

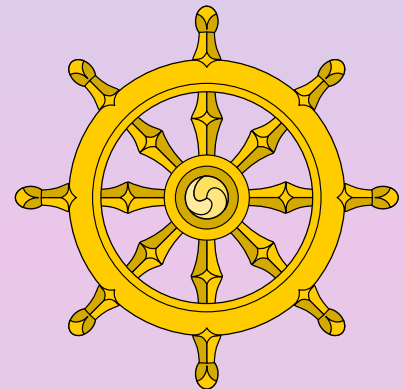
FCM Newsletter

Volume 58 - Issue 6

November -December 2024



Paul Vincent Reithmaier's history of the St. Louis FCM community raises questions about our faith communities and how we support them. Judy Lorenz poses a couple of them and comments on the issues following A Short History of the Reaching Out Group of St. Liouis



"I once heard a student ask a distinguished monk, "how would you advise someone grieving a loved one? To meditate?" The answer was definite, but compassionate: "Rather than giving advice, I would begin by witnessing their suffering, and bear it with them for a while.""

GRIEF: A Window to Wisdom

Shannon Kelley, M.Div., BCC



Download a Free Advent Devotional written by women clergy

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Christy Howard-Steele Chair Circle of Directors

chairperson@FCMmail.org

A Few Things

Rev. Christy Howard-Steele, Chairperson

The Holiday Season

It seems hard to believe that the holiday season and the end of 2024 are quickly approaching. I am full of gratefulness for you, our FCM members and all that FCM has achieved so far this year. In my opinion, FCM has had a fantastic year!

As of the beginning of October, 78 new members and 1 faith community have joined.

We have commissioned 34 members and endorsed 11 members.

We held a phenomenal National Assembly with close to 70 attendees.

We have prayed weekly for one another and the world.

We have hosted virtual gatherings to share and discuss critical and relevant topics.

We developed a strategic plan, implemented a new website, made some hard choices to maintain our financial viability and made decisions about our name and branding.

None of this would be possible without members giving of their time, talent, and treasure. As we celebrate the upcoming holidays, know how grateful I am for the gift that each of you are to FCM. Thank you for your prayers, your comments, and insights. I pray that you take the time to rest and spend time with your loved ones during this holiday season.

Welcome

FCM is pleased to Welcome the following members to their new roles:

Our New Administrator – Randy Dawson, email connect@fcmmail.org. Randy has a wealth of business and ministry experience. He has quickly learned the intricacies of Realm and will be coordinating the commissioning process.



Our New Newsletter Editor – Mary Monaco, email newsletter@fcmmail.org. Mary has a long tenure in ministry and a commitment to inclusive ministry. Mary will be editing articles submitted for inclusion in the newsletter. She has already demonstrated her commitment to her new role.



Membership Renewal

Life is full. We are busy with families or ministries or both. Time seems to go so quickly. Renewal just slipped your mind. Whatever the reason, here it is November 1st, and you have not yet renewed your FCM membership. The good news is you can still renew. Just go to the 2025 Late Renewal event in Realm. If you need to split your payment, contact Randy Dawson at connect@fcmmail.org.

Membership Type	After November 1st **
General	\$225
Commissioned	\$340
Commissioned/Endorsed	\$500
Communities	
0-50 members	\$50
51-100 members	\$95
100+ members	

Follow these instructions to renew:

Renew from your Realm Profile Account

- go to www.onrealm.org
- log into your Realm profile using your email address and a password you created
- from your profile page, go to the Community Page, click "Events"
- click on 2025 Membership Late Renewal event
- type your name in the "Add Registrant" box
- select the type of membership you are renewing (general, commissioned, commissioned and endorsed, faith community)
- answer all the questions that follow and click Next
- pay the registration fee (credit card, debit card, or electronic check)
- Click "Register"

*Please note: The renewal process must be completed in one sitting as there is no "Save" feature within Realm events. All questions marked with an asterisk must be answered or you will not be able to advance to the payment page.

Thank you and blessings for your commitment to ministry and to FCM.



Tom Cusack President

president@FCMmail.org

War and [Inner] Peace

We have an example, a model in Jesus the Teacher, of a non-violent response when His own life was in danger. John 18:10–11 relates the Teacher stepping away from using violence to protect Himself, and telling those with Him to step away, as well. This kind of response does not happen often in human history.

Now we watch the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine. This is especially close to me, as my wife, Ginny, has been a participant in bringing the Montessori educational philosophy to Ukraine since 1993. I watch the ongoing horror daily, and I don't have any idea about what I can physically do to help bring this war to an end.

In the Middle East, on October 7, 2023, we have the massacre of 1200 Israelis. I am writing this article on the one-year anniversary of that terrible date. Since then, the Israeli army has killed tens of thousands in their campaign. I don't have any idea about what I can physically do to help bring this war to an end.

In Africa's Sudan, a Civil War has been raging for a year and a half. Tens of thousands have died and millions have been displaced from their homes. This, too, is a situation of horror and death. I don't have any idea about what I can physically do to help bring this war to an end. The history of violence goes on and on.

Humanity has been engaged in warfare for thousands of years. A battle ground in the north of Germany is under excavation and analysis, with its timeframe set at 3250 BCE. It is called the Tollense Valley battlefield. It appears thousands were involved in this battle. Such a discovery does not encourage us to think that humanity may leave systematic violence behind any time soon. So where do we in FCM go, what can we do, with this ongoing history of warfare then and now?

The Inner Peace

FCM is a unique group of people. Most of us have lived a commitment over decades to follow our spiritual teacher, Jesus. We believe that He is active on the spiritual plane supporting us in our efforts to help one another and to follow Him.

