



Federation of Christian Ministries

VOL. 50 NO. 5



Newsletter...November/December 2016

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



As we approach the national election, FCM's Executive Committee urges you each to vote. This is the privilege and responsibility for which so many have given everything. In lands where voting has never occurred before, people with tears in their eyes surmounted obstacles and dangers in order to cast their vote. As Christian leaders our civil responsibility leads us to the ballot box.

The negative nature of some campaigns in this election will require leadership after the election to bring people together and to heal divisions. Please lead reconciliation and healing after the election.

Please vote your conscience. Pray for the United States of America, and pray for the Federation of Christian Ministries.

The FCM Executive Committee

Tom Stricker, Chairperson
Tom Cusack, President
Bill Appleton, Secretary
Sue Ross, Treasurer

In This Issue

Looking For A Few Good People Tom Stricker, FCM Chairperson.....	Page 2
The Faith Community in FCM Tom Cusack, FCM President.....	Page 3
Regional News	
Northeast . . . A Significant Relationship Dan Pellegrin, Northeast V.P.....	Page 4
Southern . . . Growing Faith Communities Diane Dougherty, Southern V.P.....	Pages 5-6
Great Lakes . . . Area, Regional Gatherings Celebrate FCM Amy Simpson Bennethum & Ron Davis, Great Lakes V.P.s.....	Page 7
Mountains & Plains . . . Ministry Reflection on Pain & Healing Let's Skip the Pain, Please by Kristen "Katelyn" Elizabeth Melcher Richard James Mountains & Plains V.P.....	Pages 8-9
Pacific . . . With A Humble And Grateful Heart Donnieau Snyder Pacific V.P.....	Page 10
An Offer of Thanks and an Invitation Sue Ross, FCM Treasurer.....	Page 11
Are you registered on the Members Only area of the FCM Website? FCM Communicating Antoinette Marold, FCM Communication.....	Pages 12-13
Sharing the Sacred Journey Judy McBride, FCM Specialized Ministries.....	Page 14
To Nicaragua With Love Anthony S. Ercolano, FCM Commissioning Chair.....	Page 15
New Thoughts on Giving Tom Cusack, FCM President.....	Page 16
Group Member Exemplifies Collegiality, Inclusivity Patrick E. Truillo, FCM Group Member.....	Page 17
My Pilgrimage with FCM William C. McDonough, FCM Member.....	Page 18
Just Another Small Congregation John Polanski, FCM Newsletter Editor.....	Page 19
Reflections on the Jesus Traditions: Invitation to Unitive Consciousness (continued from Sept/Oct.) Tom Leonardt, FCM Membership/Central Office.....	Page 20-22
FCM Directory.....	Page 23



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



CHAIRPERSON.....TOM STRICKER

Looking For A Few Good People

The Federation of Christian Ministries is an amazing organization. It is especially amazing when you consider we are a non-profit operated by a Circle of Directors all of whom are volunteers. Words cannot express the gratitude I have for the many people both past and present who have served on the Circle and contributed to our success. When positions on the Circle have opened we have always had individuals step up to the challenge. Once again I wish to offer the membership an opportunity to serve.

In July of 2017, **Tom Cusack** will be completing his first three-year term as President. Prior to his tenure in that office, Tom served on the Circle for two three-year terms as Treasurer and then one year as the Chair of Denominational Concerns. I am most grateful for the service he has given FCM over the years. Given that his term is concluding, this December we will be seeking nominations for that post. The President of FCM is an elected position voted on by the individual members and group members of FCM. Any individual or group member can nominate any other member, or themselves to run for the office. The term will begin after the Circle meeting in July of 2017 and end in July of 2020. Tom is eligible for a second term. If you know someone who has the gifts and interest to run for the position of President, please contact me.

When I became FCM Chair, **Ron Davis** was appointed to complete my term as co-VP of the Great Lakes Region. In 2014 he was elected to his first three-year term which will conclude in July of 2017. Ron is eligible for a second term. Also in July **Amy Simpson** will be completing her second three-year term as Great Lakes co-VP and is not eligible for a second term. I am grateful for the service they have both offered that has graced the region and the organization. A committee will be formed in late November to begin the process of nominating individuals for this office. It is worth noting that since the development of Area Representatives we will no longer be electing Co-Vice Presidents. This is an elected position which is voted on by the individual members and group members of the Great Lakes Region. I ask my fellow Great Lakes members to be thinking of whom you might want to nominate to represent you on the Circle as Vice President.

Next July (2017) **Sue Ross** is completing her term as Treasurer, an office to which she was appointed to fill out the term of **Ken Knapp**. Sue will not be seeking a second appointed term as Treasurer. If you or someone you know has the skills and talent to serve FCM in this volunteer position, please contact me as soon as possible. We would like to appoint a new Treasurer to work with Sue for the last six months of her term to help provide a smooth transition.

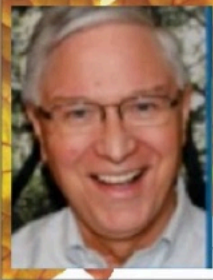
Finally, I want to mention the need in all the regions have for members to volunteer as Regional Area Representatives. This position has proven to be most helpful in those regions where people have stepped forward, convening members in local areas, helping to make connections and building community. If you are interested in serving the FCM members of your area and would like to see a job description of this position, please contact me for more information.



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6

PRESIDENT.....TOM CUSACK



The Faith Community in FCM

Our FCM group members are foundational to the definition of FCM as a "Convention of Churches." I had some happy experiences earlier in October which have caused me to consider again our makeup as a convention of churches. Here are a few thoughts.

On October 8 and 9 I had the pleasure of visiting two of our FCM group member communities. My wife, **Ginny**, and I were babysitting our grandkids in Alameda, California. Alameda is a short drive from San Jose, the location of two FCM group communities. That made it convenient for me to visit *Magdala Catholic Community*, led by **Juanita Cordero**, RCWP, on Saturday late afternoon. The next morning I was able to drive again to San Jose to the home of **Phil and Peggy Ripp**. They were hosting a gathering of *La Comunidad Ministerios Cristianos*. Both of these communities have been FCM group members since FCM began to add faith communities as members in 2011 – 2012. Each community has its own characteristics, and getting to know each community better was very meaningful.

Juanita Cordero described the makeup of her community to me. About 60 people form a pool of interested participants. They all come off-and-on to gather in smaller (12 to 15) or larger numbers (a house full) as schedules and festive occasions draw people. Juanita led a participative mass with about a dozen in attendance. We reflected on the experience of the 10 lepers who were healed, from the point of view of the nine who did not return to say thank you to Jesus for their healing. Eye opening insights followed.

After the mass we had a potluck at a lengthy table around which all could gather. There was a good deal of curiosity about FCM. I was happy to provide FCM background, and at the table I chatted with **Dave Van Etten**, the group's liaison to FCM. It was the first time I have met him. We had good conversation and good food. The folks in attendance had a strong bond with one another.

The next morning I arrived **Phil and Peggy Ripp's** home. Phil and Peggy were FCM Pacific Region Vice Presidents when I joined the Circle of Directors in 2007. It was good to see them. About 10 people gathered together in the living room. We had a discussion that was both far ranging and personal. The members were quite interested in the directions FCM was taking. Several members there are FCM's old guard. **Gerry and Marita Grudzen** were co-presidents in the past and had taken decisive action to invigorate FCM when an early decline in membership was occurring. Gerry is a leader of the *La Comunidad* group and liaison to FCM. He is also president of Global Ministries University.

With these two visits I can easily see the tremendous value offered to faith community members by the bonds and mutual support members discover within each community and service organization which is part of FCM. I suggest to you that it is in small faith communities that our own spirituality can be best nourished and developed. Our faith communities are where we can come together to support one another.

The view of the Circle is that FCM can become the broader connection between faith communities that can inspire them to deepen and strengthen their faith bonds and connections with one another. The process of gathering faith communities is part of our current strategic plan. I request you who are members of a faith community *consider having it join FCM as a group member*.

