

Dialogue

A reflective journal about faith and action
from Madison-area Urban Ministry

Summer 2012

Here we are all in one place... when you come in from the cold

The following is a reflection I offered at Memorial United Church of Christ's Maundy Thursday service. I was asked to reflect on brokenness. As our community, state and country continue to struggle with our brokenness, I thought I would share this:

"Carrie Newcomer is one of my favorite songwriters. She writes about faith, frailty, hope and humanity. In her song Betty's Diner she tells the stories of men and women who frequent the diner and Miranda, the waitress who serves them. The chorus to the song goes:

'Here we are all in one place, the wants and wounds of the human race. Despair and hope sit face to face when you come in from the cold. Let her fill your cup with something kind, toast and eggs like bread and wine, she's heard it all so she don't mind.'

Dyanne was one of our first Circle of Support participants. She came through the doors at MUM with a life splintered by addiction and incarceration. She faced losing custody of all of her children. She faced the ongoing struggle of addiction and recovery.

Dyanne's life was never easy. She wept the day she sat with her Circle of Support members in court as the judge determined that her parental rights were to be terminated for her youngest daughter. (You see, changes in the

child welfare system counted her time incarcerated as if it were a willing separation.)

She wept but she didn't give up. Even as her heart broke she pulled herself together and worked to regain custody of her other four children. To do that, she needed a job and housing. Dyanne found out that it's hard to find housing and a job when you have a felony conviction. But she did it: she got a job, she got housing, she got her four children back.

The day Dyanne completed the Circles of Support program her Circle and MUM staff held a little graduation ceremony, complete with a plaque. Dyanne was thrilled; she had never graduated from anything before. The next day I got a phone call from a woman who had met Dyanne on the bus while she was on her way home from the graduation. Dyanne had been so excited that she struck up a conversation with the woman to tell her all about how well things were going and now this woman who had never been to prison wanted to know if she could get a Circle of Support.

Dyanne died from emphysema on February 1st, 2012. For seven years Dyanne was a presence at MUM. We might go for months without hearing from her but then she'd stop in, sometimes in trouble, sometimes to let us know how well things were going. Even when things were going well for Dyanne they were never easy.

Dyanne's children wrote in her obituary "Loving mother, daughter, sibling and more. Our heavenly father called her to be his number 1 angel... she left in memory five children and four grandchildren. She was the rock that kept everyone together. No matter what she was going through, she was always there to help other people regardless of who they were. She was never judgmental of what others had done. Whether we were happy or sad she made the day better with just a smile. She was the light of our lives and will be forever loved."

We don't always remember that the men and women who fill our jails and prisons are sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, friends and spouses and when they get out we often forget about that pesky line "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." As Dyanne was the rock for her family after she got out of prison, I'd like to think that we at MUM were her rock.

The last week of December a man name Richard called MUM looking for me. He told me he had read my name somewhere and someone he knew downtown said I was O.K.

Richard is trying to get the answers to some questions but he doesn't trust the systems; he is afraid that he'll be punished if he rocks the boat. He was looking for someone who might help him find some answers.

Here we are all in one place...

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Richard lives in his car. He has multiple medical problems. He carries an old backpack filled with important papers that he brought to show me.

He's trying to figure out a few things, like how come his food stamps were reduced when his social security went up because he lost more in food stamps than he gained in income. He could use the food pantry system more if it weren't for his dietary restrictions, low sodium. So much of the food available in our pantries contains high levels of sodium and so he relies on food stamps more than he can on the pantries.

He wants to know whether the money he spends to keep his car running counts against his assets for food stamps because he needs the car to get to his medical appointments.

Richard wants to know where he's supposed to vote. He lives in his car but has his mail delivered to an agency and his driver's license has a different I.D. He's afraid he won't be able to vote.

He asked if I could help find the answers and I told him I'd get some answers.

As Richard was leaving I reached out to shake his hand. I wanted to keep that arms length between us, but then he did it, he asked "can I have a hug?" So we hugged. It was a great bear hug. I don't know what that hug meant to Richard, but I know for me, after thirty years in human services, I have learned that it's sometimes easier, less painful, to love from a distance. Richard's hug meant that I had to get over myself, my hesitation. It meant that, in Carrie Newcomer's words, I had to come in from the cold.

Getting Richard's questions answered is easy. Making a real

connection, bridging the divide between despair and hope is the hard part. All Richard really wanted was to be heard and to make a connection. Maybe Richard's hug helped heal some of my brokenness.

If you're ever in the capital early mornings you might see another friend of mine: Randy. Randy is a big guy, a booming voice and very concerned about justice. I always try to find Randy first, because if he sees me first he yells "hey darlin' over here" and then my introverted self gets all embarrassed.

Randy is homeless. Randy reads a lot and he always has something to share with me about how some other community is addressing homelessness. He cares deeply about his neighbors on the street.