I suggest that one continuous action that each of us can take to blunt the energy of war and destruction, is to engage more systematically in a spiritual life. This engagement may include a study of our founding documents as found in the Hebrew and Christian testaments. It may include our doing systematic good works. It may include our devoting systematic time each day to engage in prayer and meditation.

As we focus on the development of our own spiritual progress, I suggest that we will have an unseen but significant effect on the world's consciousness. The impact of one person's spirituality should not be minimized. As each individual comes into sync with God's will for his/her/their life, and then follows that will, goodness results. That goodness can go viral. Of course, we are not in control of whether it does or not. Results are in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

The FCM Prayer Gathering -- a formal FCM step

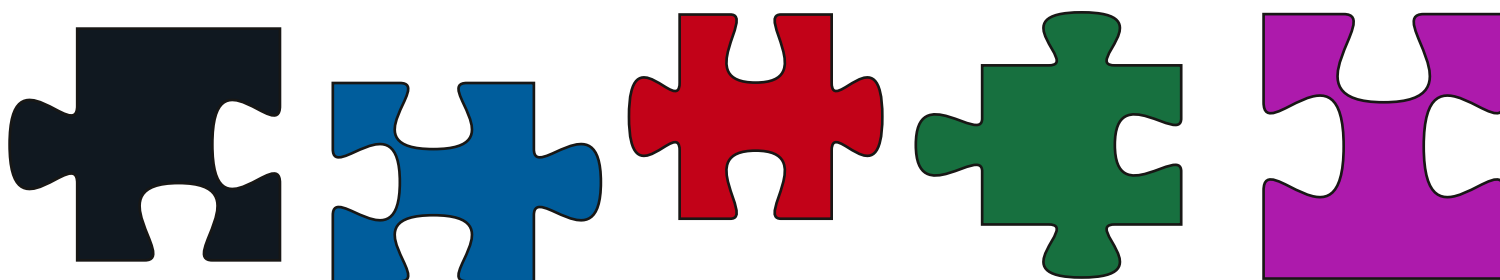
For over four and a half years, FCM has offered the Thursday evening Prayer Gathering at 8 PM Eastern time. Every session begins with a half hour of spiritual focus, followed by a half hour of discussion and additional reflections, expressions of needs for prayer, and well wishes to one another. Regular participants have formed a community. We recognize one another, we share well wishes and concerns. This is a way for community to develop within FCM. Shared prayer time strengthens each of us, and it strengthens FCM.

I request that you make it a point to join the Prayer Gathering in a way that fits your schedule. Will you join us once a year? Good. Will you join us four times a year? Better. Will you join us regularly? Well, that is close to the best. Will you never join? Bad.

I would like you to look at participation in the FCM Prayer Gathering as your way of giving back to FCM. All of us current members have benefited from the work of past members. This is a way to create a stronger spiritual energy for FCM right now. I look forward to seeing you there with us on Thursday nights.

Finally, remember to spend at a minimum, 2 X 2 4 FCM. That is two minutes of prayer, two minutes of meditation, all for the benefit of FCMeach day.

And, one more time for good measure --- I look forward to having you join with us in prayer and meditation on Thursday nights at our FCM Prayer Gathering.



Download a Free Advent Devotional written by women clergy Advent Devotional by Julia Styles

This Advent, take a pause each day to meditate on scripture and reflections written by women clergy from around the world, including women from FCM. Prayerful Reflections is a daily resource for connecting with God and the larger Christian community during the season of Advent.

Inspired by the ancient practice of Lectio Divina, or sacred listening, each daily reflection will be an opportunity to Read the Bible, Reflect on the message, Respond to what we have heard, and Rest in the love of God. This devotional could be read independently or with a community. If you would like to connect virtually, the reflections are posted daily at www.spiritualdirectionwithjulia.com/blog, with opportunities to comment.

The new devotional will be available November 24, 2024. You are welcome to share this free resource with anyone you like, just send them the link

www.spiritualdirectionwithjulia.com/prayerful-reflections

and they will be able to download a free PDF version of Prayerful Reflections: A Daily Devotional for Advent 2024.

I started publishing Prayerful Reflections in 2021 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the new reality of socially-distanced churches. An online devotional seemed like the appropriate way for Christians from around the world to connect in their shared identity in Christ, especially during Lent and Advent. I also published Prayerful Reflections out of a deep yearning to share my thoughts about God, and to amplify the voices of female theologians. You will notice that all authors presented in this devotional are women. Jesus called women to proclaim the Good News to the world, not just to women or children, but also to men. So although this devotional is written by women, it is meant for ALL people.



Tom Stricker Endowment Chair

tomstricker2009@gmail.com

The FCM Permanent Endowment Fund

- In F/Y 2022/23 we distributed \$3,519.00 to individuals needing assistance to attend the FCM National Assembly.

- In F/Y 2023/2024, we will be distributing another \$6,650.
- This accounted for 35% of our Accumulated Appreciation.
- NO donated funds will ever be used - only 35% of the annual Accumulated Appreciation
- Next year, we want to be able to double our distributions.

So, our Goal is to raise \$40,000 this year. Is this realistic?

Let's Brainstorm!

If fewer than one-half of our FCM members (300) would become new donors and give just \$5.00 a month (the cost of one coffee at a fine coffee shop), we could raise \$1,500 a month. Over 12 months that would come to \$18,000.

Could you make that kind of commitment?