Although some of these communities are joined to larger groupings, many are not. Please consider motivating your own faith community to join FCM as a group member. By attaining larger numbers, more interaction and support will become possible throughout FCM. Inspirational members from one community could visit another to present a new idea or modality of faith that would boost the faith journey of members of the other faith community. This kind of synergy is what we can look for and build toward in an FCM which is a convention of churches. Please give serious consideration and prayer (2x2 4 FCM) to the possibility of your helping grow FCM as a convention of churches.

FCM Group Member



3

FCM Group Members

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



Northeast Regional News

VICE PRESIDENT.....DAN PELLEGRIN

A Significant Relationship

May Event Brings Region Together... I start out with another reminder of our regional gathering, Friday, May 19 to Sunday, May 21, 2017 at the Eddy Farm on the bank of the Delaware River. 1½ hours northwest from midtown Manhattan it will be a weekend to savor, spiritual, serene, a place to relax and become centered in peaceful prayer, benefiting from some uplifting conferences. Most importantly it provides an opportunity to relate to fellow FCM members on our journey.

I am becoming more and more convinced that this "relating" is what is most important. A Northeast member, **Mary Ann Cejka** has brought this home forcefully to me. She has cogently said we all engage in exchanges which are either transactional or relational. Transactional: you have a pair of socks, I have \$2.00; I give you the \$2 and you give me the socks. A transaction, nothing more, and we're done with each other. A relational interaction is much different. It has the flavor of "We're in this together." And to me, this is what FCM is all about. We are in this together: this ministry, this journey, this discernment, this work, this growth. This is what brings me to urge you to join this regional conference: it helps us to make FCM a relational organization.

(By the way, this also has to do with renewing our memberships. When my wife **Donna** and I pay our dues, it is part of our decision to remain in relationship with you, our FCM sisters and brothers, not simply to engage in a cold transaction and be done with it.)

So let's plan to be together and inspire each other at the Eddy Farm May 19-21. And as grateful Northeast members we want to invite our FCM sisters and brothers everywhere to this intimate gathering!

RCWP Ordination... Congratulations to **Marilyn Rondeau**, ordained a deacon on October 14, 2016. FCM is grateful to have an ongoing relationship with ARCWP and RCWP. In recognition of this grace-filled event, we have gifted **Marilyn** with membership in FCM. **Welcome Deacon Rondeau** – we look forward to a long relationship with you.

More Ties That Bind... On a personal note, although it remains my goal to participate whenever possible at gatherings within the region, my presence and energy is temporarily limited by the impending marriage of our only daughter Kaitlin on November 19. Our entire family is overjoyed with the spirit and grace our Albany FCM member **Mary Theresa Streck** is bringing to this event. By agreeing to officiate she has relieved me as I would sob uncontrollably through it!

Finally, as members of this region it is our special task to assist at the 50th Anniversary National Assembly to be held in 2018 in Philadelphia. I was surprised (but not really) to learn **Michelita Quinn** was already at work on it! God bless and thank you so much, **Michaelita!** Please email me at northeastvp@fcmmail.org with any suggestions, requests, complaints, or thoughts for me or FCM you may have. God bless us everyone!

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



Southern Regional News

VICE PRESIDENT.....DIANE DOUGHERTY

Growing Faith Communities

Reading the history of the Federation of Christian Ministries is an exercise in growing in awareness of how a creative God partners with us to bring hope and light to people. It is a pleasure to read about our first president, **Eugene Bianchi** from Athens, GA and how the Federation began, as well as our tenth president, and one of the first women priests on American soil, Bishop **Bridget Mary Meehan** of Sarasota, FL.

I will be focusing on the people in our region that are finding in FCM a means of connection, enlightenment and direction. This particular issue will feature commissioned ministers who are the developing small faith communities and FCM's support of the work of **Eileen DiFranco**, Director of Denominational Concerns.



With many churches waning and people seeking and finding a place they can call home, a small faith community is developing in Palm Coast under the leadership of two great women, **Miriam Picconi** and **Wanda Russell**. Their journey is an amazing narrative that led them to each other, to Palm Coast, to the priesthood, to FCM and now finds them ministering to small faith communities in Palm Coast and Flagler County.

They have begun "Inclusive Catholic Ministries," presiding at liturgies where all are welcome and where inclusive liturgical language marks the change they are trying to live and promote in the Catholic tradition. They believe "faith has been spread and preserved by women" and are doing just that in the newness of every unfolding day.

In addition to sacramental ministries, they enjoy an Inter-faith Theology Club called Living with the Questions that includes a non-judgmental sharing after viewing a theologian's or spiritual leader's presentation, helping collaborate on interfaith programs when special events arise and offering sacramental services as requested.

One amazing development in their ministry was an invitation to celebrate mass once per month at Ottis Castle in St. Augustine, FL.

In light of the FCM commitment to assist and support its commissioned members, we celebrate **Wanda** and **Miriam** for their efforts to reach out, to serve and be a faith home many wish to find. I believe this is a need that will mushroom in the next few years and we only need to step up to the altar as we feel called.

In a conversation with a friend from Pittsburgh, I discovered the Catholic bishop is in the process of downsizing parishes from hundreds to 50 due to the priest shortage. A friend in the Protestant tradition has said the same is happening in many cities. Parishes and churches are closing and people are not finding the faith home they seek. We come to FCM to be a support as well as seek wisdom from the spiritual life of those who have gone before us, learning as we go along how to create a sacred space in which our creative partnership with God will open up new channels for communities that will be the support and sustenance people will need today and in the future.





We applaud **Eileen DiFranco** who is about to publish a book on Developing Small Faith Communities which I am sure is another timely movement of the Spirit. God wants God's people fed, and if you look at the energies surrounding FCM and its members who are ministering to the communal needs of God's faithful, we can see this time as another small beginning of making all things new. In a true sense we can say: "Eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard what God has in store for those who love God."

For additional information about Inclusive Catholic Ministries you can contact:

Wanda Russell, wandarussell@aol.com, 502-320-6814

Miriam Picconi, miriampicconi@gmail.com, 502-320-6817

2 Westmill Ln., Palm Coast, FL 32164

If you would like to visit the castle: <http://www.castleottis.com> 103 3rd St, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

Informal gatherings planned... **Peter Kim** and friends are targeting December 3 for a day of gathering and reflection in northern Maryland – please check with me for details. Next year some members would like to gather in central FL (Ocala area). Watch the newsletter for more information.

We have 67 members in our Southern Region. I am hoping to feature people and ministries in each issue with hopes we can get to know each other and what we are about.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your vice-president. I look forward to meeting with each of you, talking over the phone or connecting at gatherings. If you come to Atlanta, please stop by and/or give me a ring: 54 Chelsea Ct., Avondale Estates, GA 30002, phone 678-918-1945.



HAVE YOU GIVEN THOUGHT TO THIS?

Include FCM in bereavement donations and bequests
Remember FCM in obituary notices - Remember FCM in your Will.

It is a simple process that will have a far reaching impact.

- ❖ Revise your Will to include a donation to FCM
- ❖ Remember friends and loved ones with a tax deductible donation to the Federation of Christian Ministries.
- ❖ Mention that a loved one was an FCM member in obituary notices: "Name was a member of the Federation of Christian Ministries."

Add this to an obituary notice of an FCM member:

- ❖ In lieu of flowers, a tax deductible donation can be made to the Federation of Christian Ministries, Central Office 1709 West 69th. Street, #3, Cleveland, Ohio 44102-2957

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6

Great Lakes Regional News

CO-VICE PRESIDENTS.....AMY SIMPSON BENNETHUM & RON DAVIS

Area, Regional Gatherings Celebrate FCM



Greetings FCM family! Our fall has been filled with local gatherings of FCM members. This report includes highlights from recent events and information about upcoming meetings. Be sure to mark your calendar for the **2017 regional gathering at Maria Stein, Ohio, September 29-October 1**. More information on this event will be forthcoming.