It was Randy who introduced me to Mark Wilson. Mark used to be the manager at the Taco Bell on the square. That's where he met and befriended Eric Manley, a homeless man in our community. When Eric's body was found on the steps of Bethel Lutheran Church Mark's life changed. He now spends his days trying to mend some of the brokenness in our community. Mark coordinates programs for homeless people through Bethel Lutheran Church, including a book club.

Such a normal, mundane thing: reading a book, talking it over with friends over coffee and donuts. But that club, with its simple mundane normalcy, is an acknowledgement of the humanity, the intellect, and the longing for belonging that exists in all of us.

Will you pray with me?
Gracious God remind us of our connections to one another. Help us to recognize and look beyond our own

brokenness. Help us look for ways to mend what has been broken in our community, our relationships and ourselves.

Help us to see that we are indeed all in one place, that our wants and wounds are connected, that when we are willing to come in from the cold we can share both our despair and our hope with one another.

May we fill another's cup with something kind. May we offer eggs and toast like bread and wine. Help us to listen and not mind even if we have heard it all before.

Amen."

In faith, Linda Ketcham



MUM is proud to be a member of the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice



United Way of Dane County

Dialogue is a reflective journal of faith and action printed by Madison-area Urban Ministry staff. The positions expressed here are the opinions of the authors and not necessarily the board of directors or funding sources of MUM. All individual members and all faith communities in Dane County receive a copy. Individual membership in MUM is encouraged. Give online or mail gifts to MUM.



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G.I.G. meeting Greater Isthmus Group Meets 3rd Thursdays

Immanuel Lutheran Church
1021 Spaight Street, 8:30 – 10 a.m.

GIG is a roundtable work group that meets monthly to address critical issues around housing stability for all persons. Representatives from various faith communities and other groups come together to work on common concerns that impact affordable housing for all. Please send a representative to GIG

NEXT MEETING: Thurs., June 21

For further information:

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barbara@emum.org or 256-0906

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

MUM is pleased to serve as the incubator (and a member) of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice. This group is an interfaith, statewide organization of progressive faith communities and leaders focused on protection of the social safety net. The group's mission statement reads "Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice unites progressive people of faith toward creating a state whose people and government address the real needs and raise the dignity of the hungry and poor; care for and heal the sick; and truly listen to the voices of all citizens. Drawing from the wisdom of our faith traditions, we accomplish this through educating our members and the broader community, and advocating with our legislators to advance the common good."

To learn more contact Interim President, Rabbi Bonnie Margulis at bmargulis@tds.net or Linda at MUM (608-256-0906). You can find the group on Facebook: Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice.

In April of this year members of the Dane County Board asked MUM if we would work to identify an alternate site for an Occupy Madison camp. Those of you following the Occupy Madison movement know that from October through April 30th when the site was closed, the number of individuals who were homeless began living at the site. Indeed, the site offered shelter to at times as many as 70 men and women who were homeless.

The site was closed on April 30th leaving many of those who had been living there with no where to go but back to State Street and the entry ways to the City County Building. MUM is working with faith community leaders, homeless services providers, community housing advocates and individuals involved with Occupy to



try to identify a new site, whether that would be a sort of tent city, co-op housing or some other model we don't yet know. We do know that homelessness has increased in our community over the last several years.

We do know that there is not enough transitional housing available in Madison or Dane County. We do know that with the legislatures passing of SB 127, a bill that eliminated many of the gains made in tenant protections over the last 20 years people are finding it harder and harder to find apartments, especially with an arrest or conviction record. We also know that shelters are not a solution to homelessness; permanent housing is the solution to homelessness. Our preliminary report is due to the County in early July.

MUM opposes proposed changes to W-2

On May 31st, MUM's Executive Director participated in a Press Conference (called by Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and the WI Counties Association), calling on the Governor to slow down the proposed changes to how services under the W-2 program are bid out. Thirty two counties in Wisconsin provide those services but the bid put out by the Department of Health and Family Services changes the bidding process to the extent that those counties are effectively locked out of applying. This includes Dane County which operates what has been touted as a model for the state in terms of the Job Center, a one stop shop for people in need of services. In addition, the bid sets up regional service areas, Dane County would be part of an 11 county area served by one provider, a model that we believe is unworkable in terms of cost and efficiency.

Both MUM and Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice called on the Governor to put those in need first, to eliminate the profit motive in the bidding process, and to rescind the current Request for Proposal and to invite counties and current providers of these services to the table to talk about the process. The WI Council on Children and Families also spoke against the bid as written, expressing the same concerns, that it will not serve vulnerable families well and introduces a profit motive into the delivery of crucial services to families in need.

To learn more about the proposed changes contact MUM: linda@emum.org or visit the WI Council on Children and Families at www.wccf.org

MUM in the News

MUM joins other groups to call for campaign finance reform

MUM has joined an effort led by the WISPERG and the WI Democracy Campaign to push for a special legislative session on campaign finance reform. On May 31st Jackie Austin of MUM joined a Press Conference calling on whomever wins the June 5 recall election to call a special session focused on campaign finance reform. What we are asking for is full disclosure of the source of campaign dollars and issue ads for state races, and for the state legislature and Governor to close loopholes that allow unlimited campaign fundraising.

