



Federation of Christian Ministries

FCM Newsletter..September/October 2016...VOL. 50 NO. 5



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October - 2016



With Open Arms

A Message of Thanks



Patty Stricker
2016 Assembly Co-Chair

With a month behind us from the FCM National Assembly, I still can't stop thinking about the inspirational messages from our dynamic speakers.

All weekend long we came together with the mission of gaining insight into how to better understand those we serve....**With Open Arms**. Fellowship was strengthened and enthusiasm was high.

I am most appreciative to those who worked so hard to bring the 2016 Assembly into fruition.

Tom Stricker - my Co-chair
Antoinette Marold
Michaelita Quinn
Carolyn Horvath
Tom Leonhardt
Tom Cusack
John Polanski
Bea Broder-Oldach
Amy Simpson-Bennethum
and **YOU** for your support and attendance!

Next stop:

Philadelphia in 2018 for an anniversary celebration!

IN THIS ISSUE

Service at the Core of FCM

Tom Stricker, FCM Chairperson.....Page 2

The Circle and The Future

Peter Paul Brennan

2017 Membership Renewal

Tom Cusack, FCM President.....Page 3-4

2016-17 Circle of Directors.....Page 5

Regional News

NortheastLocal Gatherings Continue Assembly Spirit

Dan Pellegrin, Northeast V.P.....Page 6

Southern....Growth Encourages New Officer

Diane Dougherty, Southern V.P.....Page 7

Pacific....Bringing An Open Heart

Donnieau Snyder Pacific V.P.....Pages 8-9

Great Lakes...Regional Meetings for 2016 & 2017

Amy Simpson Bennethum & Ron Davis, Great Lakes V.P.s.Pages 10-11

Mountains & Plains...Commissioned Members

One Incredible Gift: Honesty by Shawna Tuttle

Richard James Mountains & Plains V.P.....Pages 12-16

Financial Update

Sue Ross, FCM Treasurer.....Page 17

How Far Have We Come?

A Personal Perspective on Race & Equality

Ron Davis, Great Lakes Co-Vice President.....Page 18

Pilgrim Journey Moves Through FCM

Peter Strening, FCM Specialized Ministries.....Page 19

Reflections on the Jesus Traditions:

Invitation to Unitive Consciousness

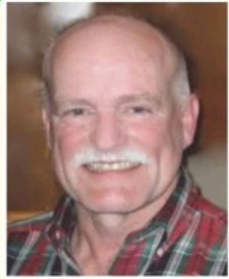
Tom Leonardt, FCM Membership/Central Office.....Page 20-23

FCM Directory.....Page 24



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October - 2016



CHAIRPERSON...Tom Stricker Service at the Core of FCM

The 2016 FCM National Assembly in Cleveland rose above all expectations. It is always good getting together and uniting with old friends. Messages of the keynote speakers and workshop presenters were right on target and cutting edge. It was a prophetic Assembly speaking to needs of our world today and focused on welcoming all people with open arms. I am so proud to be a member of the Federation of Christian Ministries. The Assembly team did a great job.



Paul Vincent Reithmaier

I continue to be awed to be part of an organization with so many amazing people. **Paul Vincent Reithmaier** is one of those. He has served as Vice President and Chairperson, and since 1995 has also been the FCM Registrar, holding the responsibility for maintaining records of weddings, holy unions (which now have the same status as weddings) and baptisms solemnized by our members. When an individual keeps those records, they can easily be lost over time. Thanks to our Registrar this information will be kept safe and secure long into the future. I am deeply grateful to Paul for his commitment and dedication to our members for so many years.



Maryann Crilly

Paul has decided it is time to pass the baton and at the Assembly we made that announcement and circulated the job description. **Maryann Crilly** stepped forward to say she was looking for an opportunity to serve FCM and believed the Spirit had called her to offer her resume for the position. Her skills and desire to serve fit the job description perfectly and I am pleased to welcome Maryann as our new Registrar. Paul has promised her his support as she takes on this responsibility.



Bill Appleton

Sally Sherry, who was elected Vice President of the Southern Region in July 2015 has resigned her office this past July due to a series of health issues this past year. Her good spirits and enthusiasm are much appreciated.

The Circle has appointed **Diane Dougherty** to complete the last two years of Sally's term. Since Diane has been serving as Secretary it is necessary for her to step down from that position which has been filled by **Bill Appleton**. Service is the name at the core of FCM members. I am grateful for all who volunteer within the Circle in whatever capacity.

Even as she resigns as VP, **Sally Sherry** is volunteering to be an Area Representative for her region. Given the desire to gather more often expressed by many members, the Circle has been encouraging the development of this position within FCM. This right arm of the regional Vice Presidents has the important task of reaching out to and connecting with local FCM members.

Allow me to offer several examples within the Great Lakes region: **Tony Heintzman** and **Shannon Queenam** put together gatherings in Louisville, Kentucky several times a year. **Antoinette Marold** also holds regular gatherings for members in the Cleveland area.

Becoming an Area Representatives is a wonderful way to serve FCM, particularly in your local area. It is also a way to foster new participation while supporting and encouraging current members. Contact your Vice President by phone or e-mail to discuss how you can get involved. Service to each other is what we are called to do.



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October - 2016



PRESIDENT...Tom Cusack

The Circle and The Future

The FCM Assembly is our most significant time for meeting together, gathering inspiration from one another, and sharing our ministerial experience. Our Assembly in Cleveland from August 5th to the 7th achieved those goals for the nearly 100 who attended and participated in the many talks, seminars, and functions. It was a wonderful meeting, and I wish you had all been there.

Just prior to the Assembly the Circle of Directors met in their summer meeting. The Circle is FCM's leadership team. All volunteers. All committed to the benefit of FCM. And over the last year, about half of the Circle has come to be made up of brand-new members. It is in the Circle meeting that the work of directing FCM is accomplished. So, I would like to give you a few highlights of that meeting.

Our **Treasurer, Sue Ross**, led the meeting with a discussion of our financial situation. She described it as being strong. And in fact our spending is at a level that is less than our budgeted amount. The Circle observed the numbers and the facts about our budget, and over the course of the meeting, it became evident that we have to grow our income in order to fulfill some important parts of our potential.

FCM is largely dependent upon its membership fees. [Remember, we are beginning a new renewal period from September 1 until October 31. This new renewal period for 2017 moves the renewal out of the holiday season. We believe this will ease everyone's renewal time.] Donations make up only a small portion of our income. Donations were about \$7000 last year. As we continue our efforts to build our FCM community and to offer our services to the community at large, we will need to acquire more funds to accomplish bigger goals.

To this end **Northeast Vice President Dan Pellegrin** will be looking at systematic fundraising efforts. He has already spoken to **Mary Ann Cejka**, who is experienced in fundraising. We will be looking to develop fundraising that will help us increase our outreach, both to members and to outside faith communities. For example, many of our members declined to attend the Cleveland Assembly due to financial considerations. The Circle discussed the possibility of generating a fund which could respond to members' requests for financial help so that they could attend FCM gatherings. We are a long way from this noble goal at this time. But work has begun.

The need to establish more support for our volunteer positions going forward was also discussed. At this moment our Specialized Ministries Committee led by **Christy Howard Steele** and **Carl Yusavitz** has developed coordinators in each of the five regions. They work with candidates for FCM endorsement. With their growing experience they provide a backup for the positions that **Christy** and **Carl** now hold. When turnover comes, there will be experienced FCM members who can move into those positions of greater responsibility.

The development of area representatives in each region is another facet of spreading experience across more members so that when an incumbent leaves office at the expiration of the term or due to other reasons, there will be experienced members who can step into the vacated role. If you are asked to fill a support position, please consider that call an important one for your contribution to FCM. It will deepen your involvement with FCM, with your FCM colleagues, and enable you to enlarge your FCM ministry as time goes by.

Time does go by. You'll find in the Newsletter details of the recent passing into the spirit plane of FCM member **Peter Paul Brennan**. **Bill Manseau's** tribute to the life of his friend, **Peter Paul Brennan**, is found on www.fcmblog.org. I recommend that you read it and visit the obituary documents that are linked. He was with FCM for more than four decades. He was a leader.

