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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.

STATE OF THE NETWORK: 2012



Twenty-five years. No easy feat for any organization, let alone for a small nonprofit in what could arguably be some of the most challenging economic times in decades. The Spirituality Network has not only made it through that significant milestone, but has done so positioned well for the future.

Several factors come to mind that make this a reality.

First and foremost, the Spirituality Network is an organization deeply rooted in its mission. It knows what it's about and that stays central to everything it does. You can find comfort in that the board's and staff's decisions are all based on prayer and a razor sharp focus on our mission.

Second, a core group of individuals are committed to that mission and the organization's success, starting of course with a dedicated staff that consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty. The value exhibited by a small, but mighty part-time staff cannot be overstated. Pat, Amanda, and Carol Ann are the engine that drives an ever-improving organization. The staff is supported by volunteers who graciously give of their time and talents to enable the Network to soar. And of course, the Network board is highly engaged, insightful, and committed to the Network's sustainability.

Third, the organization made significant progress toward the goals of our strategic plan. We set our sights high. There were aspects of the plan that did not get fully met, but where progress was made, it was remarkable. Most important, our budgeting process is now looking out over a 3-year time period. This not only helps us to better anticipate annual variances in our income and expenses, it also helps us take a longer range view to ensure the Network's ongoing sustainability. Other notable improvements from our strategic planning were ensuring that we have the technology to support our staff's work and the introduction of objective setting for staff positions. Stay tuned for more progress during our next fiscal year!

Fourth, from a programming perspective, we continue to equip spiritual directors through the Wellstreams program as well as foundational events like Arti Gras where participants can express their spirituality in new and creative ways. This year, we also renewed our focus on Women to Women and we also began a partnership with Always We Begin Again (AWBA), which could be a model for mutually beneficial relationships with other organizations that are compatible with our mission.

We're certain to encounter a few speed bumps now and then during the Network's next 25 years. But we're off on our next quarter century with a great head start. We hope you'll be along for the ride.

Respectfully submitted,
Alex Rodriguez
Chair, Spirituality Network Board of Directors

REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHAIR

REFLECTIONS

*Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.*

Chances are, you've prayed these words. Perhaps recently. Perhaps even daily.

Oh, so familiar. And yet, maybe not so. I've learned that when things are frequently in front of us, we can take them for granted. I fear that's been the case for me with these oft-repeated lines from the Lord's Prayer. So, I've been intentionally meditating on them over the past several weeks.

I have typically interpreted these words to bring comfort. After all, who wouldn't want the assurance that God's plan ultimately works out? Good triumphs over evil.

But is that what Jesus really intended? What if these words were more challenging than consoling?

Take a moment to paint a mental picture of heaven. Your picture of heaven. Imagine beyond the "pearly gates" and "streets of gold." Scripture tells us that in our Father's house, there are many rooms. Envision them.

But keep going deeper.

What are the boundaries or limitations you've placed on heaven? I love the quote on the building at First Congregational Church: "Never put a period where God placed a comma." What are the periods we've placed on God's plan that were never His intent? Many of us may be very surprised at who we encounter within those pearly gates once that day arrives.

So, now, let's make this more relevant to us today. Do we really mean it when we say "on earth as it is in heaven." Not that heaven won't ultimately be a pretty cool place. But are we working toward making earth into the heaven we hope to inhabit?

No tears in heaven? What are we doing to ensure that there are no tears here on earth? Constant rejoicing? How are we expressing gratitude for what we have today, instead of wishing for something we don't have.

Are we expecting to wear a halo and wings. Perhaps we should start trying them on for size now.

Do Justice
Love Mercy
Walk Humbly

Alex Rodriguez

SPIRITUALITY NETWORK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Patricia J. Gibboney, CFRE

The official celebration of the 25th year of The Spirituality Network came to an end at the Annual Meeting on June 1, 2012. However, we continue to celebrate the many blessings that we have received from all of you and look forward to another 25 years of reaching out to those who seek spiritual nourishment.

This past year has truly been a time to celebrate our contemplative roots. Our programs have offered a look at forgiveness, as well as an exploration of contemplative prayer. We have served as facilitators for retreats, provided spiritual direction to many individuals and groups, and have continued celebrating and connecting to the feminine aspects of the Divine through the Sacred Feminine monthly programs. Our outreach ministries continue to grow, reaching more people with spiritual hunger. The listening ministry of Women to Women meets with those suffering from domestic violence, addiction, homelessness and poverty. Always We Begin Again provides spiritual support to those suffering with chronic disease and their caretakers. The Wings & Prayers group creates the prayer quilts that comfort patients in hospice care. None of this would be possible without the dedication of countless volunteers.

