

## Counselor's Corner: *Living Your Values*

by Margaret McCray, D. MIN., LMFT, Westminster Counseling Center

612.332.7743 ext. 222

[mmcraym@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:mmcraym@wpc-mpls.org)

[www.ewestminster.org/counseling.asp](http://www.ewestminster.org/counseling.asp)

There is a current explosion of interest and research into the interplay between science and religion, specifically the healing power of spirituality in the field of mental health. Certain new mental health therapies that employ "mindfulness" as a component of treatment show promise in alleviating various kinds of emotional distress such as depression, anxiety, addiction, obsessive thinking and even some forms of more serious mental illness.

"Mindfulness" is focusing one's attention on the present moment. It is not necessarily a spiritual activity. Yet it is a discipline that by its very nature leads to heightened awareness of the nature of ultimate concerns: life and death, joy and suffering, love and hate, peace and no peace. When we contemplate such dichotomies we are deep in the territory of spirituality. (For more information on mindfulness see: Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*.)

As Christians we have been on the mindful journey of Lent, aware of how our fear and wanting can lead to sin. I think it is unfortunate that in facing our shortcomings, especially at this time of the church year, we can get caught up in the insidious emotions of shame and self-loathing. Jesus told sinners to "Go, and sin no more." When we forego the emotion that awareness of our sinfulness can create, our mind stays clear and we can see the choices we have for who we want to be, how we want to feel and act.

Now in this season of Easter we celebrate the good news of God's promise of new life. In the light of God's redeeming love we can choose to turn from fear and wanting to a meaningful life of living out what we value most.

*Adult Ed. continued from pg. 2*

Course description: *John Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*  
John Calvin (1509-1564) is the most important disciple of Martin Luther in the 16th Century, even though he is regarded as the principal theologian in the Reformed tradition that is distinguished from Lutheranism. Through reading and discussion of primary texts, this seminar explores the relation of Calvin's theology to Luther's and asks what it means to speak of a "Reformed" tradition in Protestantism.

Auditing this class requires a simple enrollment through United Seminary, a \$10.00 non-refundable application fee, and \$150 for the class tuition.

As we celebrate our 150 years as a congregation in the Reformed tradition, this is an outstanding opportunity to learn more about what that means and to internalize our sense of identity as Reformed Christians.

Please contact the Rev. Kathy Michael for more details regarding application and enrollment, [kmichael@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:kmichael@wpc-mpls.org).

"Values" are not a new concept in pastoral counseling. Scripture gives us a remarkably timeless list of values in Galatians 3:22-23. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things."



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Being aware of one's values is an integral part of one of the mindfulness therapies that research has shown to have positive effects on the alleviation of emotional distress. Kindness, patience, generosity, being a loving person, concern for the care of God's creation, caring for one's children: these are all values. But naming what we value most is not always easy.

The following is a helpful exercise for recognizing your values:

Imagine that you have died and you have the unique opportunity to watch your funeral or memorial service. You have the even more unique opportunity to decide who will be at your funeral and what they will say about you. What purpose or meaning to your life would you want to be obvious to them? What would you want to be said about you? What do you want your life to have embodied in your time on this earth? These are your "values." (For more on values and mindfulness see: S.C. Hayes, *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life*.)

Values are not goals. We don't reach a point where we have attained our values. We live them; we live in them. When we realize we are not living them we can choose to turn back in their direction and live them once again. Living our values is not about being perfect and never sinning; it is about turning towards them, choosing them, as we make decisions every day about how we live that moment, that day.

You have a new life to live! What do you want your life to be about? What values do you choose to live? What will you turn to again and again?

**Thank You!** I would like to thank my Westminster family for the many cards, prayers, calls and visits that I have received during my long hospitalization and recovery. It was truly overwhelming to re-read the many cards last week. Such an outpouring of love and concern! February 4 was the first Sunday I was able to attend church again. It was like returning home. Tim's Lenten Sermons *On the Way Home* have been a constant reminder to me of the welcoming presence of our Westminster family. Thank you to each and every one of you for your love and concern.

*Ann Bursch*