Then, if we had 10 new members who need to take a "Required Minimum Distribution" (RMD) and made a gift from their distribution to the FCM Permanent Endowment Fund, this would be a tax-free distribution for the donor, as well as earning the donor a tax deduction. If 10 members gave \$500, that would be an additional \$5,000.

Does that sound like you?

Then, If five FCM members created a "Tribute Gift" to commemorate a birthday, or a wedding anniversary, or a deceased friend; and if each "Tribute Gift" raised \$500, this would mean a \$2,500 increase in our Permanent Endowment Fund!

Could you put forward such a "Tribute Gift"?

Later this year we will be receiving an Estate Donation in the amount of \$5,000.
Have you named FCM in your will or trust? It is a Gift that will keep on giving!

In our Brainstorm, we have now raised more than \$30,000
So far this year, our Permanent Endowment Fund has earned more than \$20,000 from our investments.
Approximately \$13,000 (65%) of this will stay in the FCM Permanent Endowment Fund.

Together we can accomplish this if we ALL commit to building
The Legacy of FCM!



Donate to the FCM Endowment Fund

NO GIFT IS TOO SMALL!

Regular Donation

Go to the FCM website www.federationofchristianministries.org or go to your personal account on Realm www.onrealm.org and make your donation.

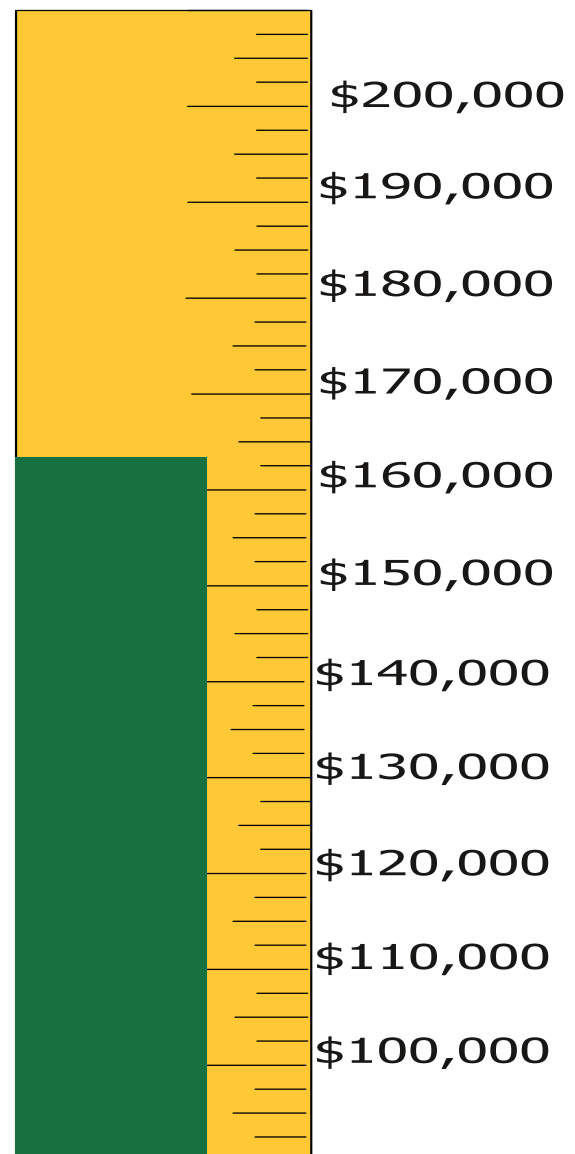
1. Sign in to Realm or, if in the FCM Website, use the "Donation" button to get there.
2. Click on "Giving" (left hand column) and this will take you to donation page
3. Click on the "+ Give" button
4. You will see a pull down (FCM General Account); click on the pulldown arrow
5. Click on the "FCM Endowment Fund" button

Tribute Gift

Is there a friend, family member, teacher, or mentor you would like to honor on their special day or send an expression of sympathy?
Consider a small donation to the FCM Endowment Fund.

A notice of your gift will be sent to the honoree or a member of their family. You will also know that your gift will help ensure that FCM will be able to support future generations of ministers and congregations.

For more information go to the FCM web site under FCM Endowment Fund for the online Tribute Gift Form orendowment@fcmmail.org





Judy Lorenz Faith Communities Chair

faithcommunity@FCMmail.org

A Short History of the Reaching Out Group of St. Liouis

Paul Vincent Reithmaier

In 1977, the Spirit moved a gifted and perceptive Paraclete priest to reach out to all priests who may have been in need of spiritual support, including those who were married.

Fr. Joseph Moylan found that there were many married priests living in the St. Louis area, and he invited as many as he could to come to the Paracletes' St. Michael Retreat Center on a bright Sunday afternoon for a meeting. About 150 married priests, their wives and children, came to this first gathering, which turned out to be a grand reunion for many of the priests.



Fr. Joe had no agenda for this meeting, but only asked how he and the Paracletes could be of help. Many had much to say, and the conclusion was that "we all should meet again."

In the series of monthly meetings that followed, several shared concerns became apparent. The slow, disingenuous, and frustrating process of applying for and obtaining dispensations, the need for transition support, including job search skills, and an accepting worshipping community were the main problems discussed. Resentment was expressed over the lack of help given, and even hostility, by the church leadership towards those in transition, after having provided many years of dedicated service.

The group proved to be an accepting and safe place to vent frustrations, and St. Michael's became our monthly meeting place with some adopting it for their weekly Sunday worship. The group became known as the Reaching Out Group (RO) after Fr. Joe Moylan's first inspiration, and also for the role the group was to take up for those in transition.