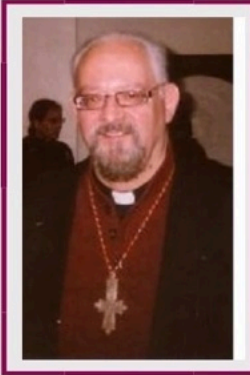
We mourn his passing. It was very meaningful to be at his funeral mass, led by **Bill Manseau** with other FCM members in attendance. Recognizing the life and passing of our associates helps to make us a stronger community.

Please pray and meditate for FCM. If this might be a new addition to your spiritual life, follow the little formula **2 X 2 4 FCM**. It refers to two minutes of prayer and two minutes of meditation for the benefit of FCM. If we do that daily as a community, the questions of funding growth and experiential depth in FCM are assured.

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October- 2016

PRESIDENT...Tom Cusack



Peter Paul Brennan, FCM

11/10/41 - 8/1/16

FCM has lost our friend and long-time member, **Peter Paul Brennan**.

His friend and fellow FCM member, **Bill Manseau**, gave the eulogy at Peter's funeral. The eulogy can be found in its entirety on www.FCMblog.org. Also found at the end of the eulogy are links to Peter's Obituary and additional reflections on his life.

Memorializing those who have built FCM strengthens our community and fortifies one another to follow their dedicated path.

Tom Cusack, President

FCM RENEWAL TIME HAS BEGUN

This is a reminder that our Central Office has recently sent out the FCM renewal materials.

The Circle of Directors changed the renewal period to September 1 to October 31, 2016 for the 2017 membership year. No change has been made in the renewal fees for 2017.

The purpose of this time-change from our traditional November 1 to December 31 time is to move the renewal out of the holiday season with its busy schedules and challenging financial responsibilities. This change does not affect our calendar year membership, only the renewal fee period. Your current membership continues until December 31, as will your 2017 membership.

For our **Commissioned and Endorsed members**, your authorization from FCM ends on December 31, 2016 so, please renew in a timely fashion.

If you have questions about your renewal, please contact Membership@FCMmail.org or your Regional Vice President.



2016 - 17 FCM Circle of Directors



First Row Left...

Dan Pellegrin
Northeast Region V.P.

Richard James
Mts. & Plains Region V.P.

Donnieau Snyder
Pacific Region V. P.

Tom Cusack
FCM President

Middle Row Left...

Amy Simpson Bennethum
Great Lakes Region Co-V.P.

Tom Leonhardt
Carolyn Horvath
Membership & Central Office

Donna Schreiber
out going Pacific Region V.P.

Christy Howard-Steel
Chair Specialized Ministries

Eileen DiFranco
Chair Denominational Concerns

Diane Dougherty -
Southern Region V.P.

Tom Stricker
FCM Chairperson

Back Row Left...

Anthony Ercolano
Commissioning Chair

Carl Yusavitz
Vice-Chair Specialized Ministries

Bill Appleton
Secretary

Ron Davis
Great Lakes Region Co-V.P.





Regional News

Northeast Region Vice President....Dan Pellegrin

Local Gatherings Continue Assembly Spirit

May 2017 Date Set... Do you need a very special weekend? We've begun planning our Northeast Regional meeting – please note the new date: **May 19-21, 2017**. We will join again at the Eddy Farm, which describes itself as, “a piece of Paradise on Earth!” Located on the Delaware River in New York, just off I-84, five minutes from Port Jervis, Eddy Farm's brochure informs us, “We kept the name ‘Eddy,’ which is riverspeak for the water that flows upstream after turning a corner. It reminds us of life: on the Pennsylvania side of the river, the water rushes downstream, the way we do in everyday life. On the New York side, though, you can watch the eddy gently pull the water back upstream. God has a similar way of turning us around. In the middle of the river, the water stands still, just as God teaches us to be still and patient so that we can hear His voice. This sense of return is exactly what our retreats are all about.”

We are planning for a combination of mutual inspiration, sharing, spiritual stimulation, and guided quiet time on the river's edge. Special thanks to **Pat and Paul Stubenbort** for agreeing once again to chair our regional meeting committee. Plan on coming together for this very special weekend. We'll be sending out emails with more information.

Regional Members Recognized at Assembly...Our region proudly included two heroic women who were endorsed by FCM: **Comfort Fordjour** and **In Young Sohn** who will continue to pursue their ministry as chaplains. Very special congratulations to them for achieving Endorsed Status. They both were commissioned in February 2016. Three Northeast members were newly commissioned: **Sharon Dickinson, Maria Gullo, and Catherine Knowles**.

Sharon is an ordained priest through the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests. She is pursuing a ministry in chaplaincy at a trauma hospital north of Boston. Maria is a spiritual director based in Marlton, New Jersey, close to Philadelphia. She is also a certified teacher of contemplative (Centering) prayer. Catherine is pursuing her ministry as a chaplain in Bethlehem, Pa.

We are grateful to **Heidi Tierney** for her work as a local representative in Philadelphia for recommending Katherine to us and FCM. These women make me so proud to be a part of the Federation of Christian Ministries, and it is a very special joy to recommend them for advancement at our Circle meetings.

Very special thanks need to go to **Michaelita and Tom Quinn, Antoinette Marold, Patty Stricker** and all the other dedicated members who worked to make the National Assembly such a polished, professional, organized, inspiring and spiritually rewarding experience.

Our next National Assembly will be in Philadelphia in 2017, very accessible to us Northeast members. I hope you join me in looking forward to it, and perhaps being inspired to devote some time to its success.

Local Gatherings Upcoming...We want to continue and expand our local area meetings. **Pat and Paul Stubenbort** have generously agreed to host an upcoming meeting in the Philadelphia area. **Ginny and Tom Cusack** have similarly generously agreed to host a New Jersey meeting. **Jane and Julien Oliver** have graciously agreed to host a New Hampshire/New England meeting. Donna and I look forward to another New York City/suburban meeting. We hope to arrange an inclusive meeting for Connecticut, another meeting for the Boston area, and work on all other local areas as well. If you can help with a local area meeting, please contact me.

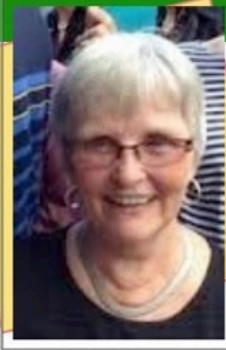
Supporting FCM... A very special service to the membership and a way to give back to FCM is to volunteer as a local area representative. In this role you will help those in your local area in any way you choose, in active collaboration with me and FCM. Please contact me at northeastvp@fcmmail.org for more information or with any questions you may have.

Our organization supports itself almost totally through membership dues so there is much more to be done. Fund-raising would be invaluable. If you have any ideas, experience, or expertise in this area, please contact me. I hope to put together fund-raising information for our next Circle meeting in February 2017.

“Vibrant” is the word that comes to mind when thinking of FCM. So many members (all of us!) are contributing in so many ways to each other and to all those we serve. Thank you God!

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October - 2016



Regional News

Southern Region by Vice President....Diane Dougherty

Growth Encourages New Officer

My name is Diane Dougherty, ARCWP, the new Vice-President for the Southern Region. I have taken over the remaining term from **Sally T. Sherry** who has had medical complications to such a degree she had to resign from her position. We thank Sally for the work she has done for FCM and the commitment she made to coordinating the members of the region. She will continue her membership and I am hoping we will be able to have a 2017 gathering with her in attendance.

As your new vice-president, I would like you to know a little about me. I have been a member of FCM for 4 years, serving as secretary following **Bea Broder**. As I mentioned above am a Roman Catholic Priest. I live in Avondale Estates, GA where I serve as both a visiting priest and a Human Rights Defender working in numerous initiatives to bring about social justice locally and globally. At present I am part of a team working to defeat the Georgia governor's plan to privatize education in our state, and will host a talk radio show on this topic once per week until elections.

As a visiting priest I preside at Mass, offer sacraments and carry the Gospel to the marginalized. I recently returned from Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, spreading the good news that Women Priests are here to stay. I call my church the Church of the Visitation as we are announcing a new spirit alive for the 21st century.