Our Louisville group gathered on the morning of October 8th at **Mary Jo Krueer's** home. The group shared a delicious brunch and lively discussion mostly around end-of-life issues. The group heard updates from **Tony Heitzman** and **Raphael Macaranas** about the FCM national assembly in August. If you live in the Louisville area, please mark your calendars for the following dates in 2017:

- ✦ **January 28 at 9:30 a.m. hosted by Shannon Queenan**
- ✦ **May 20 at 9:30 a.m. hosted by Peggy Holthaus**
- ✦ **November 4 at 9:30 a.m. hosted by Mary Jo Krueer**



Antoinette Marold hosted the Cleveland area members on Sunday, October 16. The gathering was a time of connection, sharing ministries with each other and the highlight was a Commissioning Ceremony for **Pam Meyers**. (pictured at left are: **Carolyn Horvath, Tom Leonhardt, Sandi Schmidt, Charlotte Nichols, Elise Leitzel, Pam Meyers, Amy Simpson and Antoinette Marold**.)

The group set the dates for their 2017 gatherings. If you live in northeast Ohio, please mark your calendars for the following dates:

- ✦ **March 19 at 2:00 p.m. hosted by Elise Leitzel**
- ✦ **June 25 at 2:00 p.m. hosted by Antoinette Marold**

The Cincinnati/Dayton/Indianapolis/Columbus areas have an upcoming gathering scheduled for November 5 at 10:00 at the home of **Tom and Patty Stricker**. For more information, please contact **Bea Broder-Oldach**.

Please continue to be mindful that this is the time of the year for membership renewals for 2017. Information has been sent out several times. If you haven't received information about your membership renewal, please make contact with one of us soon so that you can have a smooth transition into your next year of ministry with FCM.

Finally, we are including a psalm written by **Shannon Queenan** that she offered as the spiritual reflection during the October 8 meeting in Louisville. All the best to you!

Psalm 2.0

Fearfully and wonderfully made!

Oh God help me to move from one perspective to the other, or better stand in the gap of paradox AND know that both are true.

Fearfully and wonderfully made!

Oh God aid me in that long journey from head to heart--that I may live more fully within the compassion that is You.

Fearfully and wonderfully made!

Oh God reveal to me an ever deepening sense of your presence within me, that I might receive and reflect Your mercy upon mercy.

Fearfully and wonderfully made!

Oh God take up residence within me so that Your way and my way are one. Make me unselfconscious and free to love myself and all creation.

Fearfully and wonderfully made!

Oh God breathe in me so that Your breath--the one universal gift of life IS the cosmic dance ALIVE and recreating and connecting all to all.

Fearfully and wonderfully made!

Oh God---May it be so!



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



Mts. & Plains Regional News

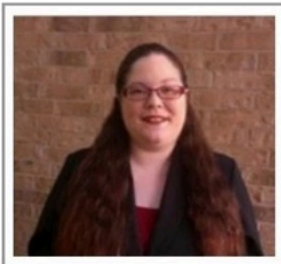
VICE PRESIDENT.....RICHARD JAMES

Ministry Reflection on Pain & Healing

Ministry is a privilege, sustaining life for the caregiver as well as the recipient. It is often wise and fruitful to pause in the midst of our servanthood journey and reflect on the meaning of our ministry. Moreover, it is important to share how FCM ministers manifest their sense of call and mission. In recognition of that, from time to time we will offer a reflection on ministry submitted by members of the Mountains and Plains region.

The following reflection is by **Katelyn Melcher**, a commissioned FCM member currently seeking endorsement. She received Master of Divinity degree with honors in May 2013, from Southern Methodist University. Katelyn has also received a Certificate in Pastoral Care from SMU, and completed three years of Clinical Pastoral Education as a Chaplain Resident/Fellow at the Veteran's Affairs Hospital. She completed CPE training with two certificates: a Specialty in Mental Health and a Specialty in Substance Abuse Addiction Rehabilitation and Recovery.

May the blessings of health, faith, hope, and love be yours.



Let's Skip the Pain, Please

BY KRISTEN "KATELYN" ELIZABETH MELCHER

He attempted suicide at the hospital! He was an in-patient for alcohol and drug rehabilitation. Nobody knew why. I was assigned to the lockdown inpatient Mental Health Unit for my Clinical Pastoral Education Specialty in Mental Health. I came in the morning to find a mid-20's Caucasian male military veteran in the lockdown unit with whom I had previous pastoral care visits. It wasn't his first time on the in-patient mental health unit. It was, however, his first suicide attempt. The staff informed me that he hadn't told anybody what happened.

He saw me in the hallway and smiled. I smiled back and asked if he would like a chaplain visit today. He said, "Yes," with what appeared to be a sigh of relief. The veteran began to talk to me openly. It seemed he felt safe. Throughout the visit, I provided quick "check-ins" to help the veteran acknowledge if he's feeling too overwhelmed. He told me his story as a living, breathing human document. When he was finished, it was monumentally clear how vulnerable, courageous, and brave this veteran was to share his story.

He told me he was sexually abused by his father as a child. He acknowledged there were a few times when his father would stop sexually abusing him. He said, "When he started taking us [him and his family] to the church he would quit sexually abusing me." I can only imagine the pain of associating sexual abuse with the church. He openly struggled with his father's attempt to stop the abusive behavior while acknowledging there was no justification for the abuse.

Then he turned the conversation to present day. He said, "There was an employee for the rehab unit who died. Everyone was going to the memorial in the chapel. I didn't want to go. I haven't gone to church since my father sexually abused me." There was a vital piece of information the veteran was missing, a piece of information that could have cost him his life. At the Veteran's Affairs hospital, no veteran would be required to attend any openly spiritual or religious service. This veteran assumed since the memorial service was scheduled during his mandatory rehab classes (which were canceled) that he was required to attend the service. I made sure the veteran understood the VA policy for future reference. The chaplain staff and rehabilitation unit also became involved to help prevent any future grievances.

He continued to openly share with me: "Being in the chapel at a service reminded me of all the times my father sexually abused me. When the service was over, I decided to kill myself." The veteran had overdosed on pills and ended up in the ICU to ensure stabilization before being transferred to the inpatient mental health unit. Interestingly, the veteran appeared to be dealing with so much already; I didn't expect more. There was more.

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6

He had been visiting with his brother, and they had religious discussions about turning his life over to Christ. The veteran seemed overwhelmed as he talked about baptism, attending church, and forgiving his father. I reflected as I listened to him. It seemed all of his spiritual struggles were too much for him to deal with right now. He had just attempted to take his life! It seemed realistic for him to begin working through the pain of sexual abuse or possibly start talking to God in prayer. The veteran seemed to be trying to **skip through the pain and radically push** himself to God and forgiveness. Intuitively, I would be terrified that this veteran would attempt to kill himself again if he felt pressured to "come to Jesus" or to forgive too soon. Nobody wants to sit with unbearable emotional pain. How often do we all want to "skip" the pain and go straight to Jesus for the cure?

I reflected back to the veteran the overwhelming thoughts about faith racing through his mind. When I repeated his words, he acknowledged the momentous pressure he was putting on himself. His only concern was wondering what would happen to his soul if he didn't get baptized, attend church, and start following Jesus **now**. Once again this veteran seemed to be feeling some internal pressure.

I asked how he viewed God. He spoke about a loving God, the presence of God everywhere, and how God knew things before they happened. I then asked him, "Do you feel God understands your pain?" He said, "Yes." I inquired further, "Since God understands your pain, do you feel God could understand if you come to Christ in small steps?" The veteran nodded his head and said, "Yes." I continued a little further, "You believe God knows what you are going to do before you do it. Do you think God knows that you want to be baptized and attend church one day?" The veteran kept nodding in agreement and said, "Yes."

I said, "Tell me how you are feeling about your faith right now?" He said, "God knows my heart and understands how I feel. God knows I want to go to church one day and be baptized. It's okay for me to do this in small steps." We conversed about what "small steps" could mean. He was good with "just prayer" for now. Given he attempted suicide when attending a chapel service, we conversed about keeping his therapist in the loop to help him take the small steps toward the possibility of going to church one day. After the visit, he acknowledged feeling relieved.

There were so many "take aways" from this. The one I want to highlight is "**skipping the pain.**" Life would be so easy if we could skip the pain and readily forgive in the moment. Forgiving readily in a situation which caused very little pain could be appropriate. **A soul-trapping life situation** that causes unrelenting pain is another story. Can you imagine if this veteran decided to go to church the day after attempting suicide because he attended a chapel service? Seems unreasonable, right?

