

SPECIAL ISSUE

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Patricia J. Gibboney, CFRE



This is the season of the year that we look back and review what has occurred during the past 12 months. But, this time, we have another opportunity that enables us to look forward to the celebration of our 25th Anniversary. This will be a year to Celebrate Our Contemplative Roots.

When the Founders gathered together in 1986, they had little inkling of how their vision would develop. The Spirituality Network did not come with a business plan for success or as a mandate from any church authority. It came into existence because of poverty and thirst----the poor of spirit and the thirst for the living God. Today, 25 years later, this unique organization continues to reach out to those wanting spiritual enrichment for their journey. Thousands of individuals have grown spiritually through spiritual direction, retreats, programs, and special events such as Arti Gras. We have developed programs for clergy and for the caretakers who walk the journey with the seriously ill and terminal patients. We have developed partnerships with congregations and other community organizations who are looking for resources connected to spiritual deepening. And, for the past 15 years, we have offered Wellstreams, the Ecumenical Program in Spiritual Formation and the Art of Spiritual Direction.

Yes, much has been accomplished during these past 25 years. We have not been without our challenges, but those challenges have provided us with many unique opportunities. We have been blessed with many dedicated individuals who have served on our Board of Directors, and as volunteers who have given selfless gifts of time and expertise. We have been fortunate to have wonderful friends who have generously shared their gifts of finances and services. However, one of the greatest gifts that has been bestowed to The Spirituality Network has been the staff. Dominican Sisters Noreen Malone and Maxine Shonk set a tremendous example in the early years, of seeing this work as a form of ministry. That commitment continues to this day.

Every anniversary deserves to be celebrated, but there are certain milestone anniversaries that make you really reflect on what has been accomplished. This 25th Anniversary is very special for The Spirituality Network. During the upcoming year we will be celebrating this occasion in different ways but always keeping our contemplative roots in mind. We hope that you will join us along the way. We pray that the Spirit continues to bless and guide each of us on our journey.

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The Spirituality Network,
Inc. provides:

- Education and formation through the Wellstreams Training Program
- Spiritual direction referrals for groups and individuals
- Retreat planning and facilitation
- Programs to foster the spiritual life
- Connection to a variety of spirituality resources in central Ohio

As an ecumenical organization, the Spirituality Network serves people both within and outside of religious institutions.

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To receive updates on Network and community events via e-mail, go to spiritualitynetwork.org and click on "Join our Google Group" box in the lower right corner.

OF GRACE, GENEROSITY, GROWTH AND GRATITUDE: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR

GRACE! At my last formal meeting as Chair of the Spirituality Network Board, our spiritual director, Sharon Reed, invited us to identify and express any particular graced moments related to the past year of service. It was a beautifully rich experience to listen to how the Spirit had touched each of us. I had a strong sense that each month as we gathered prayerfully and intentionally, our meetings were full of grace! We have worked purposefully to be responsive to the challenge of holding fast to our contemplative roots, while moving forward cognizant of the dynamics of these challenging times and ever-changing spiritual needs of those we serve. Out of our sacred conversations on sustainability emerged a deeper understanding, strong commitment, and renewed engagement. Our grace-filled third Tuesdays have resulted in a solid strategic plan that will help set the course for now and into the future. Coupled with the wisdom and care of Pat Gibboney, Network executive director, and God's amazing grace, the Spirituality Network is not only being sustained but thriving.

GENEROSITY! As a board we have taken very seriously our charge to be responsible stewards of our precious resources. We are profoundly blessed by the immense generosity of the staff and the many, many volunteers and people who support the activity of the Network by sharing time, talent, and treasure. There are too many to name individually; however, on behalf of the board, I would like to especially acknowledge and thank Sandra Kerka and Liz Kuhn for the many hours of time, for sharing their talents, and for selfless dedication to furthering the mission of the Network. Also, through the kind generosity of Maxine Shonk, OP, the author of *Blessing upon Blessing*, the Network in turn is greatly blessed! Maxine's sharing of book sale profits has yielded an unexpected and much needed windfall that has helped to keep our budget on track. In addition, the Development Committee has been proactive in creating ease of giving through electronic means, initiating a Circle of Friends of the Network to help establish a financial base for budget planning, and continuing to explore innovative ways to generate income.

