

Spring 2008

Samaritan

Center of Puget Sound

formerly Presbyterian Counseling Service

Providing counseling and other services since 1960 for individuals and families, church congregations, organizations and businesses throughout the Puget Sound area.

A Spring in Samaria

By Gerry Barney



Think back to a time in your life when you felt overwhelmed with a sense of grief or loss or anger. Maybe you even despaired of living but kept going because of loved ones who you knew were counting on you or who you didn't want to see hurt. I have had a few times like that. Many of us have -- perhaps even most of us.

During one such period, which would probably rank as the darkest moment in my life, about half a dozen times a day, my job duties took me over an open air pedestrian bridge spanning an alley between the back of the office building where I worked and a parking garage. It was about three stories up. More times than I can count, I wished that I could climb over the waist-high rail and jump, but there was no way I could let my family down like that or wound them so deeply. I had to keep on keeping on, but my depression and despair were deep and robbing me of life, even if they didn't take my life all at once.

To make matters worse, my office was on the same floor of the building as the pedestrian bridge and on the back side of the building as well. I worked with my back toward the window, but every time I turned around in my chair or got up to walk out of my office to a copy machine, get coffee or visit the restroom, there was that bridge staring me in the face. I would stare back and right away the

question would fly through my mind, "Would three stories to the alley below be enough or would you need to go to the top of the five story parking garage to make sure?"

About a month or two after the events that threw me into this depression took place, when I had considered this question for well beyond several hundred times, I thought of a friend who was a counselor. I decided to call him up and level with him, "I'm having these thoughts all the time and I know they aren't healthy or good for me, but knowing that isn't making them go away." He didn't wait for me to say anything else. He told me I needed to come see him right away and we set a time. Fortunately he didn't charge me for what he knew I couldn't afford but so desperately needed. For the next six months he got together with me regularly and helped me to find my way out of my depression and discover renewed hope and energy for living. Two years later, life was much better. I still had my family and was even a candidate being considered to become the next president of a local manufacturing company. I still got together with my friend from time to time, but now to rejoice in what God had done in my life.

Few people are fortunate enough to have such a friend and few counselors can afford to see someone so long for so little compensation. Yet as you know, our world is not short on the numbers of youth, families, women and men who hit terrible low points at some time in their lives, and often it's at a time when they are very short on financial resources as well. (continued on page 7)

The Samaritan Community

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Seattle

Main Office (Greenlake)
Beacon Hill Presbyterian
First Presbyterian
Woodland Park Presbyterian
West Seattle

South

Family of Grace Lutheran (Auburn)
Wabash Presbyterian (Auburn)
Lake Burien Presbyterian
Steel Lake Presbyterian (Federal Way)
Washington Baptist Convention (Kent)
Renton First Presbyterian
First Presbyterian (Puyallup)
Immanuel Presbyterian (Tacoma)

North (Shoreline)

Trinity Presbyterian
St. Luke Parish

West

Rolling Bay Presbyterian
(Bainbridge Island)

East

First Presbyterian of Bellevue
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Rolling Bay Presbyterian
Southminster Presbyterian
University Presbyterian
Wedgwood Presbyterian
Woodland Park Presbyterian

The main office of Samaritan Center of Puget Sound is located at 564 NE Ravenna Blvd, Seattle WA 98115. We can be reached by phone at (206) 527-2266. For more information about Samaritan therapists or programs, please go to our website: www.samaritanps.org.

President's Message

Beverley Shrumm, MC, LMHC

Samaritan Center Board of Directors and staff members plan to participate together in a day retreat on Saturday, May 31st. Our intent is to engage in a process of discerning and articulating anew the vision, mission and core values of the agency that began as Presbyterian Counseling Service in 1960. Corey Schlosser-Hall, Executive Presbyter of North Puget Sound Presbytery, has agreed to be our facilitator. I am particularly pleased about Corey's facilitating our retreat because he was the consultant for our process of adopting our new name. He is in tune with the heart of this ministry and knows our ways. Park Shore Retirement Community is hosting our retreat: I deeply appreciate their generous and steadfast support of this agency.