Interestingly, it seems we can look at ourselves or the people around us and see that as a society we try to skip the pain every day. It only takes a few seconds to review posts on Facebook before I see a meme pushing for forgiveness to relieve the pain. The message seems to be "forgive now and you can skip the pain." In reality, true forgiveness requires taking the time to work through the pain.

I have to admit there are times when I wish I could skip the pain. For me, politics this year have been excruciatingly painful. Could I skip the pain and go straight to Jesus, to forgive persons spewing hate? Of course. If I did, what would I be missing? I would be missing the emotional pain of sadness and anger which is a helpful and motivating force for me to continue my pastoral work for justice and equality. When you choose to skip the pain, what are you missing?

Thank You
to the FCM
members who have
paid their 2017
dues and sent in
their reports by the
Due Date
October 31, 2016



2017 Membership Dues Rates after 10/31/16

Member.....	\$60.00
Commissioned.	
Member.....	\$160.00
Endorsed	
Member.....	\$270.00
Group Members	
50 or less.....	\$60.00
51 to 100.....	\$110.00
100 or more...	\$150.00

FCM 2016 Membership Dues expire December 31, 2016

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



Pacific Regional News

VICE PRESIDENT.....DONNIEAU SNYDER

With A Humble And Grateful Heart

Fall is such an amazing time of year! There are so many incredible changes that come with the changing of the seasons. The fall certainly provides its share of breathtaking reminders that change is inevitable. I realize this will be the last newsletter for 2016 so it is with hope-filled prayer that the remainder of this year greets you with peace and brings forth great joy.

As we continue the journey together, I am humbled and grateful to all who have reached out in hopes of creating supportive connections with each another. I am deeply grateful and excited to announce local representatives within the Pacific region have begun developing retreats and small gatherings in various locations across our vast and beautiful region. It is a sincere hope that there will be a retreat or small gathering offered in each state in lieu of one large retreat offered in one location. I look forward to announcing upcoming events in each newsletter so you can mark your calendars.

Here are the first two gatherings scheduled for January 2017:



JANUARY 21, 2017 - CASA GRANDE, ARIZONA..CONTACT SCHREIBER.DONNA@GMAIL.COM



JANUARY 22, 2017 - SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA..CONTACT DONNIEAU SNYDER AT PACIFICVP@FCMMAIL.ORG

Stay tuned for more details about these and future events!

Truthfully, these retreats and future retreats are not possible without the loving volunteer services of our Pacific region area representatives offering these amazing opportunities to gather at a local level. If you'd like to become a local representative for your area, I'd love to connect and work alongside you to offer a retreat/gathering in your beautiful state. I was always taught that many hands make light work and becoming a local representative is another great way to become a voice amplifying the many voices from your "neck of the woods." I look forward to participating in as many gatherings as I can attend, sharing the latest news and forecasts for FCM and our region. Wherever my feet will take me I'll be there. Until next time, I will pray you all the way into 2017 – let's continue the journey together!



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



TREASURER.....SUE ROSS

An Offer of Thanks and an Invitation

Thank you to all that have been renewing your membership! Besides keeping me busy it helps the organization stay healthy and vibrant.

As you may have heard, the Circle have decided to seek out some additional help in managing our finances. One step calls for bringing on a professional bookkeeper, which involves determining a process to transfer information accurately and securely. Secondly, we are looking to add a co-treasurer so the many tasks of the office are accomplished in a timely manner. If you have any interest in helping in this way or would like more information about what is involved, please let me know. Feel free to send me an email at treasurer@fcmmail.org or call me at 260-466-7414.

A very important part of the funding to manage our organization comes from donations. Whether through PayPal, automatic checks written from your bank account or personal checks, giving is easy to do and much appreciated. Several members have added on a donation to their renewal fees. We are so grateful to your dedication to FCM!

The names listed below include those who have given over the past twelve months, during which we have received \$6206.65 that has gone into our operating account. In addition, we have accumulated \$3954.35 in donations that were directed to the Assembly in August.

Anonymous	Kathleen Bean	Karen Beck
Lance Beizer	Patricia Cane	Rebecca Cartus
Dagmar Celeste	Roddy Cleary	Mary Ann Crilly
Mary Crowley-Koch	Tom Cusack	Edward Dobransky
Anthony Ercolano	Nicodemus Gianneli	Virginia Graf
James Hayes	Benjamin Hernandez	Hope House of Prayer
Carolyn Horvath	Carol Hushek	M Anita Jones
Michael Keefe	Carl Krex	Tom Leonhardt
Charles Lavenia	Antoinette Marold	William Mconough
Joseph Mitcho	David Morrison	Bea Broder-Oldach
Dennis O'Keefe	Meg Paige	Dan Pelligrin
William Podobinski	Bertha Popeney	Kathy Redig
Joseph Ruane	Stephen Sabanos	Paul Schleitwiler
Amy Simpson	Donnieau Snyder	Tom Stricker
Yvonne Valeris	David Voellinger	Marylou Von Euw
Mary Alice Warner	William Wisniewski	

Thank you again for your generosity. All the best for the remainder of 2016 and the new year ahead.



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



FCM COMMUNICATIONS...ANTOINETTE MAROLD

Are you registered on the Members Only area of the FCM website?

The FCM website has a login area for FCM members only. You are not automatically enrolled in the **Members Only** area of the FCM website when you join FCM or renew your membership. You must register and complete your profile to be included in the area. If you have not registered and cannot access the Members Only area, please contact me at communication@FCMmail.org. I will send you instructions for you to register.

Following are the items that you will find in the **Members Only Login** section of the FCM website.

When you LOGIN you will see a **Members Only** tab on the top right of the screen.

1. First on the list is a Ministry Listing Form. If you would like your ministry listed on the FCM website, complete the form. This is a benefit of membership. You can select 3 ministries to be listed under at no cost to you. You will be expected to update this request in February of each calendar year. You can complete the form online or download the pdf and send it in to the FCM Central Office.
2. Second on the list is the Baptism Registry Form. If you preside at a baptism you **MUST** register the baptism with FCM. Complete and submit the form.
3. Third on the list is the Marriage Registry Form. This is not mandatory but suggested.
4. Fourth on the list is the Holy Union Registry Form. This is not mandatory but suggested.
5. FCM Newsletters - The most recent newsletter along with an archive of several years of newsletters are available. If you are a new member it is helpful to read some of the past newsletters to get to know us.
6. An online membership list. This is not a complete list of members and their ministries, only those who have registered in the FCM Member login area.
7. FCM membership list. This is a listing of the members. It is updated every 3 months and can be downloaded by members. Please do not share this list.



ATTENTION

All FCM members who preside at BAPTISMS
You are required to register the Baptism with the FCM Registry Office.
The registry form is available on the FCM website.

- ▶ Go to www.federationofchristianministries.org
- ▶ Login to the Members Only area of the site.
- ▶ Click on the Members Only link on the top right of the page.
- ▶ Click on the Baptism Registry Form
- ▶ You can complete the registry ONLINE or download a PDF form and mail it to the registry office
The address is on the form.

Recording the Baptism assures that a record will always be available.

Questions? Please email registry@FCMmail.org. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

FCM COMMUNICATING



THE FCM FACEBOOK PAGE IS THE WORLD LOOKING AT US. OUR COMMENTS ARE PRAYERFUL AND WE ARE CONNECTING WITH ANYONE WHO IS ON THE INTERNET WHO IS INTERESTED IN READING OUR PAGE. TO HELP FCM GET NOTICED PLEASE GO TO THE FCM WEBSITE AND CLICK THE **FACEBOOK** BUTTON AND THEN THE **LIKE** BUTTON WHEN YOU ARE ON THE FCM FACEBOOK PAGE.



THE FCM BLOG! FIND IT ON THE FCM WEBSITE OR FCMBLOG.ORG. THE BLOG IS AVAILABLE FOR ANYONE ON THE INTERNET TO READ AND MAKE COMMENTS. BLOGS ARE POSTED BY FCM AND WRITTEN BY FCM MEMBERS. THE CONTENTS ARE THE SENTIMENTS OF THE AUTHOR OF THE POST AND NOT NECESSARILY THE FCM COMMUNITY. THE MOST RECENT NEWSLETTER IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON THIS SITE.
CHECK IT OUT!