Now for the Good News about FCM: four new men and women have joined our region! I would like to congratulate these newly commissioned members: Reverend **James A. Verrecchia**, Acworth, GA; Reverend **Sakinah Nicholson-Carter**, Durham, NC; Reverend **Judy Lorenz**, Bowie, MD and **Dr. Ronald Modras**, Sarasota, FL.

It is my hope to be able to talk with each member, most particularly those who might assist me in organizing a regional gathering for 2017. We are very spread out so it might be nice to find an area central to the majority and begin the collaborations and networking. I look forward to serving with you!



Photo taken at the Carter Center's 2016 Human Rights Defender's Workshop. Artists Kira Corser (left) and Lisa Parsons (right) join Southern VP Diane Dougherty in displaying their Post for Peace and Justice
<http://postsforpeaceandjustice.org>

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October - 2016



Regional News

Pacific Region by Vice President....Donnieau Snyder

Bringing An Open Heart

A heart-felt and prayerful hello to all! As brand-new vice-president I am excited to be stepping in and reaching out with arms wide open. It is my hope to experience this amazing part of my life's journey with as many as I have the opportunity to speak with, pray with, laugh with and cry with. As this is my very first article in the FCM newsletter, I will try my best to share a little about me and share some of the profound wisdom of the region's members and faith communities.

I am a Roman Catholic woman priest, ordained this past April along with fellow member **Donna Shaw** who is also new to FCM. My life's journey to service in ministry began in my early childhood and the fire continues to burn bright seeking out others to share in this profound space. I reside in California and am blessed to be part of the New Spirit Rising faith community in Fresno. I am a counselor by trade and a minister by passion. I like to consider myself as the "busy contemplative." I recognize I am filling some very big shoes and offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to **Nick and Mary De Los Reyes** for welcoming me into FCM and being my first role models as VPs and to **Donna Schreiber** for taking up the VP baton from them and now passing it along to me. I am beyond thankful for Donna's wisdom and continued support to the members of our beautiful and spacious region.

The FCM 2016 Assembly was truly a spirit-filled experience and I was deeply humbled by the incredible individuals I met and heard about through the sharing of stories. One of the highlights of the Assembly was the ceremony for our newly commissioned and endorsed members. Congratulations to **Anya Spielberg** and **Stephanie Ryu** (endorsed) and **Javier Perez** and **Steve Stitely** (commissioned). I also want to extend best wishes to **Judy Dahl**, of Port Townsend, Washington who was ordained a Roman Catholic Woman Priest the same weekend as the Assembly.

The 2016 Anthony Soto Award recipients are proud Pacific Region members **Michael Conley** and **Jean Conley**. This honor is awarded to FCM members who exemplify the spirit and vision of the late Anthony Soto who imparted an amazing legacy that continues to enrich FCM. Thanks to both of you for your service of profound love.



Photo courtesy of Donna Schreiber (from left to right, Donna Schreiber, Michael Conley, Jean Conley, Donnieau Snyder)

As we look forward to the year ahead, it is exciting to begin the planning stages for our regional gathering. We are a big region geographically and it is exciting to see the potential to have a couple of gatherings planned to embrace our members in different areas without having to incur a great deal of travel. I would love if you would dream this into reality with me and let me know your thoughts/ideas. It is also exciting to begin exploring the opportunities of bringing on board local FCM representatives from the various areas of our region. The more eyes/ears/hands/feet we have for outreach, the greater the potential for making even stronger connections within our vast region. I like to dream as well as make concrete plans and I do not believe any dream is too big or too small.

I want to celebrate and acknowledge as many as I am able and I look forward to celebrating your exciting news. I am looking forward to connecting with as many as I am able either by email, phone or perhaps even a chance to travel where my feet will take me across the pacific region to drop in and say "hello" to you whether individual or faith community. I will begin reaching out on an individual basis in the very near future but please do not wait for me to take the first step; I joyfully invite you to please feel free to connect with me. I have some very big shoes to fill as part of the amazing legacy of FCM but I have every confidence regarding what I lack in wisdom, I am ready to absorb from each of you along the way. I have learned that what are needed to fill the legacy of big shoes are not big feet, but rather an open heart, open ears and eyes wide open. Please keep me in your prayers as you are all in mine and let's continue the journey together.

GMU Graduation



The entire membership of FCM joins the families and friends of these latest graduates of Global Ministries University in offering them every best wish on their accomplishments: **Donnieau Snyder** (M.Div.), **Maryanne Crilly** (Certificate of Celebrancy), **Gail Schultz** (Certificate of Celebrancy) and **Dan Lee** (Th. D.). Through their hard work these FCM members have immeasurably enhanced their ministry and fostered their own personal development.

FCM is honored to be connected with this outstanding institution and proud of the consistent quality of the instructors and graduates alike. Sincere congratulations to all!



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October - 2016



Regional News

Great Lakes Region Co-Vice Presidents
Ron Davis & Amy Simpson Bennethum

We just came back from a spectacular August week in Cleveland, Ohio. It began with our Circle meeting where we had three members from the Great Lakes region commissioned and one member endorsed (see below for more information). Just hours after our Circle meetings concluded, the 2016 National Assembly began. What a wonderful weekend filled with incredible speakers and connection with members in our region and across the country. We were even able to attempt to capture all of our Great Lakes members who attended the Assembly—the photo is below. Missing from the photo are Kerry Wentworth and Sue Ross who were both at the assembly but not captured in the photo.



If you were not able to attend the August Assembly please know that we missed you. The good news is that there are several upcoming opportunities to connect with your fellow Great Lakes FCM members. We have three upcoming local gatherings scheduled this fall:

- **Louisville Gathering:** Saturday, October 8 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. hosted by Mary Jo Kruer. Contact Tony Heitzman or Shannon Queenan for more information.
- **Cleveland Gathering:** Sunday, October 16 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. hosted by Antoinette Marold. Contact Antoinette for more information.
- **Cincinnati/Dayton/Indianapolis/Columbus Gathering:** Saturday, November 5 from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. hosted by Patty and Tom Stricker. Contact Bea Broder-Oldach for more information.



The Michigan group had their gathering at the end of June. It was a small group meeting but it was filled with much support and connection. (See photo below) For more information about Michigan gatherings, contact **John Schultz** or **Bob Funaro**.

In the next few months we will be working with our local representatives to schedule the 2017 local meetings. Be sure to check your email and the FCM Newsletter in November/December for those dates so you can get them on your calendar.

We are very excited to announce the dates for our 2017 Great Lakes Regional Retreat. (More information on the "Save the Date") We know it's over a year away but wanted you to have the dates to put on your calendar. It is going to be a wonderful opportunity for our region to connect, share, grow and support each other. You will receive much more information in early 2017 including how to register.



*Delmar Smolinski, John Schultz, Peter Wolf,
Bob Funaro and Joe Hanish.*

May you continue to feel God's grace and peace as you share God's love with those around you. We look forward to connecting with you in person at one of the local gatherings and at our regional retreat.

Amy & Ron

Commissioned at the August Circle Meeting

Pamela L. Meyers

Pam's current ministry is volunteering at the Women's Outreach Center (WOC), Sisters of St. Joseph, to provide healing/transformational spiritual modalities to the poor, homeless, disenfranchised and others who cannot afford to pay for these spiritual practices. She teaches yoga/meditation/breath-work group and private classes. In addition she offers Reiki and Polarity Therapy Sessions.

Pamela currently serves as an Elder at North Presbyterian Church where she serves at monthly community dinners as well as helps maintain the sanctuary art for the different liturgical seasons. Her church community supports her request for commissioning.

Pamela has a Master of Education, Community Agency Counseling degree from Cleveland State University, a BA and a MA both in Political Science from Case Western Reserve University. She also has certifications through Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, American Counseling Association, Princeton Theological Seminary (Human Relations Program, Effective Group Leadership) as well as training in yoga, Reiki and others. A commissioning ceremony for Pam will take place at the Cleveland gathering on October 16

Staci Striegel-Stikeleather, MA

Staci is currently working as a PRN Chaplain at St. Vincent Hospice in Indiana. She has worked as a first and second year resident at Indiana University Health Center in Indianapolis. She has also worked as a staff chaplain at Indiana University Health Hospice.

