

Friends of Compassion Meeting #3

July 21, 2010

St Ann's Church & Rectory

Announcements:

John Hancock: Welcome. To become better acquainted, let's pick a subject that you're interested in and sit next to someone you don't know.

- Environment
- Education
- Business
- Social Service
- Health
- Courts/Prisons

All of us want to be a worthwhile member of a worthwhile organization. The tag line for Friends of Compassion is "*Embodying, educating, and encouraging compassion in action*" – and we're making it up as we go along.

Sue Stevenson works for CHAS. Two meetings ago she mentioned that the homeless really need socks. Last meeting, members of Friends of Compassion blessed CHAS with 50 to 60 pairs of socks. The next day at work, Sue put the socks on the "Outreach Worker's" desk. She was in disbelief – CHAS was out of socks and it was a cold/rainy day.

Sicco Rood: Our website is doing great. Let Sicco know if things need to be added. Still need a volunteer or two for more content. Goal is to link us all together. Laura Bracken is designing website. She is doing this free of charge! Please send good thoughts and kudos her way.

If any of you have a website, you can link it to: friendsofcompassion.com

Universities – Kathryn Julyan

We have been honored to be part of this thriving but baby movement. Seeds have been planted along the way and it's moving to see. EWU's Compassionate Interfaith Society was born in October of 2009. It was started by Skyler Oberst (Secretary General). Kathryn is the academic advisor for the group.

We all have a story. Kathryn showed up at her home and was ready to burn her books. Her mom encouraged her, and she felt guided to teach and offer service to love and accept students. Divine mother helped. Kathryn taught philosophy initially. When she began teaching religion, she realized that you can't say, "Let's think provocatively." Professor Kenney supported her. It's very hard to teach a religion class to 18/19 year olds. It was a very difficult time.

A couple quarters later Skyler & Jocelyn took her Intro to Religion class. Skyler would want to talk about spiritual truth. The three of us had a soul connection that was meant to be. We were meant to start this club. It's growing because of the tone that was set by the students. People started showing up because there was grace and timing. CIS has hosted lectures by: Venerable Tarpa (Sravasti Abbey), Fr. Baraza (Gonzaga), Dr. Kevin Decker (EWU), and Dr. John Sheveland (Gonzaga). CIS also visited the Islamic Center.

CIS also hosted an event for Geshe Phelgye (Buddhist monk) that involved the entire campus. Geshe Phelgye and Barry Moses (Native American) blessed EWU's newly installed peace pole (compliments of CIS club). Deans were involved, professors were involved and students were involved. EWU's President, Dr. Arévalo attended both the opening and closing peace pole blessings. It was a hit and very surreal for those who have been teaching there for many years.

Dr. John Sheveland presented two interfaith workshops that Kathryn attended. John and Kathryn became friends who have similar interests and passion. Their friendship has fueled the interreligious work. In April 2011, IAAG will host a conference. Professors from Gonzaga, Whitworth and EWU will present on interfaith and compassion.

Dr. Anthony Clark (Professor of History at Whitworth) hosted Geshe Phelgye. This was the time first lecture given by a non-Christian speaker. SFCC has a new peace studies program. Conferences are coming up and the colleges will support each other. There are plans to cross list courses from all of the colleges. The colleges will also share speakers.

Compassion Research Project – Dr. Russell Kolts

Dr. Kolts is a Professor of Psychology at Eastern Washington University. He discussed how to transform and add compassion. His compassion focus therapy is currently being studied at Airway Heights Correction Center. The study is attempting to create a positive learned response to certain negative emotions. These human emotion sub-systems are:

1. Threat base – anger, anxiety
2. Excitement/pursuit – attachment system
3. Soothing system – comes from feeling safe and secure

Using behaviors like praying and meditation can stimulate our soothing system and overcome negative emotions and behaviors that result from stimulation of the threat based and excitement systems. When threatened, our focus narrows to the threat. By de-shaming threat based emotions, we can learn to recognize our negative reactions and manage our responses. The correction center at Airways Heights provides an excellent controlled environment in which to test this "therapy of compassion."

What are the barriers to get organizations to be compassionate? Organizations work from a threat based system. How do we motivate employees in ways that aren't threatening?

We're already compassionate; to open it up we need to feel safe and secure. Clinical intervention is teaching this and monitoring the outcome. We need to get the data out there. Compassion doesn't just feel good – it works.