As I look forward to our retreat conversation, I experience a high level of enthusiasm that is somewhat surprising to me. I think it's due to my awareness that there are so many meaningful opportunities we could pursue that would expand our present range of services. I can feel the impulse and impetus for growth ahead, both in the numbers of people we serve and, also, in developing creative ways to meet the growing needs in our community and beyond. This agency has always held a great potency for developing needed programs: the Crisis Clinic, the Marriage and Family Training Program and Divorce Lifeline, just to name a few. A fresh articulation of our vision, mission and core values is needed to guide us in our pursuits.

If you, from your viewpoint as a supporter of Samaritan Center, have input to offer as we are in this process, I hope you will call me or share your thoughts with another member of our Board or staff. As always, I ask for your prayers for this ministry.



Staying Healthy in a Stress-Filled World

By Lisa Thocher, MS



I try to practice laughter, time with friends and family, exercise and self-forgiveness. And at some point, I realized that when I feel relaxed I remain just as – but no more – behind, and just as – but no more – out of control, just as – but no more – helpless than when I feel stressed. My brain understood this concept long before my body did and spent several patient months commanding my body to “keep taking deep breaths” until both my mind and body were able to relax. (This is also where laughter and exercise come in – it is hard for my mind and body to cling to anxiety when I give them something more joyful to hang on to.)

I also use re-framing and imagination to trick myself. I have convinced myself that it is a gift, not a burden, to have more things than I can fit into this (as poet Mary Oliver would say) “one wild and precious life.” I have come to think of “having too much to do” as a sign that I have an abundance of desire to LIVE (to do and to be) versus a shortage of time. With God's wisdom and acceptance, I'm learning that I *will* do the important things.

Lisa, who is pictured in her office unpacking sand tray materials purchased through a grant from The Stewardship Foundation, is an expert on both playing (personally) and play therapy. She sees children, youth and their families at the Ravenna office of Samaritan Center.

Therapist's Perspective

Small Miracles In Everyday Life

By Beth Hess, MSW

We are not a miracle family. We believe in the power of prayer, we pray . . . but secretly I have felt somewhat wary of ever asking God to intervene miraculously. And since last fall, when miraculous healing did happen in our family, I've felt hesitant to talk much about it. It felt too much like bragging, or as though we are better somehow than those who don't get healed.

And yet . . . don't the Psalms seem to encourage proclaiming God's faithful works to all generations? Maybe telling this story is more about gratitude than boastfulness.

My husband and I have three children and five grandchildren. Grandchild #3, a smiley redhead named Clay, seemed healthy until he was about nine months old. Suddenly, every time he caught a cold or other virus, his breathing would become labored, Stryder breathing—noisy effort required for inhaling and exhaling---sleepless nights he felt suffocated. Over the next eight months there were numerous ER visits and five hospitalizations. Finally, last June, his throat was scoped and the news was scary. A cartilage malformation meant his throat was one tenth normal size. Surgery was tentatively scheduled for September to rebuild his throat from rib cartilage; it would require a medically induced three-week coma during the recovery. It was all very daunting.



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My fear was great and my faith was small. Doctors had said that scarring from the surgery might leave him with lifelong hoarseness – so I asked God to preserve his voice. A few prayer warrior friends, however, boldly prayed for complete healing without surgery. I was dubious but grateful for their support.

Then as the summer progressed, his breathing became less noisy and labored, even when he had a cold. A second scope in September showed an almost normal-sized throat. The cartilage malformation was gone. The doctors didn't attempt to explain. They said they hadn't seen this happen before but that medicine is full of the inexplicable. And today, six months later, Clay is a healthy, normal-breathing two-year-old.

Our family now is not so quick to dismiss the miraculous. And every so often we look at the family calendar where Clay's parents printed the 'before' and 'after' throat scope pictures, and we remember that maybe God *is* in the business of miracles.

Beth has been with Samaritan Center since 1989, where she sees individuals, couples and families at the main office near Greenlake. She and her family are members of Bethany Presbyterian Church on Queen Anne Hill.