In addition to her units of CPE, Staci holds a BA in Pastoral Leadership and Catholic Studies from Marian College and a MA in Theology from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL. Staci's ministry background includes work with Pax Christi USA, a National Catholic Peace and Justice grassroots organization, where she was a programming and policy intern on the national staff. She was also the coordinator of youth ministry at St. Bartholomew Catholic Church in Columbus Indiana.

Staci and her husband Donald live in Indianapolis. On March 31 they welcomed their new baby boy, Sutton Samuel Stikeleather to the family.

Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October - 2016



Regional News

Mountains & Plains Region by Vice President...Richard James



The Federation of Christian Ministries, 2016 Assembly took place on August 5-7, 2016 at the Sheraton Cleveland Airport Hotel in Cleveland, Ohio. What a pleasant and productive time it was to enjoy FCM fellowship, keynote speakers, workshop presenters, prayer, circle and business meetings, and for the recognition of newly commissioned and or endorsed ministers. All in the spirit of our Lord certainly had a good time!

Across the fifteen states of the Mountain and Plains Region, FCM members, and ministers are providing relevant ministry as vivid as the stain-glass above. I like to think of ministry as an expression of God's love. As the classic movie suggests, "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing," and so is the Christian ministry. FCM members and ministers embody and expressed God's love most often in the uniqueness of their personality offering their gifts, skills, and yes even themselves as servants to others. FCM members and ministers offer God's love as ministry within the particular contextual circumstances where persons are distanced from the center of where life is most meaningful for them by some form of suffering. It is in these situations where we have the opportunity to meet the Divine in us, among us, and within the persons, we seek to serve. We must remember that the persons that we strive to support are created in the image of God. Wow! What an awesome experience and responsibility.

We feel that it is important to share how FCM ministers manifest their sense of call and mission in their ministry. Therefore, as often as we receive submissions, we will feature a news brief entitled, Mountain and Planes Region Reflection on Ministry. Please enjoy this edition of *Reflection on Ministry* entitled *One Incredible Gift: Honesty by Shawna Tuttle*.

May the blessings of health, faith, hope, and love be yours.
Serving Humanity Inspired by Divine Benevolent Intent

Rev. Richard E. James, FCM Regional Vice President
Mountain and Plains Region
16169 84th Place Tinley Park, Illinois 60487
mts_plainsvp@FCMmail.org • reames@mac.com • Cell Phone: 773 418-5671

One Incredible Gift: Honesty by Shawna Tuttle



My exploration of health care chaplaincy over the last year since graduating seminary has been an incredibly rich experience. I am currently a Resident Chaplain at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois, primarily responsible for the hospitals' oncology units. My patients tend to be admitted for longer stays, and they frequently return for treatments. As I walk alongside patients and families in their journey, I savor the depth of relationship that forms. Patients are experiencing grief, whether that comes from the need to make short-term changes in life to pursue treatment, or to accept the longer term reality of living with a health condition for their rest of their lives. Sometimes it means coming to terms with a poor prognosis.

Last week, I encountered a family who had just completed a family meeting to discuss goals of care regarding their father. Present at the meeting were the patient's wife, along with his three children and their spouses. Recognizing the need for pastoral support, the nurse paged me. During the meeting, the doctors had suggested the possibility of removing technical supports. Hospice care had also been spoken of. The family told the medical team that they needed some time to absorb their father's prognosis. They were told he was dying, but they were not ready to let go of the possibility of a miracle. As I sat with the family, I observed a need for some memory making, as well as for processing grief. The patient was Catholic, and so we discussed whether an Anointing of the Sick might be appreciated.



One Incredible Gift: Honesty by Shawna Tuttle

They thought so, so while we waited for the priest, we talked about their father and who he was to them. The priest brought a wonderful sacramental and physical presence into the room, with each gesture and blessing helping them to see their father's safety in God's hands. After the anointing, I encouraged the family to offer up their feelings, their grief, and their hopes. Many in the group tearfully lifted up to God their appreciation of who their father was to them. In the prayers, their language began to shift; as they began saying their goodbyes and acknowledging the reality of his passing. Despite the younger generation's ambivalence about religion, their mother and father's strong faith was clearly healing and comforting for them. That day, I felt so clearly used by God, and I loved how my ministry was combined with the priests to serve the special needs of this family. The family opted to withdraw care the next day, and he died peacefully in hospice not long after.

The patients and families that I encounter all share one incredible gift: honesty. They might be angry, scared, sad, resilient, funny, but all are very real. I see Christ right in the midst of that honesty. It is such a gift to witness. As I complete my residency this fall, I look forward to what form my ministry will take, whether in a hospice or hospital setting, whether working with children or adults. Each population and unit are so very rich. There are so many possibilities in this field. I am thrilled to have discovered this vocation and look forward to seeing what shape it will take as I move to Seattle, Washington in the Fall.

Shawna Tuttle is a Commissioned and Newly endorsed Member of FCM. She is a CPE Chaplain Resident at Rush University Medical Center, in Chicago, IL., and a member, of the Lawndale Christian Reform Church, Chicago, IL. Shawna holds a Master of Divinity from McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL., and a Master of Public Administration, Non-Profit Management.

Mountains and Plains Region Celebrates Newly Commissioned Ministers



Cynthia K. Hong, D.Min.

Cindy has earned several degrees; a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of North Carolina; a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois; a Master of Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas; and a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. Cindy was born on July 4, just outside of Washington, D.C., and considers herself as American as apple pie. She begged her mother to cook casseroles and spaghetti for dinner, food her friends ate at home. However, her mom's answer was always the same, "God made us Chinese, and we eat Chinese food at home."

It wasn't until college as a psychology major that she began to examine the gifts of her culture. After two years of living abroad in Taiwan, she was able to see and receive herself as Chinese-American. As a result, she found herself more at home in the Chinese-American church, and studying at Dallas Theological Seminary opened her eyes to congregational ministry in the local church.

After graduation, she was on staff at two Asian-American churches in Dallas and Houston. The Dallas church fully supported women in ministry, an eye-opening experience for her. The Houston church had seemed more open to dialoguing about this when she interviewed, but after several years, she was feeling the limitations of being a woman in ministry. After much prayer and discernment, and further seminary studies at Fuller and volunteering as a lay minister in a hospital on her days off, it became evident that it was time to move on.

Therefore, Cindy began CPE residency in 2013 at Memorial Hermann Health System, which turned out to be a life-giving experience. Subsequently, she signed up to do a second-year residency at Baylor St. Luke's and Texas Children's in the Texas Medical Center. Cindy left before the final unit to take a solo staff chaplain position in the hospital system where she completed her first-year residency. She is currently a Staff Chaplain at Memorial Hermann Sugar Land Hospital, Sugar Land where she has served for 13 months now. Cindy says, "The work I get to do every day is above and beyond what I could've imagined. I hope to be commissioned and eventually endorsed by FCM, and shortly I will pursue APC board certification."

Mountains and Plains Region Celebrates Newly Commissioned Ministers



Daniel E. Lee, Ph.D.

Daniel spent his childhood years in Southeast Asia as the son of missionary parents, but he did not become significantly involved in ministry himself until mid-life. Upon graduating from college in 1976, he joined the Dallas Police force and served on the streets of Dallas for several years. Dan joined the U.S. Navy in 1982 as an Intelligence Officer and rose to the rank of Commander. He transitioned to the Reserves in 1988, joining Lockheed-Martin the same year. There Dan continues to serve as a researcher—leading a small team which assesses the probable impact of future technologies.

In 1990 he began leading Christian study classes and small groups which focus on bringing spirit and intellect together in intimate understanding of the sacred text. The ultimate aim of these efforts has been to provide Christians with motivation and a supportive environment to actively live out Jesus's selfless commitment to humanity. As Dan's theology became progressively more post-evangelical and transcendental, he pursued the joint Ph.D./Th.D. in World Religions from Mahidol University and Global Ministries University. His doctoral focus was religious epistemology and the impact of mystics; he completed his doctoral degree in 2015. He currently serves as a leader of Haven, a spiritual-growth ministry of Sanctuary in Fort Worth, Texas. He plans to retire from Lockheed-Martin in November of 2016 to continue ministry efforts full time.