John: Thanks for sharing. It gives scientific basis for what spiritual traditions have been saying for years. There's a difference between love and compassion. Love is a sharing of affection, kindness. Compassion is going into the business of going to another person and helping. We have a variety of ways to define compassion. A goal of this group is to find potential actions and goals for this community.

Let's divide ourselves into groups, introduce yourself, share your passion, and name two potential ways of creating action on your general topic.

Environment

- Education and teaching people how to reduce their harmful footprint
- Turning trash into treasure
 - Sicco's truck runs of restaurant grease
 - Debbie found a kitten in garbage (named it Treasure). She now works for Spokanimal

Education

- Having journal of hate studies
- Organization of panels of professors from all colleges to discuss compassion
- Meet with Deans to infuse compassion throughout campus

Business

- Have an effect on the individuals you communicate with every day. Give mail carrier a candy bar.
- All like to complain if we're not getting good service. Make a practice to write a letter about good service.

Social Service

- Use Interfaith Council to promote worthwhile projects
 - socks for CHAS (Sue Stevenson)
 - chickens for the Masaai (Bon Wakabayashi)
- CDL – Circle of support for people near poverty line – invite them to our group
- Help with funding of SNAP. They have a 2 year waiting list.

Health

- Talked about value of applying compassion in health field. Have conversations with others in field about compassion. How do you apply compassion to the suffering?
- Provide personal support for health care providers and bring that conversation in public forum.
- Provide peer-to-peer support to lessen burn out. Just being part of this group helps.
- Francesca shared that throughout Sacred Heart, when nurses trade off patients they "huddle" and share something compassionate!

Courts/Prison

- Shift from punishment to possibilities; Problems to solutions
- Focus energy on no new jail. Promote restorative justice programs. People in the community will get that jail doesn't work.
- Bring meditation practice into jails. Show up with positive messages and conversations.

Compassionate Cities Initiatives – Joan Broeckling

Compassionate Cities started in Seattle as a result from "Seeds of Compassion." The goal is to develop a global network of cities who are promoting Karen Armstrong's "Charter for Compassion." Seattle started by asking if 1,000 people pledged to give their time, treasure, talent, will the City Council adopt a proclamation declaring that Seattle is a "Compassionate City." Seattle did sign the proclamation. The question is: How do you make this real? What does a compassionate school, workplace, etc. look like? A program is being developed by One Peace, Many Paths. We'd like to be able to increase the "Gross National Happiness" index.

LDS – Dave Ross

It's exciting to be here. Our objective is to determine what we can do in the community. Dave and Diann are the LDS coordinators for the greater Spokane area outreach.

After hearing about CHAS's need for socks, Dave volunteered to will help provide them. All organizations can tell Dave or Diann of their ideas and needs. The LDS community will be able to help attain some of these needs. LDS teens had a dance and were asked to bring coats for the needy. The floor was covered two feet deep in coats! *We can accomplish great things together and make a real difference in the community.*

Bonnie Maeger

Bonnie could not be present. She wants us to know that the new prison is her big issue. She believes that people need help, not punishment. Spokane's jail population is actually decreasing. To slow process of building a new jail:

1. Write a letter to the editor
2. Go to a politician's forum and ask questions about why we need a new jail
3. Talk to voters you know and share ideas.

Fig Tree is a monthly newsletter of hope and compassion. They will have a representative next time.

Unity in the Community - Jim Mohr

Friends of Compassion will have a booth at Unity in the Community. It's one of the larger festivals in Spokane. We need to have 5 volunteers for us to have a free booth. There are 4 shifts available. Volunteers will NOT be sitting at the FOC booth. They will be helping the event organizers.

Kids will go through cultural areas and get stamps. They'll receive school supplies after getting these stamps. Donations of school supplies for this event can be brought to either Community College.

Pennies for Peace – Rev. Toni Niemiec

A group is working to bring Greg Mortenson ([3 Cups of Tea](#) and [Stones into Schools](#)) to Spokane. Please contact Toni (joyfulrev1@msn.com) for penny jars. The money from these jars goes to support schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. For more information, please visit: Penniesforpeace.org

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 18th at 7p.m.

Gonzaga University - Jepson Center, Room 017

Directions:

Park near St. Aloysius Church at Astor and Sharp

Follow Astor Street heading South

Jepson has a large rotunda