We are always looking for new opportunities that will provide the financial sustainability of the Network. During the past several months we have been blessed with several opportunities that, thanks to many of you, have been very successful. Our virtual fundraiser to raise \$3,500 to purchase and update our technology has moved us to the 21st century with new computers, a copy/scanner/fax machine, a digital camera, and new computer programs that will assist us with better recordkeeping. The Big Give fundraiser and match, sponsored by the Columbus Foundation, provided us with over \$13,000 that has been directed toward our programs. Sister Maxine Shonk's book, *Blessing upon Blessing*, has sold over 3,000 copies and her new book, *Silver Linings: Blessings for Shadow Times*, is also on its way to becoming a best seller. Our Circle of Friends has grown to over 50 members who have committed to making recurring annual gifts. The generosity from so many friends has made this an awesome year!

I have been very fortunate to work with the dedicated and passionate board members who believe in the mission of the Spirituality Network and who have made the financial stability of the Network a top priority. I will miss the wisdom of Sister Maxine Shonk, OP and Wayne Rapp who are leaving the board after two 3-year terms of service. I am looking forward to working with Sister Joan Supel, OP and Rick Wicks who are joining the board and am grateful for the gifts that they bring. Working alongside Sister Carol Ann Spencer, OP and Amanda Stone Cushing is a joy. Carol Ann does an outstanding job as the Director of the Wellstreams Training Program and Amanda's creative talents add a special touch to the programs we offer as well as Arti Gras.



At our Annual Meeting on June 1, our keynote speaker, Diana Butler Bass reminded us that spirituality is on the rise. As she complimented us on our mission of serving those seeking spiritual growth, she also challenged us to continue offering hope and direction to individuals and congregations who are longing to participate in the new vital and fresh way of faith that stays true to the message of the Spirit. It is our belief that we are ready for that challenge. We hope that you will continue with us on that journey.

Diana Butler Bass speaks about "Being Spiritual and Religious: Paradox or Possibility?" at the Network annual meeting.



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 companionship. 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. The Wellstreams Program began in January 1996.

Our eighth class began in August 2010, with 25 participants and just finished its fourth semester with 21 students. The fourth semester is usually the fullest because the interns begin to work with two outside directees and then participate in a silent 6-day directed retreat over the summer.

Registration for the ninth class opened in September 2011 and the new class will begin in August 2012. Currently we have about 17 registered for this class. We start a new class every other year. Please check our website for more information: www.wellstreamscolumbus.org.

The Wellstreams Board welcomed five new members last September and worked with the Strategic Plan of the Spirituality Network Board to look at the structure and plan for term limits and rotation for the Wellstreams Board. Janice Bachman, OP and Carol Ann Spencer, OP drew up plans for a practicum for some Wellstreams graduates who desired to get experience in giving directed retreats. The first practicum will take place from August 5-11, 2012 at Our Lady of the Pines in Fremont, Ohio. Both Janice and Carol Ann also wrote a proposal for a grant for this project and received \$3,000 from the Dominican Sisters of Peace Shalom Fund. The Wellstreams Board is currently evaluating the website and will continue with this project in September.

The workshop schedule for Wellstreams for this past year included the following: Listening Skills/Compassionate Communication, Developing Healthy Beliefs and Values, Introduction to Enneagram, and Eco-Spirituality and the New Cosmology (Awakening the Dreamer). The workshops for this fall will include Mid-Life Directions, Family Systems, and Grief and Loss. Please watch for details in the fall newsletter. 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 sacred space for each to attend to one's inner growth, along with the support of many companions on the journey.

Wellstreams graduates gathered for a reunion at the annual meeting, June 1.



PROGRAM REPORT

Amanda Stone Cushing
Program Coordinator



Our theme for this anniversary year has been “Honoring our Contemplative Roots and Seeding Our Future.” The program committee put together a rich selection of programs and events that have both honored our roots and seeded the future. Two 4-week series provided in-depth introductions to contemplation, including both instruction and experience. We hosted several days of reflection on topics of forgiveness, Sabbath rest, and praying with the Prodigal Son. Attendees to these programs asked for more opportunities for contemplative prayer in community. We are currently developing the fall/winter schedule and will include several options for contemplative prayer.

We have definitely seeded the future with our first online series this summer. “Creativity as a Spiritual Practice” is underway with full enrollment and enthusiastic participation. Virtual community offers flexibility of time, location, and participation, making it possible to connect with people from all parts of the world. Although we are still committed to providing most of our events and programs “the old fashioned way,” the online format is one option for future programs.