GROWTH! The fastest growing segment of the population are those who identify themselves as spiritual but not religious. Many are searching, seeking, hungry and thirsty for the God of life. A growing number of friends following us on Twitter and Facebook and hundreds of newcomers to the website are significant indicators of that fact. We are experiencing

many other growth trends as well: a growing number of inquiries about spiritual direction, an expanding quilt ministry, and increased outreach through Women to Women. The diversity of Network programs and offerings continues to meet people in various ways and on a variety of levels. What an amazing creative gift Amanda Stone Cushing's tireless effort brings to accomplish that! There is increased enrollment in Wellstreams as well. The deep dedication of Carol Ann Spencer, OP, to preserving and expanding the quality of Wellstreams has made this a signature and bright beacon for the Network. In an exciting step forward, the board approved a provisional period for collaboration and support of a ministry to those with chronic disease and their caregivers called Always We Begin Again, designed, developed, and implemented by Judy Smoot, a Wellstreams graduate. A final decision to hold this ministry under the Network umbrella will be made once it is determined that this partnership is mutually beneficial. It is an innovative and creative way to *network*. The board has continued to dream dreams and to envision the future. As one member put it: to create The Spirituality Network version 2.0. This requires additional technological proficiency as more and more turn to the Internet for information, inspiration, and enrichment. The board made a unanimous commitment to upgrade antiquated office equipment without affecting our tight budget. And so, the Network continues to grow based on the dreams of the founders, true to the mission, living fully into the now and positioning ourselves for the future, because we have been courageous in asking ourselves the tough questions and confronting current realities.

GRATITUDE! The grace, generosity, and growth we have experienced individually, collectively as a board, and communally as a Network brings a deep sense of gratitude on many levels! I, personally have learned, been stretched and humbled by the inspiring servant leadership of each staff member and each board member. I am filled with heartfelt gratitude to have had the honor and privilege to serve as chair of the board of this amazing entity called the Spirituality Network. As we launch this 25th year of the Network, we face a bright future full of *grace*, blessed by the *generosity* of many faithful supporters, and sustained in a healthy, holy *growth* that leaves the many whose lives are touched and whose souls are nourished with a sense of *gratitude* to the God who gives life and gives it in full measure!

Blessings of Peace and Love to you,
Katherine Murphy Mertzluft

SPIRITUALITY NETWORK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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WELLSTREAMS ANNUAL REPORT

Carol Ann Spencer, OP
Coordinator of Wellstreams

www.wellstreamscolumbus.org

Wellstreams is a two-phase program designed to enhance the personal spiritual growth of participants and provide training in spiritual direction and companioning. The program is open to women and men of all faith traditions who have a desire to enhance their own spiritual journey and wish to discern their call to share with others.

On May 11, 2011, we graduated 16 from our seventh Wellstreams Ecumenical Program in Spiritual Formation and the Art of Spiritual Direction. This brings the total for the seven classes to exactly 100 graduates. For this class, we had 16 supervisors/faculty and 1 intern. The Wellstreams Program began in January 1996 and will celebrate its 15th anniversary in this calendar year.

Our eighth class began in August 2010 with 25 participants and is finishing up its first year on June 10-11 with a Discernment Retreat. Currently there are 23 students.

Registration for the ninth class will open in September 2011 and the new class will begin in August 2012. We start a new class every other year. Please check our website for more information (www.wellstreamscolumbus.org).

Wellstreams class of 2011: front row: Jan Hoffman, Jan Anible, Cathy Davis, Sara Ward, Magdalen Castillo-Lewis; middle row: Dave Nickel, Joanna Samuelson, Debbie Brenneman, Kathy Whitt, Nancy Hardin, Sr. Carol Ann Spencer; back row: Margot Connor, Sheila Lafferty, John Kauffman, Lisa Heckaman, Noel Kupras-Bauer, Myra Hayduk

The Wellstreams Advisory Board continues to look at how to better market our program and to look at new sources for our scholarship fund. This past year the Board conducted a survey with our graduates to see what they were doing since they completed Wellstreams and to discover what further inservice opportunities would be helpful to them. One of the requests that surfaced was some training in retreat ministry. The Board will begin to explore the possibility of a certificate program in this area. Currently, there are eight members on our board with several finishing up their terms. We look forward to welcoming five new members in August.



The workshop schedule for Wellstream has been completed for 2011-2013. Some of the topics will be Listening Skills/Compassionate Communication, Developing Healthy Beliefs and Values, Introduction to Enneagram, Eco-Spirituality and the New Cosmology, Mid-Life Directions, Family Systems and Grief and Loss. Please watch for these in the newsletters. They are open to the public.