In the words of WISPERG Director Bruce Speight, "We might have had a short winter in Wisconsin this year, but campaign fundraising and spending has been like an avalanche for the past ten months... The people of Wisconsin have been buried in campaign ads and literature from unknown sources that exploit loopholes to funnel unlimited campaign dollars into our democracy. At the very least, Wisconsin's gubernatorial candidates should pledge to provide Wisconsinites with transparency and accountability - values core to any healthy democracy."

According to the WI Democracy Campaign, in 2011 the senate recall elections, interest groups, candidates, party committees and recall committees spent a total of just under \$44 million, largely from undisclosed sources. So far in the 2012 recalls interest groups sponsoring independent expenditures and issue ads have spent more than \$30 million, with candidates for governor spending another \$30 million. Those numbers don't include the senate recall numbers.

Interest groups active in our state have reported spending over \$25 million in the recalls this year. Most of that money was raised from anonymous donors. WI Democracy Campaign Director Mike McCabe summed it up well: "Our elections are being poisoned and the public is being kept in the dark about who's paying for most of the poison."

The statewide coalition of groups, which includes MUM, is calling on the Governor to bring the legislature into special session this summer to advance four specific policy recommendations that would bring the state system closer to transparency and accountability:

1. New disclosure laws ensuring that the public can see where every single penny spent on state elections comes from;
2. Close the loophole in Wisconsin law allowing public officials targeted for recall to engage in unlimited campaign fundraising;
3. Require corporations to notify and get permission from shareholders in order to use their money for election spending;
4. Require that television, radio and newspaper outlets keep an online public record of advertising purchased for electioneering purposes.

Other members of this coalition include: the Coalition of WI Aging Groups, Wisconsin Farmers Union, WI Council on Children and Families, American Association of University Women, United Council of UW Students, WI Network for Peace and Justice, ABC for Health, Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter, Progressive Dane, Midwest Environmental Advocates, WI Association of Retired Americans, and the Citizens Utility Board, WI Voices.

Social Action Connection

MUM is updating our email list.

If you have been receiving Social Action Connection emails from MUM you already are on our email list.

If you would like to be on our email list but have not been receiving the Social Action Connection, you may send your request to join to jackie@emum.org.

MUM's Social Action Connection is a calendar to highlight MUM's activities and other activities/news in the Madison area concerned with interfaith dialogue and social justice.

Celebrate Madison-area Urban Ministry's
Annual Meeting
Justice and the Homeless: A Faith Perspective

Tuesday, June 19th
5:30 to 8:30

Please join us at First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive

This year's Annual Meeting will feature a panel discussion with Rev. Scott Anderson, Wisconsin Council of Churches; Rabbi Jonathan Biatch, Temple Beth El; Rev. Stephen Marsh, Interim Pastor at Lake Edge Lutheran Church; Rev. Dr. Jonathan Grieser, Grace Episcopal Church; Rev. Karen Gustafson, First Unitarian Society and Hostess for the Panel; Sarah Gilmore, Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Dane County Homeless Services Consortium; and Eric Pilcher, Social Justice Coordinator at First Unitarian Society as Moderator.

Registration is \$10 per person.

A meal of sandwiches, green salad, cookies and beverages is provided.

To register:

Email lori@emum.org with name, organizational or faith affiliation, and any dietary restrictions you may have. (You may pay online, return the form below, or pay at door.)

We look forward to seeing you there!

Yes! I'd like to support MUM's work for social justice!

Enclosed is my check to register for MUM's Annual Meeting on Tues., June 19 (\$10)

I am not able to attend the Annual Meeting, but enclosed is my donation

\$175 Sustaining annual \$100 Supporting annual \$65 Household annual

\$50 Individual annual \$_____ Student/Low/Fixed income (Please contribute based on ability)

*Please send check payable to Madison-area Urban Ministry or
Make your secure donation online at www.emum.org*

Name/s _____ Affiliation _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please mail your contribution to: Madison-area Urban Ministry, 2300 S. Park St., #2022, Madison, WI 53713

Mentoring, Family & Reading Connections holds Cook-out & Bike & Spring Plants Give-away!



On June 1, MUM's Mentoring, Family & Reading Connections program hosted a summer cookout and party for the children enrolled in Mentoring Connections. Mentoring and Family Connections Coordinator Fabu Carter was the lead organizer and hostess. MUM's Jackie Austin also helped coordinate the event and assisted with the activities. Circles of Support Coordinator John Givens was our grill master. Volunteers Tchaka, Linda Newman, Romilia Schlueter and Rev. Mary Pharmer were also on hand to help supervise and serve.

Our special thanks to Steve Meier with the City of Madison who offered a special bike safety presentation and demonstration; to Dream Bikes for providing bicycles for the bike giveaway and to Jason Garlynd with Oakhill Correctional Institution's horticulture program for offering a presentation on container gardening and healthy eating, and for providing plants for all of the kids to take home.

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A Faith Perspective
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 We look forward to seeing you there!
Details inside



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