An interesting anecdote involved a visit to then-Cardinal Carberry's office to invite him to one of our meetings to speak about the issue of married priests. Three from RO, the Cardinal, and two priests from the chancery met at the chancery. The Cardinal was obviously on-guard and somewhat nervous. He graciously greeted us, and he got down to business right away asking what it was that we wanted from this meeting. One of our group, Bill Lally, immediately responded, "Your Eminence, don't you think that it would be a good thing to start this meeting with a prayer?" The meeting went well, but Carberry, knowing he was to retire shortly thereafter, advised us to talk with the next Archbishop, John May, who by the way, did come and address a very large crowd gathered for the occasion.

As a result of this meeting and John May's positive attitude, an Archdiocesan Reintegration Committee was formed, comprised of men, women, and priests who were both married and celibate. Its charge was to make recommendations to the Archbishop about policy towards priests and religious leaving the active ministry. It was successful in developing Archdiocesan policies providing for insurance, health benefits, and some monetary support for those in transition, which continue in-place to the present.

RO met monthly (weekly for some) at St. Michael's for a number of years, during which time we were able to influence the attitude of the many priests passing through St Michael's to celebrate Sunday Mass, towards the married priests for whom they were celebrating the Mass.

In 1981 we were asked to leave St. Michael's, as their ministry had expanded to help more priests with different problems. Our Diaspora took us to a number of temporary places, until we arrived at Maryville College where we were given refuge, welcome, and permission to use their chapel for our gatherings.

A pattern was now clear — Reaching Out was called to be a support group for men and women in transition from religious life, and for others who came seeking an accepting worshiping community. Attempts were made by members to focus Reaching Out activities on one good cause or another, but the conclusion was that RO began and should continue as a support group for individuals in transition, while at the same time supporting the members as they pursued their own causes.

We always remained true to this purpose, and many brothers and sisters have passed through Reaching Out since 1977. Some have stayed to form an ongoing core, while others left to join in the parish life of their own community as their children grew. We, as a group, grew as well.

For the first year of our stay at Maryville College, we continued to have a regular celebrant for our Sunday celebrations. When this was no longer possible, we chose our celebrant from amongst our ranks, male and female, and continue this practice today.

While the group remains focused on our original purpose, individual members have taken up a wide variety of ecumenical ministries that include: The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (ARCC), Bread for the World, Call to Action, CORPUS, deacon (Presbyterian), ecumenical mission activity, Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM), Meals on Wheels, Parish activities, Pax Christi, serving as priests in various Old Catholic Communion, prison ministry, political and environmental activities, and extraordinary ministers as needed, etc. Retreats, picnics, reunions, and conferences have been held. We celebrate key life events of our members including marriages, baptisms, confirmations, and significant birthdays.

In 1995 Maryville College became Maryville University and we were again asked to find another place to meet. Again in Diaspora, our search for a home took us to many places, but we found a welcoming place at a local hospital to function as a support group. We continue to meet on the second and fourth Sunday of each month to pursue our original mandate. Many of the original members are still around.

In recent years, fewer and fewer men and women in transition from religious life are encountering the same problems as those of earlier years, as the overall Catholic community has grown to understand and accept the conscience decisions of celibate men and women to respond to a different calling by God. It can be foreseen that the transition help offered by Reaching Out will no longer be needed, and we welcome that day; but we continue to cherish the community our original calling has created and still inspires.



From Priest to Priests

For about the first 10 years from its beginnings, the Reaching Out Group was able to procure the services of a priest in good standing (in the RCC) to celebrate the community Eucharist twice a month on Sunday mornings. Originally they were the priests, and priest-in-treatment at St. Michael's Center. This continued for some years, even after we moved from St. Michael's to Maryville University. After a while it became clear that the availability of a priest to celebrate Mass for us was not going to continue indefinitely. When that day came, the group decided that our own married priest members would be designated to officiate at our Masses. As this became more and more the norm, the wives joined their husband-priests in officiating at the celebration. As could be anticipated, some were deemed more charismatic and skilled than others and eventually, those who took on this ministry were those who felt called to do so, and it became a volunteer service of ministry. Individual men and women, couples, or combinations thereof, volunteered to prepare and lead the Eucharistic celebrations. It was only through discernment, growth, and time that the group was able to arrive at the understanding that it is truly the whole community that brings about and celebrates the presence of Jesus in the community and offers this gift in worship to the Father.



From Leaders to Servants

These past 47 years also bear witness to the growth and understanding of the organizational structure of this community. Like most, we began by electing leaders and officers to manage the organization's affairs and resources, meager as they were/are. Elections were, at times, hotly contested by candidates with differing philosophies of leadership and direction. Slowly the focus shifted from officers-to-manage-matters, to matters that needed to be served. Finally, the matters that needed ministering-focus were all volunteer, and ranged from treasurer, liturgy, publication of monthly e-newsletter, refreshments (2nd Sunday), pot-luck materials (4th Sunday), coffee seeker, to a "designated bishop" whose crosier is a carpet sweeper carried in a briefcase. We are most blessed in not having more structure than needed, but enough ministers to serve as servants.



From Wanderers to Squatters

We were indeed pilgrims. Over the years we have wandered from place to place to gather twice monthly. We have been welcomed by kindly leaders who eventually retired; and then by willing replacements "who knew not Joseph" and we were invited again to wander. Eventually, and for quite some time, we were welcomed, as a "support group" by a local (not RCC) hospital, to use, free of charge, a large meeting room unoccupied on Sunday mornings. We became an unofficial but known regular meeting group there with a longer tenure than most employees at this hospital.

In 2020 REACHING OUT started meeting at St. Thomas/Holy Spirit Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3980 South Lindbergh, Sunset Hills, MO 63127 on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, at 10:45 a.m., in room 101. During the COVID period Reaching Out met on ZOOM.