FCM HAS A GROUP ON LINKEDIN. THE GROUP IS FOR **FCM MEMBERS ONLY**. IT IS A PLACE FOR FCM MEMBERS TO COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER. IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF LINKEDIN GO TO THE GROUP AREA, FIND FCM AND REQUEST MEMBERSHIP TO THE FCM GROUP. IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF LINKEDIN...JOIN MEMBERSHIP IS FREE....



CONSTANT CONTACT IS THE MEDIA THAT FCM USES TO COMMUNICATE WITH FCM MEMBERS. ALL OF THE FCM COMMUNICATION SENT TO THE MEMBERSHIP IS SENT VIA CONSTANT CONTACT. THIS INCLUDES THE FCM NEWSLETTER, ASSEMBLY INFORMATION, GENERAL NEWS OF INTEREST AND ANNOUNCEMENTS. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE CENTRAL OFFICE HAVE YOUR CORRECT EMAIL ADDRESS.
WWW.FEDERATIONOFCHRISTIANMINISTRIES.ORG - THE FCM WEBSITE

FCM WEBSITE

IS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS AND THOSE WHO ARE EXPLORING MEMBERSHIP. IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT FCM IT CAN PROBABLY BE FOUND ON THE WEBSITE. CONSTITUTION, BY-LAWS, MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION, FCM HISTORY, EVENTS AND MANY OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST ARE ON THE WEBSITE.

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



FCM MEMBER.....JUDY MCBRIDE

Sharing the Sacred Journey

Hello FCM Family! My name is **Judy McBride** and I have the privilege of serving on the **Committee on Specialized Ministries** as the Liaison for the Great Lakes Region. When I went through the process of seeking endorsement and would call **Christy Howard-Steele** with a question, she was always kind and helpful. So when she approached me several years ago and asked if I would be willing to serve on the committee, I knew that it would be my opportunity to give back. It is an honor to meet and journey with commissioned members as they explore and pursue endorsement.

Becoming endorsed by FCM isn't just a matter of jumping through hoops. As the "Introduction to the Process" states, "Religious body endorsement is an official declaration by a religious body that a person is in good standing with that religious body, has a relationship of clear accountability with that religious body, and has met certain ethical and competency standards to serve in a specialized ministry – such as chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical pastoral education. Endorsement also means that the endorsed person can represent that religious body in a specialized ministerial setting." It's all about relationship!

When I was in parish ministry as a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) for fourteen years, being in relationship with my parishioners is what I valued most. I loved being able to minister to the different ages and generations of families -- as the saying goes, from "the cradle to the grave." It is this same intimacy of relationship that I experience in my ministry now and for the past fifteen years as a pediatric hospice chaplain for the StarShine Hospice and Palliative Care Program at Children's Hospital, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

I appreciate my colleagues who feel a calling to chaplaincy in an emergency department or trauma setting. But for me, I most value being able to get to know my patients and their families over an extended period of time.

When I first started in hospice I read a devotional book called "**May I Walk You Home?**" (Hutchison & Rupp, 1999). The publisher referenced the old-fashioned custom of walking home from school or church. Walking someone home was a way of offering protection and companionship and an opportunity to reflect on what had just been experienced. I love this analogy in regards to caring for someone who is terminally ill.

When people ask me what kind of work I do and I tell them I work in pediatric hospice they almost always say that it must be incredibly hard, and they don't know how I can do it. My reply is that there are, for sure, very difficult days. But more than anything it is an incredible privilege to be allowed to share in such a sacred journey with these children and their families – to walk them home. It reminds me every single day what really matters in life and certainly puts my problems into perspective.

There is nothing more intimate than the transition between life and death. To be allowed to companion people on that journey, I believe, is the highest honor of all.

As a pediatric hospice chaplain there is nothing I can do to change the outcome of the dying process. What I can do, though, is share the burden of the unfathomable sadness, pain and grief of losing a child.

Again, it's all about relationship! Isn't that perhaps the most important gift that we can give one another—to know that we are not alone in our deepest, darkest moments? I'm grateful to be able to live this out in my ministry. And I'm also grateful to be able to experience this in my FCM faith community.

Endorsement for Specialized Ministries

Applications can be found on the FCM website
www.federationofchristianministries.org

Inquires may be made at specmin@FCMmail.org

Specialized Ministries
Chair: Christy Howard Steele
Vice Chair: Carl Yusavitz

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



COMMISSIONING CHAIR.....ANTHONY S. ERCOLANO

To Nicaragua With Love

Seasoned international travelers know the virtues of packing light. Although this was hardly their first trip, the members of the **St. Kevin Mission Team from Flushing, New York** ignored that advice. This past August, eight brave souls left LaGuardia Airport for a week-long mission to the largely abandoned developmentally disabled children and young adults of the Mustard Seed Communities in Nicaragua. They were loaded down with 11 suitcases, each containing 50 pounds of supplies for the residences in Managua and Diriamba. In addition, under the direction of **Margaret Brower** the team had raised more than \$21,000 to help support the work of the dedicated staff who minister to the children at both sites.

Upon arrival they were welcomed by **Julia Castillo-Bryan**, director of **Hogar Belén in Diriamba**, and their guide **Fernando Bosques-Flores** and were transported to the Mission House, their home for the week. Sunday was spent attending Mass with the children at San José Church and getting to know the children from that campus. For some, it was a pleasant reunion; for most, it was an effort to memorize the names of 42 residents, most of whom were non-verbal.

Monday and Tuesday were work days: digging a ditch for a water pipe and priming steel beams to be used in the new residence under construction to house the overflowing population of children. Tuesday began with Mass for the team, the staff and the children celebrated by the team's spiritual director, **Father Paul Kim from St. Kevin's Parish**.

On Wednesday, the team visited the Sewing Center, an institution sponsored by Mustard Seed that educates former residents of the city dump in the art of sewing and baking, preparing them for productive careers. This was followed by a stop at a chocolate factory and a supermarket to collect essential supplies before arriving at Hogar Belén, **Managua**, the residence for the younger, and far more disabled children under the care of Mustard Seed. The team took the little ones to the park and entertained them by blowing bubbles and doing "wheelies" with their wheelchairs.

On Thursday, **Bosques-Flores** and **Castillo-Bryan** accompanied the team on a tour of the countryside. They introduced them to nacatamales – a popular weekend breakfast treat, the marketplace in Masaya, the scenic overlook and resort on Laguna de Apoyo and the town of Granada. The boat ride on Lake Nicaragua was especially memorable.

On Friday, they were treated to a visit by Mustard Seed founder, **Msgr. Gregory Ramkissoon**, and **Archbishop Donald Reece**, archbishop emeritus of the Archdiocese of Kingston, Jamaica who celebrated an inspiring liturgy and joined them for lunch. The day concluded with a celebration, including a piñata, pizza and fireworks. The week ended all too swiftly with a dash to Managua to attend the pre-dedication festivities for a new chapel. Then it was off to the airport, traveling the return leg of the journey once again loaded down: this time with full hearts.



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6

PRESIDENT.....TOM CUSACK

New Thoughts on Giving

As FCM continues to develop its own self-understanding as a Convention of Churches, several implications begin to clearly develop. For FCM to have a greater capability to accomplish its goals, greater resources must flow to FCM so that new activity can happen. This article is the first of a series providing ideas by which members can have a significant financial impact on FCM.

FCM is largely funded by the dues that members pay into FCM. Only about 10% of our income comes from donations. This article will provide one route by which that donation flow could significantly increase over time. With a reversal of those percentages (90% of income from donations versus 10% of income from dues and fees) many doors could open through which material support can flow to faith groups, individuals and ministries.

Many people have life insurance policies providing coverage at the time of their death. In some cases the amount and form of these existing policies no longer fit the needs for which they were purchased. The passage of time and the evolution of the life of the person insured has changed how the policies apply to the owner's current situation. When this is the case, there are several creative approaches by which an existing life insurance policy could provide benefits to FCM.