Also looking to the future, we hosted a small, yet powerful experience of contemplation in action at our Urban Retreat. Church for All People on Columbus’ south side provided the setting for a day to be present with and to one another as we spent time in the United Methodist Free Store. As those who attended this retreat discovered, giving your presence is transformative!

The 12th Annual Arti Gras! Celebration of Art and Spirit honored our roots and seeded the future. Trinity Lutheran Seminary hosted this year’s event which was sponsored, in part, by the Franklin County

Neighborhood Arts Program. More than 100 people attended, with about one third to one half being new to the event. We see the future of spiritual formation being intertwined with creative expression and recognize the deep roots of contemplation that feed creativity. We are already looking ahead to Arti Gras! 2013. Stay tuned...

In addition to the outward aspects of the Spirituality Network’s programs, the program committee has been instrumental in creating new program guidelines and policies this year. These will help us attend to what you in the Network community want and need in the way of programs and events. Your input and participation are not only welcome, but needed. Please contact us with your questions, comments, encouragement and proposals.

Recently, a friend of the Spirituality Network told me that she experiences our gatherings as a “welcome oasis in the desert” of her busy life. She went on to say that she appreciates the “atmosphere of respect and reverence” we foster, a contrast to the pervasive incivility in our culture. As I reflect on her words I am reminded of Sr. Noreen Malone’s own spiritual thirst that led her to begin dreaming the Spirituality Network over 25 years ago. Moving into the future of the Network, I will continue to look for ways that we might help you tend to your spiritual thirst and help you find a little oasis in your busy life.

Program Committee: Linda Bryant, Jackie Dean, Pat Gibboney, Donita Harris, Katherine Murphy Mertzlufft, Dan Schleppe, Linda Schoen, and Sara Ward

Creativity is a spiritual practice at Arti Gras!



ALWAYS WE BEGIN AGAIN

2011-12 was an exciting first year for Always We Begin Again. AWBA offered two Internet-based retreats serving caregivers and those with chronic disease living in our immediate area as well as nationally and in Canada. In addition, participants were served through the ministry of an equine-assisted learning workshop and an overnight retreat experience. We successfully completed our first fund raising campaign for the development of a custom website to be operational in late August. We recently welcomed two new Board members who bring gifts and experience in fund raising for nonprofits, social media and marketing. Those gifts round out our Board's existing experience in the areas of business, legal, finance and education. All of our board members have a passion for providing spiritual care for caregivers and those with chronic disease. We are grateful for the support of The Spirituality Network as our fiscal agent and their hands on support with board development and workshop materials in this past year. With the launch of our new website, social media support and new offerings to be announced for fall and winter, we are excited about the opportunities to serve a wider audience that includes those directly impacted by chronic disease as well as caregiving professionals, faith communities and other like-minded individuals seeking additional resources and/or care for themselves as they care for those in their community impacted by chronic disease. We are grateful for whatever you can offer to help us get the word out to those who might benefit from this form of support. If you are interested in learning more about AWBA and/or have any ideas you would like to share, please contact Judy.

Judy Smoot
 Executive Director, Always We Begin Again
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The Spirituality Network is an ecumenical outreach addressing the "thirst for the God of Life." Founded by Christians, our aspiration is to be a community of acceptance and inclusion. We seek to create hope, peace, and purpose in our community.

We Believe:

- That God's love is unconditional
- That each person is drawn into relationship with God through the circumstances of human experience
- That a healthy, ongoing relationship with God, self, and all of creation moves one to respond authentically to the needs of others
- That a contemplative life stance must be rooted in prayer, nonviolence, and a radical passion for truth

We Provide:

- Education and formation through the Wellstreams Program
- Spiritual direction referrals for groups and individuals
- Retreat planning and facilitation
- Programs to foster the spiritual life, including continuing education and professional enrichment for those in caring ministries
- Outreach to the underserved in society, through programs, scholarships, and other enrichment opportunities

We Serve:

- Both those with and without formal faith affiliations
- Both those with and without ability to pay.

The Spirituality Network, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

WINGS & PRAYERS QUILT MINISTRY

Now in our second year of making lap quilts for hospice patients, the Wings and Prayers quilt ministry has produced more than 35 quilts. We have settled into a spacious room in the education wing at the First Congregational Church and have our own storage area. We've been blessed with donations of fabric that are sure to keep us inspired and productive in making creative quilts to uplift the spirits of the patients whom we seek to comfort with our quilts.

New members are always welcome to join us on the second Saturday of the month, from 9:30am to 12:30pm. For more information, please contact Mary Ellen George at 614/878-1920 or via e-mail: kmgeorge@wowway.com.