The Final Page

On September 8, 2024, the remaining four regular attendees of Reaching Out worship decided that Reaching Out had completed its mission and that, after 47 years, it was time to disband the group due to low attendance.



Faith Communities of FCM

New Ministries for a New Millennium

Comments from FCM Faith Community Committee Chair, Judy Lorenz

The Reaching Out Group of St. Louis has done great work helping priests to transition to new lives after leaving the Roman Catholic Church. These gentlemen found themselves in extremely difficult circumstances for simply speaking their truth and understanding that their call to ministry was not one that required celibacy. They expanded their ministry over many decades, serving the needs of men who came after them, in the hopes of making their lives easier. In the process, they created a stronger and more vibrant community. The Reaching Out Community has done an enormous service, and many have benefitted from that ministry.

Sadly, RO finds itself in a place familiar to many progressive Catholics from the 1960's who were hoping for a bright future within a Vatican II Church. The window that had been opened by Pope John XXIII was gradually shut, and later bolted by Pope Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. There is no indication that any progress will soon be made, if ever. Now, the generation of promising boomers are entering their twilight years.

While their generation did not see the fulfillment of John XXIII's dream, they responded to the call and inspired many! As church pews continue to empty out, it is my hope that the people leaving will one day awaken to the idea of small faith communities. Jesus was about empowering people. He was asking us to be the best version of ourselves by living the Beatitudes. It is that simple.

In further response, there are two questions I have after reading Paul's story.

- 1. How can we support community members who no longer have communities?**
- 2. From where will FCM's future communities come?**

Regarding question 1, I suggest researching current FCM Faith Communities on our website. Several of them have zoom options so you may be able to attend a service online to see what they are like. You can also contact their leaders to learn more about them and to see which one may best fit your needs.

For the second question, I understand that FCM 's history was very much Catholic-oriented. However, a shift has taken place. I believe the next group will be coming from Protestant churches who feel compelled to go out on their own, due to their leadership lacking acceptance of the LGBT Community and women's rights. I hope we can find a way to make FCM known to this broader community that may be seeking a safe space for worship and ministry. In the meantime, I think the ship may have sailed for many millennials and younger, who have found too much contradiction between the message of Jesus and organized religion. They are sparks of creation with beautiful spirits who will lead a new and different way forward.

Thank you,
Judy Lorenz

FCM Anniversaries

FCM Anniversaries

5 YEARS

Ebenezer Aguirre	1/11/2019	Southeast
Kimberly Borin	11/07/2019	Northeast
Kamil Cak	12/31/2019	Mid-Atlantic
Rebekah Maaz	11/23/2019	South Central
Deirdre Manning	12/16/2019	Heartland
Allen J. Theis	12/18/2019	Heartland

10 YEARS

Salvador Leavitt-Alcantara	11/29/2014	Heartland
Mark Bernecker	11/04/2014	Northeast
Lavender Kelley	11/11/2014	Mid-Atlantic
Judith MacNutt	12/29/2014	Southeast
John Wentland	12/24/2014	Northeast

15 YEARS

Amy Simpson	12/22/2009	Heartland
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20 YEARS

Mary Jo Kruer,	12/02/2003 for 20 years,	Heartland
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30YEARS

Philip Belzunce	11/04/1994,	Heartland
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[Return to TOC](#)

GRIEF: A Window to Wisdom

Shannon Kelley, M.Div., BCC

My friend Arturo has died, and I am grieving. This is becoming an increasingly familiar experience, and ritual. I am not unequipped to deal with grief, either by experience, or available support — nor by training, as an Interfaith Chaplain.

To speak of support from my spiritual tradition, a relevant Buddhist teaching concerns a grieving mother, Kisa Gotami, who appealed to the Buddha for the life of her just-deceased child. He instructed her to bring him a mustard seed from every home that had not experienced death. Going door-to-door in this search, she soon got the point.

Through this experiential and communal learning opportunity, a more spacious and workable view of life arose for Kisa Gotami. Her perspective, rather than her circumstance, was changed — the suffering had been in the perspective. The way to get beyond suffering entailed compassion, implicitly enfolding her within the community of fellow sufferers. Following this preliminary learning, she became a disciple of the Buddha — and over centuries, an example to others.

Flash forward: I once heard a student ask a distinguished monk, "how would you advise someone grieving a loved one? To meditate?" The answer was definite, but compassionate: "Rather than giving advice, I would begin by witnessing their suffering, and bear it with them for a while."

This reveals one of the greatest pastoral visions within Buddhism: being with what is present, either to others or to oneself, however lofty one's spiritual ideals.

Humans may grow in wisdom, but we are still humans, not wisdom-buckets, and not usually impervious. To those accompanying a suffering being, openings to compassion become lost opportunities if they merely represent teaching opportunities. "Teaching" as such might well come later, as it did for Kisa Gotami.