The simplest modification to a life insurance policy is through its beneficiary clause. The beneficiary on a life insurance policy is the person or organization to whom the life insurance company would pay benefits in the event of the death of the person who was insured. *In almost all cases the modification of an existing beneficiary arrangement is very simple. It involves obtaining a beneficiary change form from the life insurance company's policy service phone number. With this form in hand the owner of the policy can change the beneficiary clause to one that carries some benefit for FCM.*

For example, a primary beneficiary of a widowed man might become his adult children in the amount of 90% of the death benefit. The other 10% could be designated for FCM. In this way a member's long involvement with FCM could be memorialized at the time of death.

In other situations as much as the entire death benefit would be designated for FCM as "Federation of Christian Ministries." When this death benefit was payable to FCM, FCM could follow additional instructions given to it by the person benefiting FCM. Perhaps such a fund would be designated to support attendance at FCM functions, such as the assembly, by members who might not otherwise be able to afford to attend. Another possibility would be to establish a fund from which FCM could support the establishment of small communities of faith. With more significant resources these possibilities become attainable.

Another approach to benefiting FCM is to change ownership of the life insurance policy to FCM. If there are additional premiums to be paid, their payment would become a charitable deduction, a donation to FCM as a religious body. In addition an accountant may verify that such a policy's cash value has then become a charitable donation immediately. The amount of the cash value would be considered a tax-deductible contribution itself. Of course, actions taken in regard to your own life insurance should be carefully considered and the financial implications should be reviewed with your financial professional (accountant, lawyer, etc.) Making contributions through life insurance can have a significant impact on FCM and create a lasting memorial to your memory as a contributing member of FCM.

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



SUBMITTED BY...
FCM GROUP MEMBER
PATRICK E. TRUJILLO
NORTHEAST REGION

In 1998, a small group of individuals began meeting weekly at the suggestion of **Ron Sarno, Esq.**, a married priest and former Jesuit, to draft a Constitution and By-Laws for their organization of married priests, created to fulfill the goals of Vatican II. In April 1999, the **Archdiocese of Our Lady of Guadalupe of New Jersey** became formally incorporated, with a 501 (C)-3 non-profit tax-exempt status and legally recognized by the Internal Revenue Service and by the State of New Jersey.

The founders who drafted the Constitution and By-Laws were **Humberto Prada**, a former Salesian Brother from Colombia; **Sonia Reyes**, a former Cuban nun; married priest **Albert Sosa** whose family is from Puerto Rico; Spanish-American Bishop **Osmel Valera d'Abela**; **Ilija G. Herrera**, a former prisoner of conscience, who served a ten-year sentence in seven maximum security prisons in Cuba; married Ecuadorian Jesuit priest **Francisco Cevallos** who is on loan from the OLG Archdiocese to St. Matthew's Autocephalous Old Catholic Cathedral in Houston, Texas and married priest **Patrick E. Trujillo** who served in Wyoming as associate pastor and pastor for nearly 20 years in Wyoming, in addition to being the Director of Cursillos and of the Spanish-Speaking Apostolate.

On September 24, 2006, **Archbishop Trujillo** was consecrated a Roman Catholic Bishop along with **George Stallings**, **Peter Paul Brennan**, and **Joseph Gouthro** by **Zambian Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo** who was consecrated by Pope Paul VI.

Included in the constitution were the stipulations that no collections would be taken up at mass and no stipends will be accepted with the exception of weddings and quinceñera (15th-16th birthday) celebrations, and those only if the parties could afford to make an offering. In addition, the clergy were not to be paid for "any religious service rendered."

For the first ten years of its existence, mass was offered every Saturday and later twice a month. After the archbishop's wife **Ilija** had a stroke and the archbishop had extensive cardiac surgery as well as treatment for prostate cancer, mass was offered once a month with the able assistance of bi-lingual Lutheran **Pastor Carlos Jarvis** and various Episcopalian priests.



Group Member Exemplifies Collegiality, Inclusivity

The Board of Trustees, like its clergy and lay members, must be guided by the spirit of collegiality which means there must be unanimity in decision making. The bishops and laity can make recommendations to the Board Members who are responsible for any final decision.

If consensus or unanimity cannot be reached on a certain issue, then "time out" for prayer, reflection and meditation must be taken after which those involved resume the process until unanimity is reached. All understand they are temporarily giving up their individual wills (poverty of spirit) for the sake of unity.

Such collegiality "implies accountability, teamwork, community, prayer, the earnest desire to fulfill God's Will, openness, and respect. If any of the seven is missing, collegiality is weakened or destroyed."

Presently, the archdiocese has three auxiliary bishops: **Dominick Riccio**, a North American married deacon with the Newark Archdiocese for 33 years who together with Deacon **Susan Negrotto** builds the Lord's community in South Jersey; **Ronald Gadrinab**, a Philippino-American, a hospice chaplain currently involved in creating a community in the Los Angeles, California; **Octavio E. Beal**, a Mexican-American working as a juvenile probation officer in Colorado where he helps to build community among the Mexican population and also among the personnel with whom he works. The three bishops have recently elected one from among themselves to be the Archbishop-elect until the present Archbishop officially retires.

On December 3, 2016, at 3:00 p.m., Deacon **Susan Negrotto** and Deacon **Jerry Pepin, R.N.**, will be ordained priests for the archdiocese during the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Trinity Reformed Church, 401 60th Street, West New York, New Jersey. All are invited to receive Holy Communion with us.



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



My Pilgrimage with FCM

BY WILLIAM C. MCDONOUGH

Recently, I was led to reflect on my years with FCM. It has been a long journey, going back just shy of 50 years, when the Federation of Christian ministries (FCM) was in its infancy, and was known by its original title "**Society of Priests for a Free Ministry**".

I had been ordained in June, 1955. Like so many other priests of my day, I was inspired by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Further, I was happy to see that the teachings of this Vatican Council rescued us from the doldrums of a church saddled with a dying theology and a legalist moral approach. Documents, like the Declaration on Religious Freedom, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and The Document on the Church and the Modern World, encouraged us to a more energized and effective ministry.

Like so many other priests of that time, my priesthood had gone around an unexpected corner. By the middle years of the 1960s, I had come to realize in my research studies, that celibacy was not an essential element for the Roman Catholic Priesthood. It was just an old tradition that the Vatican was holding onto. Some theologians felt it was time to change it, at least to optional celibacy. I felt the church would not abandon it unless we priests nudged them on, by leaving our celibate positions and pressing for optional celibacy.

My journey led me to take time for additional studies at Temple University, so after 13 wonderful years of parish life, I moved to Philadelphia and took up the graduate studies program in religion.

Here I found many other priests, some still in parishes, but most having taken a similar road as I. Shortly after arriving in Philadelphia, I was introduced to "**Priests for a Free Ministry**". It was a dynamic, but small group at that point, and we met periodically.

This early group provided me and others, important support and encouragement. It not only encouraged socialization, but also and very importantly, employment support and job leads, as well as housing suggestions and very practical counsel on changing from parish house living.

As many will recall, this small group, grew nationally and faithful to its goals, it developed and broadened the idea of ministry to help us see that our work and ideals continued to be very important ministries to building the "City of God".

After several years, this original group grew eventually into the "**Federation of Christian Ministries**" (FCM). Under its wise leadership, FCM became increasingly organized and even governmentally recognized, and in position to supporting interested women and men in ministries, commissioning and/or certifying them.

Over these past 48 years, I found valuable support in the many shared meetings and writings which FCM presented. We realized that our ministries were still vital, though usually in areas and often with people who had found their church/parish unable to meet their needs.

To this day, FCM has broadened the concept of ministry and through its commissioning and endorsement processes, has given many more people a clear path for vitalizing their lives, and the encouragement to respond more effectively to the needs, spiritual and otherwise, of the many women and men seeking their help.

We know not where the Spirit of God will lead us, but I'm very grateful to be part of this inspired organization. I'm grateful for the creative initiatives of its members since 1968. FCM, (this "**Society for a Free Ministry**") has been drawing on the good will, talents and support of the members. We trust the Spirit will continue to take these Federation on a journey both effective and meaningful for us all.