Erik Anders Doughty

Erik self-identifies as a gay and partnered, Christian chaplain, called to word-and-sacrament ministry in the context of hospital chaplaincy. Erik Doughty grew up in Central Illinois amid the cornfields and has a great love for salt-of-the-earth farm folk. Erik has worked in customer service, IT helpdesk, and temp jobs. He graduated from Augustana College and volunteered for a year in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps and earned a Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota in 2013, which clarified for him a passion for ministry work.

He completed a four-unit CPE residency and now works at Woodwinds Health Campus in Woodbury, Minnesota as an On-Call Chaplain. Erik enjoys spending time with family, walking Molly his chocolate lab around the lakes, and travel; most recently to Denmark, Sweden, and Iceland. Erik, who is openly-gay, is passionate about God's love for all people yet especially for those who suffer, are ill, oppressed, and in need.

Erik is passionate about God and serving the Christian community, and inclusive in his spiritual care in the hospital context. Erik has displayed empathy, kindness, humor, humility, a passion for serving God in the Church, and a gift in relating to communities who are left on the fringes. He is a deep listener and thinker, and meets people where they are, without judgment and with arms open wide. Erik thrives in the context of chaplaincy, where he works across boundaries of race, ethnicity, and religious affiliation to offer non-judgmental and supportive ministry to any who might be in need of pastoral support, whatever their religious background. Erik states that he is "socially and politically progressive, yet liturgically traditional." Erik is a Graduate of Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota where he earned a Master of Divinity degree. He completed a CPE Chaplain residency at HealthEast Care System hospitals and hospice, where he is an On-Call Chaplain. Erik proclaims a great love for two other denominations, the Episcopal Church and the Lutheran Church (ELCA). While Erik is approved for ordination by the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA, he says; "I know that as a gay man my chances of being ordained to chaplaincy in those churches are very slim. It's possible, but will take years. Meanwhile, I want to get to the doing of ministry!" Erik has sought FCM commissioning to secure and advance his position as chaplain and later plans to seek endorsement for specialized ministry for chaplaincy and APC board certification.



Mountains and Plains Region Celebrates Newly Commissioned Ministers



Rev. Grayce R. Lane, M.Div.

Grayce grew up in a relatively happy home with two older sisters, and two younger brothers. Her father is a retired career Army officer, who did two tours in Vietnam. He was 82nd Airborne Division and a decorated soldier. Her family moved about every two years when she was growing up and lived primarily in the South during the Civil Rights era, which provided its set of challenges. She was born in Fayetteville (Fort Bragg), NC, when housing and most other things, were segregated.

After graduating from college, she was the first person to complete the management trainee program at a local bank in Des Moines, which led her to Human Resources. Over a fifteen year career, she became a generalist with experience in affirmative action/EEOC, recruiting, interviewing, benefits and compensation, organization development and diversity.

Grayce is the mother of one son; Gareth who was born in 1986. She was a single parent until Gareth was 18. He is now a successful, not for profit fundraiser with CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education). She answered the call to ministry in 1999, and left for seminary in 2001, attending Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary from 2001-2004. She met her husband, Vincent while at the seminary, and they were married the day after they graduated in 2004. They then moved to the Eleventh Episcopal District of the AMEC, which is comprised of Florida and the Bahamas; they served there in various locations for 6 ½ years. Grayce served as Christian Education Director at each of the churches her husband pastored. Grayce completed her first residency of CPE at Tampa General Hospital (TGH), in 2009. After leaving the supervisory education program at TGH in 2010, due to her spouse being relocated to another part of the state, she did not return to CPE until 2012. Grayce then completed a second residency at UnityPoint Health-Des Moines. She has re-entered the supervisory education program and made Candidate Supervisor in October 2013. Grayce is currently in the process of writing supervisory theory papers; her goal is to accomplish FCM commissioning and later endorsement, in her quest to become an Associate Supervisor status by May 2017.



Rev. Joey Armstrong, M.Div.

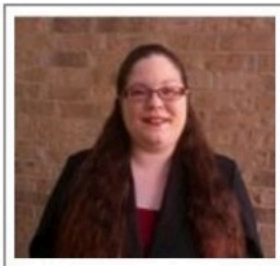
"Joey" is a hospice chaplain from rural Western NY. He has his BA in Religion/Philosophy from Houghton College and his M. Div. from The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. He has served as a parish youth director at Hope Lutheran Church, Arcade, NY, parish vicar at the Zion/St. John's Lutheran parish in Western NY and St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Lafayette Hill, PA, chaplain intern at Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, PA, and chaplain resident at Fairview Ridges Hospital, Burnsville, MN. His background is in music and the theatre arts.

He is also a writer, writing for thestake.org and medium.com. He is passionate about the intersection of arts and theology and where these things can breathe life into healthcare. Joey and his spouse, Cari, live in the Twin Cities area with their two kitties, Reverend and Rabbi. Cari does philanthropy work with Lutheran World Relief, and they attend Mercy Seat Lutheran Church together where Joey is congregational vice president.

Joey plays percussion and played trombone for many years in jazz bands. He has classical training as a vocalist and has sung all over the country with touring choirs and as a conductor. Joey is currently working on a novel and is finishing up his CPE residency. He will begin full-time employment as a hospice chaplain with Brighton Hospice in St. Louis Park on September 12. Joey is also a cartoonist and aspiring puppeteer.

With his FCM commissioning, Joey hopes to provide spiritual/emotional healthcare for patients, families, and healthcare staff in clinical and hospice settings in a way that is more inclusive of people's varying faith/denominational backgrounds. Joey says that "As a commissioned member of FCM, he "will be speaking as part of a larger community that seeks to creatively, and with the compassion of God, make space for suffering people to share their stories safely in a way that is healing for them."

Mountains and Plains Region Celebrates Newly Commissioned Ministers



Rev. Kristen "Katelyn" Elizabeth Melcher, M.Div.

In May 2013, Katelyn graduated cum laude with a Master's of Divinity (M.Div.) from Southern Methodist University. In her M.Div. program, Katelyn chose to concentrate on mental health classes centered on pastoral care and crisis ministries. Also, Katelyn received a Certificate in Pastoral Care from SMU, which required a demonstration of professional skills. Moreover, she went on to complete three years of Clinical Pastoral Education as a Chaplain Resident/Fellow at the Veteran's Affairs Hospital. During those years, she provided spiritual support to persons of all faith backgrounds. Her passion in ministry emphasizes inclusiveness, the social gospel, dignity, support, love, and respect of all people.

Katelyn has learned a wide variety of skills during hospital chaplaincy including preaching, facilitating Sunday worship, pastoral care hospital rounds to offer spiritual support in areas, such as anticipatory bereavement, grief/loss, addiction issues, mental health concerns, spiritual guidance, and prayer. Additionally, Katelyn has provided crisis ministry to persons who were having suicidal/homicidal ideation. She has provided pastoral care to patients before death, as well as, their surviving loved ones. She assisted in preparing a Memorial Service to honor all veterans who had died in the last quarter.

Katelyn graduated from Clinical Pastoral Education with two certificates; a Specialty in Mental Health and a Specialty in Substance Abuse Addiction Rehabilitation and Recovery. She is skilled in providing spiritual care when there is family conflict or situations which require more sensitivity and finesse. She enjoys Interfaith ministry to assist persons from all walks of life with loving spiritual care. Katelyn currently facilitates funerals for marginalized families and their loved ones.



Rev. Phillip L. Haltom

Phil is originally from Dallas and has made the Chicago area his home for the last 13 years. He is married, the father of four grown children, and has served in full-time ministry for over 30 years. The first 18 years were served with CRU International, where Phil ministered to university students, first as Campus Director at Louisiana State University, then as Regional Director for the TX/OK/AR/LA region for CRU.

From there, Phil went on to become a Presbyterian pastor, serving as both the church planter and then as senior pastor for two thriving Presbyterian churches in the Midwest. More recently, Phil has served as a consultant and coach for the PCUSA's 1,001 New Worshipping Communities initiative, where he helps lead an interdenominational effort shared by the PCUSA and ELCA for a new church plant in the Pittsburgh, PA area of Brookline.