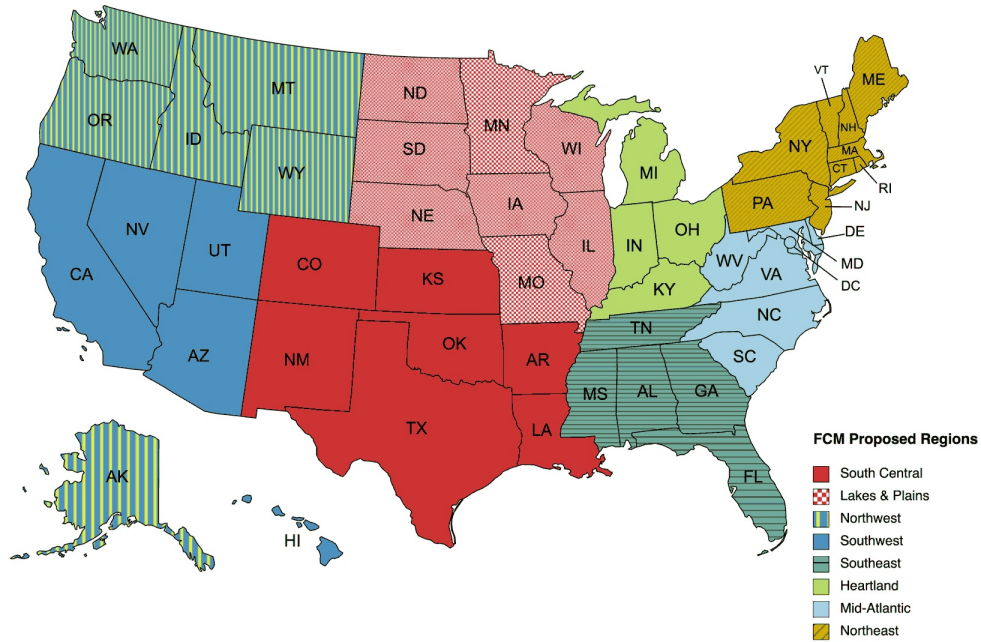
**Nava Jetavana Temple -Shravasti -007
Kisagotami with her Dead Child**

One of the great beauties of life is to witness persons building sturdier mental and emotional frameworks amid the rubble of lost ones. Witnessing such work emboldens the striver, and benefits all parties. Often the new frameworks are more earthquake-proof. The embodied wisdom that informs their design is more accommodating and flexible; more apt to sway than collapse.

One may read or even meditate one's way, partway, to such an advanced state. In my experience, referring to the actual data of life as contemplative material is most expedient. Doing so in community, thus seeing one's experience reflected and refracted, enhances growth-potential. There is so much to unlearn in this life, and a suffering human has an edge as a lifelong un-learner, over one who prefers received wisdom in a privileged echo chamber.

So today I weep for Arturo, as I have recently done for Patty, Ricardo, J.D., Millie, Joaquin, David, Brian, Gail, and others — only then to strive and, usually, smile again. As a professional spiritual caregiver who is also an aspirant to enlightenment, it is well to be reminded occasionally that I am not the Buddha. Whereas, we are all Kisa Gotami.

FCM Regions



Created with mapchart.net

Northeast

Pennsylvania
New Jersey
Rhode Island
New York
Connecticut
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
Vermont
Maine

Mid-Atlantic

West Virginia
Virginia
Delaware
Maryland
Washington DC
North Carolina
South Carolina

Southeast

Tennessee
Mississippi
Alabama
Georgia
Florida

South Central

Colorado
Kansas
New Mexico
Oklahoma
Arkansas
Texas
Louisiana

Heartland

Michigan
Indiana
Kentucky
Ohio

Lakes & Plains

North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Minnesota
Iowa
Missouri
Wisconsin
Illinois

Southwest

California
Nevada
Utah
Arizona
Hawaii

Northwest

Alaska
Washington
Oregon
Idaho
Montana
Wyoming



Mike Corso VP Northeast

northeastvp@FCMmail.org

As we move from the colors and beauty of fall to the drawing-in and readying for winter, I thought this reflection on sacred creation would be helpful.

Recovering a Sense of the Sacred

By Matthew Fox September 24, 2024

Awe, New Cosmology, sacred creation, Thomas Berry, Via Positiva, Wisdom

From Recovering a Sense of the Sacred - Daily Meditations with Matthew Fox...WEB Sep 24, 2024.

"The health and future of Mother Earth are in rapid decline due to Climate Change, which is in turn caused by human arrogance and indifference and greed. The late, celebrated student of the universe, geologist Thomas Berry, told us how to recover a sense of the sacred when it has been lost. He begins with the observation that it has been lost—for he talks about recovering our sense of the sacred.

What is more important than if humanity is to wake up, and get up, and choose to survive as a species? Professor Lani Shiota shares how awe is involved in her research. Here are Thomas Berry's instructions:

We will recover our sense of wonder and our sense of the sacred only if we appreciate the universe beyond ourselves as a revelatory experience of that numinous presence whence all things come into being. Indeed, the universe is the primary sacred reality. We become sacred by our participation in this more sublime dimension of the world about us."

Notice how he identifies a sense of wonder with a sense of the sacred. How important this is! Once again, we are being told to pay attention to the Via Positiva. Awe. "Awe is the beginning of wisdom," Heschel reminds us again and again. And in our pursuit of knowledge, we have often put aside or even run over the quest for wisdom.

Wisdom of course is feminine in the Bible and around the world. She is reasserting herself in our time, for her neglect has been devastating for millions of species and the Earth herself.

Awe. Wonder. Reverence. Gratitude. Here is the springboard for all spiritual growth. This is why moving from an original-sin consciousness to an original-blessing consciousness lies at the heart of our survival as a species today.

Our origins, as Hildegard of Bingen reminds us, are Love. And Goodness. And Joy, which derives from both. So is our destiny.

Berry again: "The human venture depends absolutely on this quality of awe and reverence and joy in the Earth and all that lives and grows upon the Earth....In the end the universe can only be explained in terms of celebration. It is all an exuberant expression of existence itself...."