We are grateful for the wonderful participants, faculty, supervisors and the Network and Wellstreams Boards who are our greatest assets in our training program. This program continues to meet a need for spiritual directors and companions, along with providing other resources for spirituality and prayer groups in the various denominations that are represented. Perhaps, the greatest benefit of the program is providing a safe and holy space for each to attend to one's inner growth, along with the support of many companions on the journey.



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PROGRAM REPORT

The Spirituality Network is a 501(c)3 nonprofit ecumenical organization founded by Christians of the contemplative tradition.

Beginning in 1986, the Spirituality Network was envisioned as an interfaith outreach to address the "thirst for the God of Life." Though the Network was founded and has been sustained primarily by individuals from the wide spectrum of Christian faith, our aspiration is to be a community of acceptance and inclusion.

It is therefore, our vision that:

The Spirituality Network will be an inclusive resource for individuals and groups in Central Ohio who share a desire for spiritual growth and for helping others on their spiritual paths. Through a rich and diverse network of resources, we seek to provide a lasting sense of hope, peace, and purpose for our community.

I am blessed by the support and encouragement I receive from the Program Committee. This talented group works to offer a variety of opportunities to explore, experience, and learn about spiritual themes based on feedback from the community and program participants. This past year included the diverse topics of peacemaking, ecospirituality, dreams, and Ignatian, Celtic, and Benedictine spirituality. We held the 11th *Arti Gras! Celebration of Art and Spirit*, had our sixth year of the Sacred Feminine series, and our fourth year of semiannual respite retreats for ministers. We gathered in classrooms, churches, meeting rooms, and beautiful natural settings for prayer, reflection, learning, faith sharing, and fellowship. More than 250 people were served through these programs this year.

With an impressive roster of spiritual directors and retreat leaders, we are able to meet an increasing number of requests for spiritual direction, retreat leadership, and small group facilitation. Although they may not know it, the time that I get to spend with people who are seeking spiritual support is a sacred privilege. I prayerfully listen to their soul stories and longings in order to offer two or three possible referrals. With the combined spiritual direction referrals and retreat and program facilitation requests, we served another 175 people through our resource members.

As we plan programs for the coming year, we have begun a process of inviting program proposals that are in keeping with the mission of "assisting those who thirst for spiritual growth" and support the contemplative approach to spirituality. These proposals will be reviewed and decided by the program committee based on current program needs, schedule availability, and relevance of the theme. Please contact me if you would like to know more about the proposal process.

In the coming year of celebration, I will work with the Program Committee to develop programs and services that honor our contemplative roots while we tend to the seeds of future growth. Your input and feedback are very important in the planning process and we welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions.

This has been a blessed year for The Spirituality Network, beginning last autumn with the long-awaited publication of Sr. Maxine Shonk's book, *Blessing upon Blessing*. The book was a labor of love and I had the privilege of being a part of the "midwife" team that assisted, coached, and cheered Sr. Maxine along the way. The program committee collaborated with the Blessings Book team to launch this beautiful book with a dessert reception and book signing in October.

"May the God of VISION be with you. May you see as God sees and dream as god dreams for the world around you." From Blessing upon Blessing © Sr. Maxine Shonk, OP

Amanda Stone Cushing, Program Coordinator
Program Committee: Linda Bryant, Pat Gibboney, Donita Harris, Linda Schoen, Dan Schleppe, Sara Ward

IN DEVELOPMENT

*"Wonderous Worker of Wonders,
I praise you, not alone for what has been,
or for what is,
but for what is yet to be,
for you are gracious beyond all telling of it."
~ Ted Loder, Guerrillas of Grace*

At this moment we are indeed most grateful for what has been, for what is and for what is yet to be. This past year, the Spirituality Network embarked on some new and innovative efforts to raise the funds necessary to sustain the ministries we hold so dear. Our many supporters were gracious beyond all telling of it. as many gifts were made in support the Network. We launched a new Circle of Friends giving program as a way to encourage recurring gifts to the Network as we also made it possible for gifts and purchases to be made by credit card and over the internet. Already, 42 individuals have given their support to the Circle of Friends.

As we near the end of the year, we are pleased to tell you that the Network has been given a generous grant from the Marian Foundation to support the critical need for new equipment and technology in the office. The foundation's support of \$2,000, helps us towards a goal of \$6,000 needed to upgrade computers, software and other inadequate office equipment. I hope you will consider making a special gift to this particular effort, even though many of you have already made an annual contribution. You may do so easily online by coming to our "virtual event" at <http://www.spiritualitynetwork.org/SNVirtualParty.html>.

With a grateful heart,
Rebecca Bass
Spirituality Network Board Development Chair

Spirituality Network—Summer 2011