusion*, by Mark Pinsky, Alban Institute 2012. 64 stories of disability and inclusion in religious congregations. My story is one of them.
- *Serving with Grace: Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice*, by Eric Walker Wikstrom, 2010. A very helpful guide for transforming lay leadership into something which spiritually fills a person.

- *Creating the Caring Congregation – Guidelines for Ministering with the Handicapped* by Harold H. Wilke, Abingdon, 1980.
- *Living a Life that Matters*, by Harold S. Kushner, Anchor Books, 2002. The main message: We matter not because of our achievements but because we are loved by God and loved by the people around us.
- *A Singular Woman – The Untold Story of Barack Obama’s Mother*, by Janny Scott, Riverhead, 2011. Fascinating portrait of Stanley Ann Dunham Obama Soetoro and her unconventional, authentic life.
- *Kristin Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset, Knopf, 1923. Winner of Nobel Prize for Literature for this classic saga of the Norwegian middle-ages.
- *Bad Blood* by John Sanford. Another escapist mystery. Why do I like these?
- *Live Free or Die, Die, Die!*, Collection of short mysteries by New Hampshire writers. Delightful.

Personal

- Need to continually work at life balance and stress management. This has gotten easier since Nathaniel.
- Keeping up my exercise at the gym *Curves*, and work out there 3 times a week. Keeps up my energy level.
- My weaving *Garden Above and Below Ground* is in the annual textile exhibit at Olive Hyde Gallery in Fremont.



Other

- Met with Community Ministry Advisory Committee every quarter
- Monthly status meetings with UU Mental Health Caucus, Equal Access, MPUUC Board
- Visit my spiritual director and my psychiatrist regularly.
- Attended some MPUUC Board meetings.

2012 Development Plan

Area	Plans	Time line	Measurement	Status
Continuing education:				
Take one or two classes a year	Investigate classes to take in the next year	Ongoing- Identify classes	Take classes by December 2012	Several on-line classes taken
Attend GA	GA in June	June 2012	Event attended	Registered
Attend Mental health seminars / conventions	Attend at least one local / state mental health convention in next year	Chosen by March 31	Attended by Dec. 2012	
Help in starting new counseling center	Attend meetings and engage in planning to start new center	Throughout 2012	Plans for new center are created.	Attending meetings every 2 weeks
Areas for growth in the next 2 yrs:				
Continue producing TV program	Work on continuing to improve quality of show. Identify vehicles for wider broadcast	Work with PEERS to identify possible users of programs	Ongoing	Plan to try a "focused story" show in the summer/fall
Preaching style	Work on preaching with feedback from parishioners and other professionals	As speaking engagements show up	Style continues to improve.	
Spiritual Direction	Continue to grow Spiritual Direction practice	On-going	Would like 4-5 clients by year end	Have 2 clients
Long term possibilities				