FCM members are invited to submit their Pilgrimage with FCM. Submissions will be printed and available to the public in one of the following ways, the FCM Newsletter, on the FCM Blog, and/or the FCM FACEBOOK or LinkedIn pages. Submit your FCM story to communication@FCMmail.org

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6

NEWSLETTER EDITOR.....JOHN POLANSKI

Just Another Small Congregation



If you were to drive past Woodworth Church of the Brethren in suburban Youngstown, Ohio it's pretty likely you would not give it a second look. One of those small, nondescript houses of worship, there's not much to distinguish it from dozens of others you might pass by on your way to the grocery store or the dentist's office.

A portion of the building is over a century old, with the current sanctuary added in 1960. It sits unassumingly near a busy intersection making it even less likely you would give it a second look. With its bell tower and red brick exterior it couldn't look any more ordinary.

Yet like many such places, its exterior gives little if any indication of the people who make it a living, breathing community of believers. They and their faith are inspiring to all whom they touch, especially me: their new pastor.

In the early '80's my career as a priest took me to Youngstown and a stint on the faculty at Ursuline High School (where my future wife was the guidance counselor - but that's another story). During that time I became involved with the Youngstown Peace Council which also included several members of the Woodworth congregation. I got to know and admire their commitment to social justice based on the gospel and felt so comfortable with them I was not surprised when they invited me to preach on a particular Sunday when the pastor was away.

That small encounter was the beginning of a relationship that has deepened and become a treasure for me, and judging by their warmth over the years for the members of the church as well. Following the conclusion of my tenure with the Roman church in 1988, I served two brief stints as interim pastor at Woodworth as well as providing "pulpit supply" 4-5 times a year. It was always easy to accept these invitations because of the genuine warmth of the congregation, their deep desire to grow in their faith and their commitment to service.

For the last dozen or fifteen years my longing for a sense of community with people of faith has led me to some exploration with several groups, some of whom happily continue to feed my soul. What I felt was lacking was the experience of a regular (read: weekly) opportunity to pray and celebrate with a group. As they say, be careful what you wish for.



Young members of the congregation prepare to participate in the CROP Walk for hunger relief on Oct. 9....

This past May the board approached me with the news that the pastor was leaving for another post and would I be interested. Given the dwindling enrollment and knowing my other commitments they assured me the primary responsibility would be leading the Sunday service along with occasional visits to shut-ins and attendance at whatever meetings and gatherings I chose. My wife and I considered the pros and cons and as it was an open-ended commitment it was very difficult to say no. The next thing I knew my name was on the sign.

Since I have felt at home here for some time, the past six months have not involved much adjustment in any typical manner. I had seen these people in action and in many ways already felt a part of their efforts. In every sense the church is theirs and they take the responsibility of ownership seriously. From raising funds for maintenance of the structure to participating in community efforts, every generation is involved. The support and encouragement they offer each other is consistent and heart-felt and one gets the notion anything they set their minds to will be accomplished.

As in nearly every small faith community, tradition is an important part of their identity. As a new Brethren pastor I am in the process of learning that history and how it colors the spirituality of these wonderful people. And since this is not an organization with which I have been formally associated there is also a process of inclusion in which I will be involved with fellow ministers in the northern Ohio region of the denomination.

All in all it has been and continues to be a deeply rewarding experience. I continue to grow in appreciation of the gift this community is to me and trust they likewise benefit from our relationship. They are a constant reminder there is no such thing as "just another small congregation."

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



BY TOM LEONARDT, FCM

Reflections on the Jesus Traditions: Invitation to Unitive Consciousness

(Editor's note: Members have occasionally requested we include articles on spirituality as well as prayers and reflections. Given the wealth of wisdom and experience that graces our organization, it is appropriate these come from within FCM. This is the second of a two-part article written by Tom Leonhardt, co-director of our office and membership services. He invites you to visit www.hope-space.com for more information on this and other topics.) continued from the September/October 2016 issue...



Literalism, Conscience and Authority... Though Vatican II championed the primacy of individual conscience the expectation remains that conscience will be formed according to the directives and teachings of the central authority. Pope Francis counsels more understanding and compassion on the part of bishops and clergy but without changing long-standing teachings. The collective unconscious of centuries keeps people bound by shame and guilt and the threat of punishment. This is spiritual abuse and not what the Jesus Story suggests.

Indeed, Paul was not much for rules and regulations: in Colossians 2:20-22 he says, "If with Christ you have died to cosmic forces, why should you be bound by rules that say, 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!' as though you were still living a life bounded by this world? Such prescriptions deal with things that perish in their use. They are based on merely human precepts and doctrines. While these make a certain show of wisdom in their affected piety, humility, and bodily austerity, their chief effect is that they indulge men's pride [ego]." (see also Romans 14:1-5; Philippians 3:3)

A great problem with literalism is the implication that the external story is enough. Of course there have been and are mystics who have gone beyond the outer story, the outer meaning of the Jesus Story, but often the mystics have been suspected of walking outside "safe" boundaries set by the authorities. Mystics like John of the Cross wrote poetry which was suspect and so he needed to write treatises to prove that he was orthodox. The very boundaries set by the authorities hold onto cultural mores and lead to oppression and abuse. Historically the treatment of women is a blatant example. Theological reasons are advanced to keep the abuse in place.

Authority and Human Freedom... Ultimately literalism leads to separation, separating us from God and from each other. Dogmatism sets the stage for "this is right, that is wrong, we are right, they are wrong, we are the chosen, they are not, we are the privileged they are not." Righteous killing, literal or otherwise follows! History abounds with examples of righteous violence wherever dogmatism reigns whether in religions, nations, corporations or families. It is really about control, not about truth. (For information of "Christian" sponsored violence, see: **Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries** by Ramsey MacMullen, 1997, Yale University Press, pp. 16-17.) Another notorious example is the burning of those accused of witchcraft, resulting in the execution of something in the neighborhood of 100,000 women.

This is not to say that clarity, certainty, order and even some rigidity as in the military is always and for everyone wrong. We do know, for example that people who live in chaos from addiction of various sorts discover a haven where there is a community of clarity about what's right, what's wrong, what is to be believed and what is not. Yet this is a two-edged sword. The key is to avoid keeping people stuck, to encourage movement forward in personal responsibility and growth, both emotional and spiritual.



Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



The danger for religious institutions is the temptation to keep things as they always were, self-perpetuating, keeping people stuck, actually blocking growth by placing suspicion on asking questions, on doubting the "true teaching." A lively religious institution would be one which encourages doubt, encourages questioning, encourages searching for more, going beyond the literal story. A lively religious institution provides spiritual companioning which keeps the faithful growing...yes, even "leaving the church." Fr. Richard Rohr said many years ago that if you find life somewhere, go there, whatever it is called. Clergy education/formation can keep both clergy and faithful stuck, hindered from growing in the freedom of the sons and daughters of God.

Developmental research has long revealed that when a quite humanly developed person joins a group with fundamentalist, rigid leanings, regression to a lower developmental level occurs.

Gnostics... Gnostics do not hold that the Jesus Story as revealed in hundreds of gospels is an historical happening. The Jesus Story is mythical and the foundation of a process for adherents guided by masters, to come progressively to deeper and deeper awareness, consciousness, "True-Self"-realization, enlightenment.

This has immense implications for our journey on this plane of earth. The bottom line is that there is no separation, only the perception of separation. It means that all life is sacred, that all creation is sacred. It means that we will change our ways of violence and oppression of each other and of Earth. It means that the various "religious traditions" are all paths to Unity. In the Mystery Religions there was no need for bickering and blaming because though there were competing schools, they were not concerned about orthodoxy.

One could easily see that whatever the name of the Mystery god-man, it was fundamentally the same story. Even though Christians share the same outer literal story, many can't love and accept each other because of personal and collective ego frames of reference which create separation. Obviously the same is true with Muslims. Although Muhammad created the city of three faiths at Medina, we know that his honoring of Judaism and Christianity was quickly abandoned. So it all came down to "my/our way or the highway!" That is an approach which mystifies the masters of all traditions because they know that ALL IS ONE!