Jennifer Friedman & Barbara Zeman VP s Southeast



Michelle Graham
VP Mid-Atlantic
midatlanticvp@FCMmail.org

southeastvp@FCMmail.org



From the Southeast and MidAtlantic on Hurricanes Helene and Milton

Dear members of FCM

As many of you know (and some of us personally experienced), the devastation of Hurricanes Helene and Milton have been and continue to be catastrophic. Many in Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and beyond have experienced unprecedented flooding, loss of power, loss of cellular towers and service, loss of clean drinking water and the ability to obtain it, loss of property, and an ever-growing loss of life. As we write to you, there are at least 90 reported fatalities and counting, and thousands still remain missing. Many main roads to get into the western areas of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee are destroyed or impassable. For most of those areas, assistance is only getting in from the air. Millions are without power and drinking water and may remain without for weeks. Areas of the coast of Florida are completely washed away, and sand has washed inland in record amounts trapping vehicles. Southern GA is dealing with the aftermath of multiple tornadoes, and northern GA has also experienced record-breaking flooding.

And these are just a smattering of the stories we know. There will be more stories to come.

In addition to sadness, overwhelm, grief, or many other emotions, I know many are asking: "What can we do?" The regional Vice Presidents of the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic have compiled a list of non-exhaustive suggestions below:

1. When posting online, share information from reputable sources such as departments of transportation services, local power companies, first responders, meteorologists, and county officials. Inaccurate information or sensationalized posts can add confusion, and cause more harm than good in these moments. And, as always, please be love and add love to the conversation.
2. If you live outside of the area, know roadways are down and may continue to be down for weeks. Even FEMA is having difficulty getting into these areas, and some of them are only accessible via air.
3. If you can, please consider donating to disaster relief services. Donate to those you feel comfortable with and have vetted. This is not an official FCM endorsement, but some places regional members have offered are: Convoy of Hope, Operation Airdrop, and BeLoved Asheville. Even a few dollars will go a long way in the months and years it will take to rebuild.
4. If you need individual assistance visit: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/individual>.
5. Pray. Send light. Send love. Pray.
6. Take care of your physical and mental health. You are precious. Your one wild and magical life is precious. Take a break and cherish it.
7. Finally, check in on us. Check in with us. Let us know how we can support each other, and do not hesitate to reach out to your regional VPs for help.

May God bless each of our members, their families, and community members in these areas with safety, with strength, and with sustenance as they clean up, work, and minister. May God bless our first responders, linemen and women, sanitation workers, medical staff, and any and all who are working around the clock to get people to safety and help us rebuild. May God hold all of us in our grief and give us strength to begin again.

With love and gratitude,
Barbara, Michelle & Jen



Peter Wolf VP Heartland

heartlandvp@FCMmail.org

The Heartland News

Mark Your Calendars!!!

Place: The Heartland Region Retreat at Maria Stein, Ohio.

Date: October 24th – 26th, 2025 --- PLEASE NOTE - that's 2025

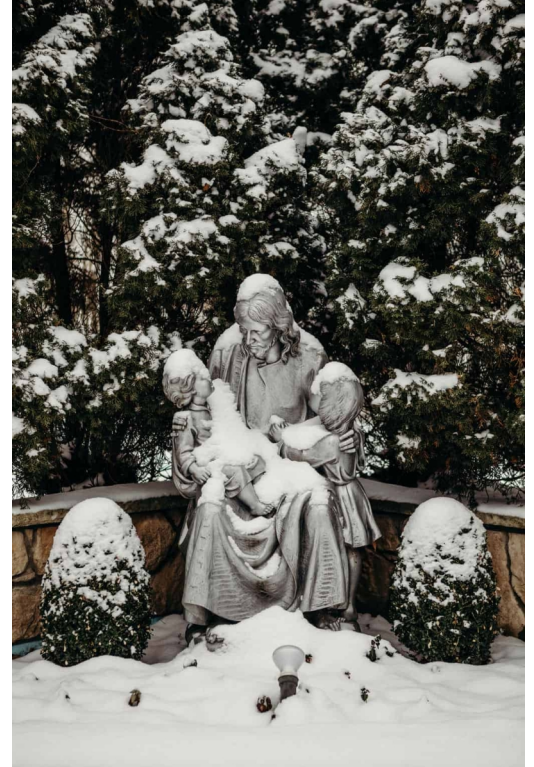
Are you interested? What topics interest you? Do you want to volunteer?

For now, we want to know if this is a priority for you, and will you consider attending?

We had a great celebration of installing Rev. Jessica Tinkham as a chaplain for the Trinity Communities of Greater Dayton, Ohio. The service joined three churches, St. Luke UCC, St John UCC, and Memorial UCC, who came together to create a community for older adults in need of care and housing in the Dayton area.

Rev. Jessica was called and installed into her ministry of being a peace maker, urging her to help the weak, encourage the timid, and be patient with all. She was surrounded and supported by the staff and members of the retirement community. She was exhorted to be compassionate for God's people, to be joyful, to pray at all times, and to be thankful at all times.

The ceremony concluded with the laying on of hands, which asks the Holy Spirit to confer the gifts of preaching, healing, and forgiving, and has been the symbolic act of the church in every age, recognizing God's call to ministry in the lives of faithful women and men.





Jo Brenneman-Fullwood VP Lakes & Plains

lakesplainsvp@FCMmail.org

Greetings & Salutations

Fall is moving out, and winter is here! The cool breeze calls for drinks flavored with pumpkin spice, and smells of hot apple cider fill the air. This year provided some wins and losses; for some, it brings feelings of melancholy mixed with the hopes of the coming year. I pray you have found time to enjoy the fall colors and change the landscape as you sip your favorite drink.