Currently, Phil serves as a chaplain resident at Advocate Condell Medical Center in Libertyville, IL, in combination with finishing his Ph.D. in I/O Psychology, majoring in Organizational Leadership.

Phil's research is on redeeming, repurposing, and relaunching leaders who have lost their way, and his research is in conjunction with the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, having received ACPE national board backing for this research on redemptive leadership. Phil holds a B.A. in Business Administration from the University of Arkansas and an M.Div from Covenant Theological Seminary and enjoys both playing golf and taking long walks with his beloved wife, Sharon.



Mountains and Plains Region Celebrates Newly Commissioned Ministers



Rev. Sarah D. Powell

Sarah is a forty-year-old white woman, of Christian faith and a member of LaSalle Street Church. Sarah is an identical twin, of four children, who have enjoyed the loving support of their father and mother. She is also a person of patriotic commitment such that she is seeking the opportunity to serve in the United States Navy as a chaplain. She is well traveled and has visited such destinations as Guatemala, Mexico, Tanzania, Panama, Botswana, and South Africa as well as living in Venezuela, Australia, Costa Rica, Kenya, and China. Sarah's faith commitment began during her eighth-grade year, at the age of thirteen, during a John Guest Evangelistic concert at a local community college.

She walked forward to receive Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior. The decision was enabled by a loving relationship with her earthly father, a rich background of being regularly exposed to liturgy and hymns, and the partaking of the elements in the Presbyterian tradition realized as a gift of God.

Sarah grew up in Wheaton, Illinois, attended the University of Iowa majoring in Elementary Education and Spanish. She taught bilingual education for three years in the public schools before pursuing theological education and global service. In the past twelve years, Sarah has received a bachelor of theology from Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia (2004) a Master of Divinity from Trinity International University in Deerfield (2015) and completed one unit in Clinical Pastoral Education at Rush Medical Center (March 2016). She has taught English and Theology overseas in Costa Rica, Kenya, and China with various non-profit organizations.

Sarah has sought affiliation with FCM because she has found FCM to be "a Christian group whose members reflect the character of God and Christ in their value of other peoples and their benevolence toward them." She has found in FCM "a faith group that transcends the cultural wars, practicing love and acceptance toward all people regardless of age, race, culture, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religious background, disabilities or different abilities, whether one has money or not, a degree or not, or a home or not." Sarah has demonstrated an openness to learning, a passion for being present to people in ordinary daily life, times of crisis and celebration. She has a "delightful personality and a wonderful sense of humor, and a sense of spirituality which she embodies in her ministry. Sarah states, "It doesn't matter; my financial status nor my marital status, nor anything else that might be true of me— I belong, and I am accepted, and I want others to belong and experience the reality of acceptance—just as they are accepted by God. (Romans 14:4)" Currently, Sarah is a CPE Resident Chaplain at the Mayo Clinic Health System Eau Claire, in Wisconsin.



Federation of Christian Ministries

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October- 2016



TREASURER...Sue Ross

Financial Update

Current expenditures on budget... We are doing well in our numbers! Our largest expenditures come from three categories:

1. Circle of Directors meetings,
2. Communication and
3. Office expenses.

The Circle of Directors meetings are twice a year and provide the platform of how we work together to serve our members and as such are essential to the work of FCM. Secondly, we hope to communicate well to our members so our communication budget includes preparation of the Newsletters, Constant Contact that allows us to inform you of ongoing news and access for our website. Lastly, there are many costs to doing business – phone, printing, postage, and renting space for our files.

As of July 31, we spent \$35,924 year-to-date which is just under 45% of our 2016 budget. I anticipate that our expenditures will be in line with our projections throughout the rest of the year and we will end the year with stability. Income sources highlighted...

There are two sources of income that we receive: memberships and donations. Membership renewals are an integral part and the renewal period is here! Donations can be made in several ways – PayPal, personal checks payable to FCM (mailed to the treasurer) or automatic checks that can be arranged with your bank. Another method of donations can be to include Federation of Christian Ministries in your estate planning. You can include FCM in your Will or name FCM as a beneficiary on a life insurance or an annuity.

Help is on the way... After working as the treasurer since October 2015, I have found how busy the treasurer can be! I have asked for part-time help with bookkeeping and the request was approved by the Circle of Directors. I have been working with a bookkeeper in Indianapolis to establish a way forward. We are making a plan that will help us in the future and to utilize a professional bookkeeper for our record keeping.

If you have questions, feel free to send an email to treasurer@fcmmail.org.





How Far Have We Come? A Personal Perspective on Race and Equality

by Ron Davis, Great Lakes Co-Vice President

(Editor's note: Those who attended the Assembly a few weeks ago were moved and challenged by Rev. John Dorhauer's presentation of the unfinished business of racism in America. Deep thanks to our own Ron Davis for his open and honest sharing of his experience and for his invitation to take the first steps to "slow down, center ourselves and get things right" with regard to our sisters and brothers.)

President Obama recently said, "If I could choose when to be born young, gifted and black, I wouldn't choose 1927, nor would I choose 1957, or 1987, I would choose right now." Race relations in America have gotten way better now than how it was in days gone by. I see this to be true in many measurable ways, especially when I look back on my family's experiences over the last three generations.

When my father was raised in Deland, Florida everything was separate and very unequal. Volusia Avenue was the dividing line in our small town. Due to redlining, blacks could not buy property on the other side of that main street. My dad went to Euclid High School, a high school for blacks because black kids couldn't attend Deland High. Two of my aunts went to Florida A&M University without the option of going to other university due to their race. Law enforcement treated them as less than equal. They could not vote. I could go on and on.

As a child in the 60's, things started out the same. I went to the same segregated elementary school that my father went to and I lived in the segregated neighborhood. Yet, the civil rights movement was going on. Because of that work, new doors began to open up right before my eyes. My family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota at the time when I was to begin the 4th grade. When I walked into the doors of Bancroft Elementary School, for the very first time, there were white students and teachers in my school. I befriended a guy in my class named David. One day, he invited me into his home. I remember going there and playing with him and his black lab. I remember that day in my history for being a time to get to see and to know a white person as a person who was more like me than different from me. A huge wall came down and relationships were formed outside of my ethnic group, a practice that has continued in life for me.

Most of the stories from my life are different than that of my father's. I could go to schools that were closed to him. I could buy real estate in places where he couldn't. When I reflect on my nearest and dearest friends, work place peers (from 4th grade onward), running buddies, teachers and mentors—they are white, black, Hispanic—multi ethnic. I have sat at the table with people from different faith backgrounds, to the honor of God. What a blessing for me.

But, I must also be true to the exceptions to the rule when I experienced and felt racial pain. One day, while running with a Hispanic friend in San Gabriel, California—I was followed home by a police cruiser. The officer flew down the street. I walked towards the cruiser to see what was up. To my surprise the officer drew his gun on us, on me, while asking me to stop. His assumption was that blacks don't live here and I was a criminal. I had this kind of experience when I was 16 and 24 in both California and Minnesota.

When I reflect on what has been happening in America of late, I grieve. I am made very, very sad. I'm affected. The memories of my bad experiences came back to me instantly. Then I think—my 3 young daughters could possibly be in a car with a black man in an incident like the one that happened in Minnesota—isn't this 2016? This generation shouldn't be living out that which I lived out 30 years ago. We have come too far to go backwards. Oh how we need to have a renewal in our racial dialogue.

In the work that we do here at Nationwide Children's Hospital, we find ourselves in traumatic and very stressful situations more often than we want. Over the years, I have learned that when I am in a stressful situation there is a need to slow things down. In order to be professional I slow things down, center myself, in order to get it right. The patients and their families matter. Perhaps this work place principle applies beyond the work place and it reaches out towards matters regarding race, religion, economics and politics—slow things down, center one's self in order to get it right. We are one another's neighbor in the eyes of God and I want to walk in such a way as to show all of you that you matter and you have my love.





Pilgrim Journey Moves Through FCM

by Peter Strening, Specialized Ministries

"O Lord you have searched me and you know me...."
(Psalm 139:1).