Conclusion.... When all is said and done, it is very likely that we actually have the Jesus Story because of the Roman Catholic Church. It seems unlikely that the story would have survived through the handing down of Christian Gnosticism, strong and vibrant as it was in the Mediterranean region two thousand years ago. We just don't know. What we do know is that there is much more to the Jesus Story than the literal story whether that story is seen as historical or not. We know that initiators of Christian Gnosticism guided those who were ready into the deeper mysteries, deeper consciousness. We know that leaders in institutional Christianity provided intellectual knowledge of the Church's doctrine, practical knowledge of moral behavior, and how to participate in the Church's rituals. We know that participation in external ritual does not transform the hearts of large numbers of people. But then, what does? History attests to this.

However, Jesus Energy is real and holds power to transform lives at the deepest level. This wondrous Energy is so profoundly, desperately needed in our time. Consciousness is rising...and it happens one person at a time. It is also deepened in the context of loving, supportive communities. Their number is also growing. So let us take up the challenge, using whatever means are available to us from whatever source. The ultimate Jesus Dream is of Unitive Consciousness, what the mystics of the ages have experienced, from whatever spiritual tradition.

So is the Jesus Story simply another story? No, the Jesus Story is just the greatest story ever told. We need to embrace the truth that religion, any religion, needs spirituality. Spirituality does not need religion. The Jesus Story is an invitation for us to move intentionally, using whatever spiritual practice delivers the goods to the realization of the secret told by Antoine de-Saint Exupery in the story of the Little Prince: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

There are many paths to the goal. We need to ask ourselves: what practice helps me to be more conscious, reveals the illusions of ego entrapment, brings me to **experiential** awareness that we are all connected, opens the possibility of experiencing unitive consciousness, what the "ancients" called **Gnosis**?



Earlier, in the section on the difficulties of Literalism we saw that there were various levels acknowledged by the Mystery Religions and Christian Gnostics: hylics or what Paul called sarkics, psychics, pneumatics and gnostics. Sarkic Christians and psychic Christians need the law. Pneumatic Christians, according to Paul, are beyond the law, they know what is good and fruitful and what is destructive and what is not and do not need a law to tell them.



Gnostic Christians live in the reality that all is one. The goal of spiritual practice is ultimately to live in the realization that All Is One while remaining fully in the body. Paul speaks of out-of-body experience. Various spiritual practices speak of this too. Nothing wrong here but we can't stay there. We need to integrate the "knowing, experiencing" that All Is One in the body. This is ultimately what can change the world. Various practices include:

- ◇ FOLLOWING THE BREATH
- ◇ IMAGINATIVE (IGNATIAN) MEDITATION
- ◇ HEART RHYTHM MEDITATION
- ◇ BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICES INCLUDING WALKING MEDITATION
- ◇ SOUL COLLAGE
- ◇ CENTERING PRAYER
- ◇ LECTIO DIVINA
- ◇ BEING IN NATURE
- ◇ BEING FULLY PRESENT TO A BELOVED PARTNER OR AN ANIMAL
- ◇ BEING MESMERIZED BY THE NIGHT SKY, PHOTOGRAPHY, GARDENING

A combination of some of the above practices may be effective for some. The question we need to ask ourselves is: "what delivers the goods for me?" Whatever it is, do it every day.

Perhaps you have had a "near death experience." If so, you may already experience gnosis. If needed choose whatever ongoing practice will deepen what happened in that experience. We need to search for growth in awareness. We may not reach unitive consciousness; we may glimpse it from time to time. All we need to do is to keep moving in that direction. Many people have had spiritual experiences at one time or another, maybe experiences of unitive consciousness, perhaps in nature, perhaps at a concert, perhaps at a church service. But it passes and we slip back into the same old, same old: states of awareness and ego entrapment, forgetting that we are All One.

Regular practice can protect us from slipping back so easily. Our wellbeing as a species and as a planet requires our commitment to becoming more conscious.

I have practiced Ignatian meditation, centering prayer, Buddhist meditation practices, chanting, Dances of Universal Peace, and now with the monthly help of a mentor via Skype, Heart Rhythm Meditation. I was in my head for so long that it was crucial for me to get into my body. It was the Buddhist practices that were most helpful for me. Then came Heart Rhythm Meditation.

More than 30 years ago when I was giving talks on the history of healing in the church, I prayed that what was in my head would fall into my heart. Now we are in the right ballpark. It has been worth it, a day at a time, with patience toward myself in the process. I am immensely grateful. So be patient with yourselves, friends, be patient. Just take the next step with confidence.

THOSE WHO DON'T FEEL THIS LOVE
 PULLING THEM LIKE A RIVER,
 THOSE WHO DON'T DRINK DAWN LIKE A CUP OF SPRING WATER,
 OR TAKE IN SUNSET LIKE SUPPER,
 THOSE WHO DON'T WANT TO CHANGE LET THEM SLEEP
 THIS LOVE IS BEYOND THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY,
 THAT OLD TRICKERY AND HYPOCRISY.
 IF YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR MIND THAT WAY, SLEEP ON.
 I'VE GIVEN UP ON MY MIND,
 I'VE TORN THE CLOTH TO SHREDS
 AND THROWN IT AWAY
 IF YOU'RE NOT COMPLETELY NAKED,
 WRAP YOUR BEAUTIFUL ROBE OF WORDS AROUND YOU
 AND SLEEP.

MEVIANA JELALUDDIN RUMI

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter - November/December 2016 VOL. 50 NO. 6



Newsletter Editor...John Polanski
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 15th of each month (February, April, June, August, October and December).

FCM Central Office and Membership



COORDINATORS

Carolyn Horvath & Tom Leonhardt
Emails: membership@FCMmail.org
centraloffice@FCMmail.org

1709 W. 69th. St., #3
Cleveland, Ohio 44102-2957
Phones: 216.651.4362 - 800.538.8923

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.

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 twice yearly. Endorsement application materials are available for downloading on the FCM website at: www.federationofchristianministries.org
Inquiries may be made at: specmin@FCMmail.org

GLOBAL MINISTRIES UNIVERSITY

GMU offers degree completion programs 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: GMU5053@aol.com
Phone: 866 419 8020 toll-free

FCM Circle of Directors

Chairperson: Thomas Stricker

Phone: 937.477.0139 | Email: chairperson@FCMmail.org

President: Thomas E. Cusack

Phone: 609.947.0770 | Email: president@FCMmail.org

Treasurer: Susan Ross

Phone: 260.466.7414 | Email: treasurer@FCMmail.org

Secretary: Bill Appleton

Phone: 216.210.0855 | Email: secretary@FCMmail.org

Chair, Denominational Concerns Committee: Eileen DiFranco

Phone: 267.258.6966 | Email: denomcon@FCMmail.org

Chair, Commissioning Committee: Anthony Ercolano

Phone: 718.461.7128 | Email: commissioningchair@FCMmail.org

Chair, Specialized Ministries: Christy Howard-Steele

Phone: 708.285.5845 | Email: specmin@FCMmail.org

Vice Chair, Specialized Ministries: Carl Yusavitz

Phone: 215.453.5170 | Email: specmin@FCMmail.org

REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS

Pacific: Donnieau Snyder

Phone: 209.505.4339 | Email: pacificvp@FCMmail.org

Mountains & Plains: Richard E. James

Phone: 773.418.5671 | Email: mts_plainsvp@FCMmail.org

Great Lakes Co-VPs: Ron Davis

Phone: 513.262.2210 | Email: greatlakesvp@FCMmail.org

and Amy Simpson Bennethum

Phone: 513.295.5506 | Email: greatlakesvp@FCMmail.org

Southern: Diane Dougherty

Phone: 678.918.1945 | Email: southernvp@FCMmail.org

Northeast: Dan Pellegrin

Phone: 914.328.9732 | Email: northeastvp@FCMmail.org

FCM ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

Ethics Committee: Joseph Ruane

Phone: 215.387.7998 Email: j.ruane@usp.edu

Prayer Support Coordinator (on the website or):

Susan Ferman Email: prayersupport@FCMmail.org

FCM Communications: Antoinette Marold

Email: communication@FCMmail.org