Several members have accomplished goals, personally and professionally. Today we congratulate our recently endorsed members and newly board-certified chaplains! If I have missed you in this announcement, please email me so we can celebrate with you in the next newsletter. Lakes & Plains, please join me in celebrating the many special occasions in our area. When you have a moment, please reach out to the following members and send an email to reach out to them personally.

Let's Celebrate with our Member(s):

Name	Area	Occasion	Email
Daniel Galvin	Illinois	Endorsement	danielgalvin93@yahoo.com
HaLana Thompson	Illinois	Board Certified Chaplain	hthompson627@gmail.com
Patrick Mack	Wisconsin	Board Certified Chaplain	pmack256@gmail.com

Volunteer Opportunities:

The FCM Endowment committee is looking for two members to join their efforts. The time commitment is low at a single, 1-hour meeting per month via Zoom. Contact me at lakesplainsvp@fcmmail.org to express interest and I will connect you with the chair of the committee.

Chat with the VP monthly zoom will be the first Monday of each month at 8:00 CT, using this recurring link. Just copy and paste the link in your browser, or use the Meeting ID and Passcode below! Looking forward to meeting you soon!

The link is:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83666911344?
pwd=9nGIHUILb240rlu8Q2wHTxmIb1yLjm.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83666911344?pwd=9nGIHUILb240rlu8Q2wHTxmIb1yLjm.1)

Zoom Meeting ID: 836 6691 1344

Passcode: 796312



Final Thoughts: I pray that the holiday seasons bring cheer to your home, and that the upcoming year treats you well! Below, you will find a poem for the finishing seasons.

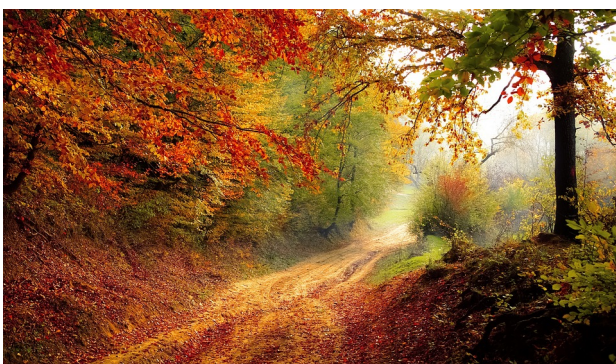
Fall, Leaves, Fall

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.
— Emily Brontë

Peace Be with You All,

Rev. Jo

P.S. I hope your fall-winter season provides you with color and wonder-filled opportunities!





Zachary Wheat VP Northwest

northwestvp@FCMmail.org



A Season of Changes

We are once again heading into that season of damp air, early sunsets, and crisp mornings. With that we do have a couple of updates from up here in the Northwest. Firstly, we are looking forward to welcoming two newly commissioned members both of whom are in the Portland area. And just as it is with the coming and going of the leaves and seasons, we are also saying goodbye to one of our members who is headed off to new adventures in the mid-Atlantic. We will miss Majia deeply and her work at Doernbecher will be difficult to replicate.

In addition to these comings and goings we are in the midst of the renewal season so if you have any trouble feel free to reach out to me directly over email or phone. We look forward to this one opportunity to check in and see what all of you have been up to.

I know that it has been a bit since our last regional gathering but with the help of another member plans for some gatherings are coming up. Please be on the lookout for more information and if you have any thoughts on gathering, please feel free to connect with me also.

FCM Newsletter

Email: newsletter@FCMmail.org

The FCM Newsletter is published bi-monthly by the Federation of Christian Ministries, a non-profit religious body. As the informational publication of FCM, its mission is to keep members current with the organization and its activities, to provide ideas to further ministry and to promote community building among local FCM groups and the national organization. All current members receive a copy. Articles and feedback are welcomed and can be sent to: newsletter@FCMmail.org by the 4th of each month (February, April, June, August, October and December). FCM member-submitted articles should aim for 500 words and 2-3 selected photos in MS Word and JPG formats.

FCM Central Office Coordinator Carolyn Horvath

Email: centraloffice@FCMmail.org Phone: 216.571.7698

1709 W. 69th. St., #1 Cleveland, Ohio 44102-2957

FCM Website:

www.federationofchristianministries.org FCM Blog:
fcmblog.org

FCM Certificates

These lovely certificates are available from the FCM Central Office. Please specify your choice: Baptism, Marriage, Holy Union, and the number of certificates you need. Certificates are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. Each certificate is printed on certificate weight paper in blue ink; they carry the FCM logo and seal.

Realm & Membership Administrator

Emails: connect@FCMmail.org -
membership@FCMmail.org

FCM Baptism and Wedding Registries

are now on www.onrealm.org Sacramental Registry - Click EVENTS and follow directions for additional help

Email: registry@fcmmail.org or connect@fcmmail.org

Endorsement for Specialized Ministries

Qualified FCM members may apply for "Religious Body Endorsement" for the specialized ministries of Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Pastoral Education. Such endorsement is required by professional certifying organizations and many institutional employers. The FCM Circle of Directors acts on endorsement applications three times yearly. Endorsement application materials are available for downloading on the FCM website at: www.federationofchristianministries.org Inquiries may be made by email at: specmin@FCMmail.org

Global Ministries University

GMU offers degree completion programs, certificates, a Celebrant Training Program, and individual courses online. FCM members are eligible for a 5% discount on degree programs. For more information, visit the web site:
www.globalministriesuniversity.org Email:
info@globalministriesuniversity.org Phone: 866 419 8020 toll-free

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Email: prayersupport@FCMmail.org

Return to TOC