In ministry we strive to make the best use of our gifts in the service of others. In order to serve, we have to have deep knowledge of the gifts we possess, and we have to know the places within ourselves that may keep us from full knowledge and use of those gifts. FCM provides us with a community of ministry that empowers its members to share the blessing of our gifts for ministry with those in our care and with one another, so that we may utilize the full range of gifts we have been given.

My name is **Peter Strening**. I serve FCM as the Liaison for the Committee on Specialized Ministry for the Mountains & Plains Region. The Committee on Specialized Ministries provides information and resources on the process of endorsement for those who minister in pastoral care, clinical pastoral education, and other ministries where endorsement by a religious body is needed for professional certification.

Members of our committee serve as support persons for those in the endorsement process, providing information, serving on committees and accompanying candidates on their journey to professional certification. It is a privilege for me to join others who are coming to appreciate the depth of their gifts for ministry.

I serve as a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Supervisor and Chaplain at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, part of the Northwestern Medicine system. In my role I have the opportunity to join with patients, family members, staff and students as they seek healing and wholeness. One of the blessings of my ministry is that I am reminded ever day of the potential for growth that lies within me. I continue to be a pilgrim and student of life and ministry.

FCM and Specialized Ministries entered my life at a time when I was in the process of discovering new perspectives on my gifts for ministry. Certified as a chaplain by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) in 1986 and as a CPE Supervisor by ACPE (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education) in 1997, I have been privileged to engage in the ministries of pastoral care and education in the context of an academic medical center for three decades. When my own religious/spiritual journey began to take a turn about 10 years ago, I found myself seeking a new denominational home. What this meant for me professionally: I needed a religious endorsing body that would reflect my commitment to ministering to the full, diverse population of God's people. I needed a community that would know me and help me to continue to discover the gifts for ministry within.

Through association with other members of ACPE who had encountered FCM, I joined the Federation in 2010, became Commissioned in 2011 and was Endorsed in 2012. While I value these credentials, what I value most about FCM are my fellow members, who have "searched me and who know me", who have validated my call to ministry and who have asked me to join them in validating that same call in others.

My participation on the Committee for Specialized Ministries has been challenging, fulfilling and educational. I have come to appreciate the relationships that FCM has with the wide range of religious organizations and endorsing bodies that assist in supporting and validating the ministry of our Endorsed members. Having recognition of our gifts for ministry is crucial to establishing and maintaining trust with those in our care. What I find is that by encountering such a wide range of gifts for ministry in others, I am inspired to search myself and to know myself in order that I may better serve. And, I am inspired to help others do the same.

I am available to my fellow Mountains and Plains Region members as a resource person who can provide support, information and partnership as we all seek to come to know our gifts for ministry. I invite all who are seeking to know more about Endorsement to contact me at pstrenin@nm.org. I look forward to hearing from you.

Reflections on the Jesus Traditions: Invitation to Unitive Consciousness

by Tom Leonardt, FCM



(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 issue we present the first of a two-part article written by **Tom Leonardt**, 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.)



Introduction When teaching theology at St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland, Ohio, in the late 60's and early 70's, I told students that if Jesus came to call us to anything, he came to call us to consciousness. The statement is true, but reflecting on that statement now it is clear to me that I had no idea what I was talking about.

What the statement meant to me then had more to do with the *object* of consciousness: for example behavior, like that found in the life of Jesus, which is loving, compassionate, just. Those behaviors are good and desirable but now I realize those behaviors primarily arose from ideas and will power. Consciousness, what Buddhists call "the observer" leads us to a fundamental experiential awareness that **All Is One**, that we are not separate from anything and certainly not from one another. I did not have the tools to grasp this and for that to change I began to do a Buddhist breathing practice.

I began to read Thich Nhat Hanh, Pema Chodron, and Ezra Bayda to gain some clarity about how the mind works and how we tell ourselves stories that we treat as if they were reality, which they are not. They are simply stories which we tell ourselves and out of which we create for ourselves mountains of suffering.

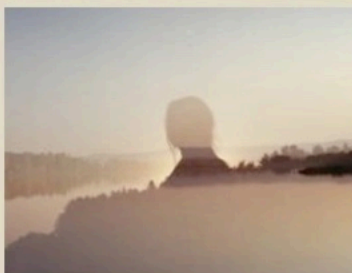
What is it really all about? One thing that the various religious traditions share in common at a fundamental level is that "All Is One". There is no separation. We perceive that we are separate beings but the reality is we are one. That does not mean that our perception is wrong, only that perception is not the full reality. For example, we tap on a table top and we perceive that the surface is solid. We know from physics that the surface is not actually solid but is mostly space. Our perception is not wrong but it does not reveal the reality we know from physics.

Though it is not central to mainline Christianity, there are clear statements in the Gospels we do possess that Jesus also experienced and taught that all is one. In John's Gospel Jesus is reported to have said "...that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you...that they may be [one] in us..." (17: 20-21). There exist other texts, outside the canonical gospels, which point in the same direction.

The Jesus Traditions The title at the top of this essay suggests there are many Jesus traditions. Mainline Christianity is an example of one Jesus tradition but as many writers have stated, it is the winners who write the history. Here too regarding Jesus, there are winners and losers and the "received story" comes from the winners beginning with the Roman Catholic Church.

Mainline Christianity, as found in our time, is based on this "received story." This is not a judgment it is simply the way it is in view of the evidence which is now available. But there is another story, a different story. Indeed of the two stories, one was championed by the Roman Church and the other was not.





Above we mentioned the Gospel of John. This very gospel is highly resonant with some of the hundreds – yes, hundreds – of other gospels which did not "make the cut." These were virtually unknown for hundreds of years because they were eventually destroyed. In 1945, however, a library was discovered near Nag Hammadi, in Egypt. What had been lost was now found. This discovery revealed there indeed exists another story which differs from the "received story." So there were originally two differing perspectives. The "received story" was understood to be literal. The other story was understood to be non-literal. The non-literal story was created over time by people who, in my view, engaged in practices that lead to knowledge, the Greek "*gnosis*," consciousness, "True-Self"-realization, enlightenment, mystical knowledge.

Mythology and Mystery Religions Before we say more about the other story, the non-literal one, it is important to mention mythology. By Joseph Campbell's definition, "A whole mythology is an organization of symbolic images and narratives, metaphorical of the possibilities of human experience and the fulfillment of a given culture at a given time."

It is critical to our purpose to avoid casting myth as "false," "untrue," or "a lie" simply because it does not manifest as physically, historically factual. Rather, the truth of myth reveals itself in a completely different arena, the arena of human symbology, meaning, significance.

Now back to the non-literal version of the Jesus story. The basic bare-bones, non-literal version actually predates the Jesus Story by hundreds of years. It probably began in Egypt and was a story about a Mystery god-man which reaches back into pre-history. The god-man's name in Egypt was Osiris, in Greek, Dionysus.

This being was God made flesh, savior, "Son of God." His father is God and his mother a mortal virgin. He was born in a cave on December 25 before three shepherds. He offers his followers the chance to be born again through the rite of baptism. He turns water into wine at a marriage celebration. He rides into town on a donkey with people waving palm branches to honor him. He dies at Eastertime as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. After dying he descends to hell, then on the third day he rises from the dead and ascends to heaven. His followers await his return as the judge during the Last Days. His death and resurrection are celebrated by a ritual meal of bread and wine, which symbolize his body and blood. ([The Jesus Mysteries: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?](#) by Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, Harmony Books, New York, 1999. Referred to hereinafter as *JM*.)

Of course, this is a familiar story to Christians. As stated above that same basic story appeared long before the advent of Christianity, having what Joseph Campbell would call "the same anatomy." Another example of "the same anatomy" would be Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

The Mystery Religions of the Mediterranean region repeated the basic story with adaptations to various regions or cultures. For example the names of the mystery god-man changed. As mentioned above he was known as Osiris in Egypt and Dionysius in Greece; in Asia Minor he was given the name Attis; in Syria, Adonis; in Italy, Bacchus; in Persia, Mithras (*JM* p.4). The Jesus story is a Jewish version of the basic story of the Mystery god-man.

