

Counselor's Corner: Sacred Encounter

by Margaret McCray, LMFT, Westminster Counseling Center

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My life is blessed in many ways, a major one being that I have found a vocational niche that gives me satisfaction, a sense of purpose, daily challenges and a feeling of contributing to good in the world albeit on a small scale.

Like all vocations or "jobs," mine includes stress and disappointment. At times it is tedious and frustrating. Yet when I examine where I am vocationally I always re-up and feel gratitude for each day I can go to work and find joy and meaning in what I do.

That being said, I am exceedingly grateful to the board of directors of the counseling center who have granted me a one month sabbatical to be spent in rest and renewal. In 25 years of ministry, this is a first for me. I feel some trepidation and guilt at leaving clients for a month, not checking email or phone messages, not being on top of each happening or need or crisis. I know the world can exist without me, but can I exist meaningfully without all that the world brings to my doorstep?

The fact that I can seriously ask such a question indicates I am in dire need of a sabbatical! Like many people I meet in my office, I find the noise and clutter of the world—my own thoughts, even my prayers, my duties and responsibilities, my relationships, my reading...and on and on—all this noise clutters and overwhelms the quiet serenity where I confront myself and ultimately meet God.

In July, I wrote in this column of being "loosed from our moorings" in the world of the intellect. In that free floating away from the constraints of the "real world" we find the peaceful Mystery that is beyond our knowing. My sabbatical will be an extended time to free float. I pray God's help in not trying too hard, not setting expect-

tations, not watching the clock, not doing for 30 days!

My sabbatical begins with ten days in the mountains, my favorite place to be. In the grand geography of the Canadian Rockies I will feel my smallness and experience the proper awe for God's immensity. The beauty of mountains and lakes arising out of the violence of earth's groanings and clashings assure me that "all shall be well" (Julian of Norwich). "The sins and evils of our human failings are always resolved in some earthly or heavenly realm of God's love for us and all creation. Suffering does not have the last word.

I will spend some time at retreat centers in Minnesota and Pennsylvania. And no time away would be complete without a few days experiencing the joyful humblings of my adult pretensions in the beloved company of my two grand daughters.

The image I have for these 30 days is of a liminal space where inner noise is quieted and I can know myself in God. There is some fear in this prospect and some curiosity—but we cannot know one without the other. In knowing God we come to ourselves; in knowing ourselves we come to God. That sacred encounter can happen over a matter of seconds and be gone until its next shining. Or it can be the shining privilege of days and years.

I pray that my encounters will clear out the clutter, calm the noise and make that sacred space more readily found. And I will return with a glad heart to the blessings of my vocation. I leave October 6 and will return November 6.



Margaret McCray

Attention! Handbell Ringers...And Potential Ringers

By Nancy Carter, Director, Westminster Handbell Choirs

The Handbell Choir program has openings for new ringers. The Westminster Handbell choir rehearses Tuesday evenings from 6:00-7:00PM and plays for worship services once a month. If you have basic music reading skills and a desire to play with the handbell choir, Nancy Carter, director, will help you learn and develop the skills necessary to play handbells.

The Youth Handbell Choir began rehearsing in September. Rehearsals are from 6:30-7:15PM. The Youth rehearse weekly through December.

There's still room for you at the table! All handbell rehearsals are open to anyone who would like to observe and learn about Handbells at Westminster.

Contact Nancy Carter, director, 952.226.2105 or ndscart@aol.com