In the Mystery Religions there was an exoteric or outer meaning, and an esoteric or inner meaning. The outer meaning is simply the story and its rituals as heard and practiced. The inner meaning is what that story and rituals actually point to. Great philosophers like Plato, Socrates and Pythagoras were actually initiators into the inner mysteries, inner meanings. The purpose of initiation was to bring initiates to consciousness, enlightenment, "True-Self" realization. There is a Sanskrit phrase, "Tat tvam asi," which might be translated as "Thou Art That." The point is fundamentally the same as the quote of Jesus above from the Gospel of John. "ALL IS ONE."





People of these Mystery Religions did not think that the tales were literally factual. The fruit was found in the inner meaning of the stories. So what about this story of the Mystery god-man? What did it mean?
Unity of Human and Divine The main point was to bring people to the awareness that although we think of God as a separate being the reality is that God is not a separate being. So in the story God becomes human, dies, often by crucifixion, and rises from the dead to invite us to realize that we too die and rise **knowing that we are God**. The resurrection is about realization of our true nature. The God-man dying for the sins of humankind is a pointer to our experience of being flawed, sinful, unworthy, self-hating. The death of the God-man and his resurrection indicate that **we are really Divine**. Resurrection is a way to convey *waking up, becoming conscious, "True-Self" realization, enlightenment*.

Crucifixion or death has to do with EGO, false-self. In the Jesus story, we die with Christ so that we can rise with Christ, so that we become the Christ. Paul talks about putting on the Mind of Christ, the Consciousness of Christ. Paul says that we are the body of Christ. In communion we receive the body of Christ so we can become the body of Christ. We become what we receive.

There are stories within the story for example, the God-man rides into town on a donkey. The donkey is a symbol of the Ego. So the meaning of the Master, riding on the donkey, focuses on who is riding. Our day-to-day experience often shows that the donkey is riding rather than our being the Master and doing the riding.

Baptism imagery and consciousness Another example is the reference to being born again through baptism with water. Interestingly, in the Mystery Religions three baptisms are mentioned, all for purification. The first mentioned was with water, the second with fire, and the third mentioned is breath or wind or air. We find these three baptisms also mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew and John. In Matthew, John the Baptizer says referring to Jesus, "He it is who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Breath) and fire. He will clear the threshing floor..." this clearing was done with a winnowing fan, creating wind (Matthew 3:11-12).

Also John's Gospel records a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Jesus tells Nicodemus "No one can enter into God's Kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit (Breath). Flesh begets flesh, Spirit begets spirit. Do not be surprised that I say you must be begotten from above. The wind blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes but you do not know where it comes from, or where it goes. So it is with everyone begotten of the Spirit (Breath)." (John 3:5-8)

This reference to baptism with water, breath and fire comes straight from the pagan Mysteries. They speak of initiations to progressive stages of awareness in the practice of pre-Christian and Christian Gnostics. Water baptism initiated the person, cleansed the person. But there is more to the ancient mysteries. It is all about the stages of becoming more and more conscious and can be identified as having four levels:

1. people completely dead to spiritual things, identified with their body like unconscious matter, the lowest level of human consciousness (*sarkics or hylics*);
 2. those who identified with their personality, ego (*psychics*);
 3. those who identified with their Spirit (*pneumatics*);
 4. those who realized that there is no separation, that all is one (*gnostics*).
- Gnostic Christians identified with Christ, Christ Consciousness, or Universal Consciousness (*JM* p. 127).

The various baptisms then, brought those initiated to progressively deeper consciousness, "True-Self" realization, enlightenment. There is no central authority detailing teaching and behavior. The outer story may be the same as for literalists, but there is much, much more. Adherents who were ready were called initiates. The guides were called initiators. In gnostic communities, women were treated as equals with men and held positions of influence.

Newsletter...VOL. 50 NO. 5 September/October- 2016



Early Christian communities were composed of both literalists and gnostics. This posed a challenge which was addressed though not solved by Paul and teachers following him (see I Cor. 1:10, and *JM*, p. 217).

"The Gnostics covered Asia and Egypt, established themselves in Rome and sometimes penetrated into the provinces of the West...Justin Martyr, a literalist, Marcion, an uncompromising Gnostic, and Valentinus, who tried to heal the Gnostic/Literalist division, were all important Christian teachers in Rome at exactly the same time. This is how diverse the Christian community was in the middle of the second century." (*JM* p. 217) Gnostics far outnumbered Literalists at this time.

Paul and the Gnostic tradition "Paul is a Jew who had embraced the ubiquitous Greek culture of the times. He writes in Greek, his first language. He quotes only from the Greek version of the Old Testament. His ministry is to Pagan cities dominated by Greek culture. Of these, Antioch was a center for the Mysteries of Adonis, Ephesus was a center for the Mysteries of Attis, and Corinth was a center for the mysteries of Dionysus. Paul was a native of Tarsus in Asia Minor, which by his time had surpassed even Athens and Alexandria to become the major center of Pagan philosophy. It was in Tarsus that the Mysteries of Mithras had originated, so it would have been unthinkable that Paul would have been unaware of the remarkable similarities we have already explored between Christian doctrines and the teachings of Mithraism." (*JM* p. 162)

So the great challenge that faces us as Christians is to go beyond the basic story. We are to become conscious of *who* we really are. That requires work on our part. We live in a culture which lives mostly in avoidance and denial. We are unaware of the dominance of ego both on the individual level and on the collective level. It is collective ego that sweeps us along with the crowd without asking where the crowd is headed. This "going beyond" is what Franciscan Father Richard Rohr's Wisdom School is about as well as other Wisdom Schools, e.g. Jean Houston. For Christians this means getting at the real meaning of Jesus, not staying stuck in the basic story and acting as though there is nothing further. Rohr's book, What the Mystics Know tells of a further reality, the reality that in spite of appearances, WE ARE ALL ONE.

In light of this evidence it is not at all surprising that we find Paul often using words and phrases previously known and used in gnostic circles. Paul speaks of himself "ascending to the 3rd heaven" (II Cor: 12: 2); Gnostics and initiates of the Pagan Mysteries taught that there are seven heavens (*JM*, p. 164). Theresa of Avila speaks of seven mansions. Paul writes, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him." (I Cor 2:9) In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says: "I will give you what eye has not seen, and what ear has not heard, what has not been touched, and what has not arisen in the heart of man." (*JM* p. 164)

Here are some gnostic terms which Paul uses: pneuma (spirit), gnosis (knowledge), doxa (glory), sophia (wisdom), teleioi (initiated), charismata (gifts) (from the Mystery term *makarismos*, refers to the blessed nature of one who has seen the mysteries). Paul speaks of himself as the "Steward of the mysteries of God," (I Cor 4:1) a term for a priest in the mysteries of Serapis. Paul writes, "Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face." (I Cor 13:12). Plato said, "...at present all we see is the baffling reflection of reality." This is also a ritual formula of the Pagan Mysteries. In *The Bacchae*: "He gave these mysteries to me face to face." (*JM* p. 163) Lucius Apuleius says of his initiation, "I penetrated into the very presence of the gods below and the gods above when I worshiped face to face." (*JM*, p. 163) Justin Martyr stated that: "The aim of Platonism is to see God face to face." (*JM*, p 163)

The Difficulties with Literalism Literalists hold that the Jesus Story of the Gospels was an historical happening. From that flows the need for some agreement or uniformity. Responsibility for such basic agreement or uniformity is assumed by a central authority. This central authority determines the teaching, rituals, and moral behaviors. This requires faith and participation on the part of the faithful.

The implication of this set of "givens" is that the primary object of faith is not God but the institutional authority. It is the authority that determines what is to be believed about God, the kind of God, the scriptures that are from God, what those scriptures mean and imply for faithful followers. Before the invention of the printing press, assurance of fairly unified teaching and practice was mostly not complicated. After the printing press, some of the faithful were forbidden to possess or even read the Bible. Then there was the Protestant Reformation which was mostly a reaction to Roman authority. Yet the Protestants kept substantially the same canon of scriptures. So authority splintered from the previous central authority and formed other centers...and that beat goes on.

Part 2 will appear in the November/December issue of the FCM Newsletter

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Newsletter Editor...John Polanski
Email: newsletter@FCMmail.org

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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
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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

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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