"Children of the Nations" Invited to Share Samaritan's Space

This international program, which provides health and educational care for orphaned and destitute children in Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the Dominican Republic, was founded by Chris and Debbie Clark and has its headquarters in Silverdale, WA. What "sealed the deal" in our extending space without cost to COTN is that Chris's family were missionaries who were supported financially by Ravenna Boulevard Presbyterian Church. The RBPC building, which has been the home of our main office for many years, was deeded to Samaritan Center/Presbyterian Counseling Service by Seattle Presbytery after RBPC closed. To learn more about Children of the Nations go to www.COTNI.org.

Bill Collins Named WAMFT Distinguished Clinical Member



On any single day, you could find Samaritan Center's Bill Collins in countless places: listening with compassion to a client couple and suggesting a surprising new way they might want to think about what's troubling them; doing clinical supervision with a beginning therapist who is fortunate enough to be the beneficiary of his unique blend of challenge and nurture; on a ladder in the upstairs hallway changing a light bulb, or saving an over-the-edge colleague from computer-related meltdown. Bill has been at Samaritan/PCS since 1980, first as an intern, then directing the post-graduate Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) training program, and currently as Vice President for Training and Operations.

In March, Bill's service to the field of marriage and family therapy was recognized by the Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (WAMFT). He's held many positions of leadership in the state organization; currently he is a member of the Ethics, Training and Standards Committee. An approved supervisor since 1987, he has taught and supervised generations of students and, in 1994, established a preparation seminar for the state licensure exam. He's an adjunct faculty member at Seattle Pacific University and Seattle University, and has conducted site visits nationally for the accreditation arm of AAMFT.

Colleagues attending the recognition banquet described Bill as "a walking encyclopedia"... "a quietly distinguished father figure" and as a person whose "devotion to God, his family and the persons he serves" is legendary. "Bill has a unique way of seeing the world and drawing on metaphors and ideas that most of us would never think about," noted one colleague. Others expressed their gratitude for his integrity, his willingness to take a stand for students and faculty when that was needed and his irrepressible sense of humor.

Those of us who work with Bill are grateful that he has chosen to share his extraordinary gifts of faith, imagination, intellect and energy with Samaritan/PCS for 28 years.

Mediation Services

Restoring Broken Relationships Through Mediation

By Andy Hamilton

I know a man named Doug who will be turning 70 later this year. He's feeling very sad and morose because he hasn't spoken to his adult son in more than 20 years. He knows he's entering the twilight of his life and his dearest wish is to somehow remove the barrier between himself and his son. Doug's problem is that he doesn't know where or how to begin such a process. He can't envision any conversation with his son that would not break down into a bitter shouting match.

Many clients in therapy grieve because they are emotionally cut off from their loved ones. Like Doug, they would give anything to restore these relationships but don't know how to accomplish this. It generally hasn't occurred to them that mediation could provide the needed therapeutic intervention.

Here is how that could be done. To be successful, mediation requires an impartial and neutral facilitator. For this reason, many therapists or ministers are unable to mediate conflicts because of their preexisting relationship with one or more of the parties. A typical mediation session lasts between three and four hours. The parties are asked to pledge at the outset that they will operate in good faith and abide by the rules of common courtesy. The mediator ensures throughout the session that these rules are honored by each party. Through the use of facilitative questioning, the mediator is able to help the parties focus on the primary issue: the restoration of their relationship.

A single mediation session such as this could offer Doug and his son the opportunity to create a new kind of dialog, one in which the father could explain the anguish and sorrow he has felt over the years and the son could tell his father what those lost years have meant to him. Through mediation, they could be helped to interrupt their old, destructive scenario and lay the groundwork for more positive, fulfilling father-son conversations in the future.

Therapist's Perspective

When Life Happens . . .

By Dave Wells, LMFT

The New Year began with a real bang for my family this year. Literally. I was driving home one January evening in our newly restored '83 VW Rabbit when a dump truck ran into me! The car had been a year-long project I had shared with my teenage daughter. She never had a chance to drive it before the truck totaled it. It was no contest. The truck hit me at about 20 mph, mashing the rear of my Rabbit and propelling me into the van ahead. My door still opened and when I climbed out I was immediately grateful I could stand, walk, talk, think and otherwise get on with my earthly life. But I also thought of the year's worth of spare weekend hours and the cost of the many parts which lay worthless amidst the broken glass and creased metal.



It was turning out to be quite a week. On Monday my wife and I had made the decision to lay out some serious cash to repair our aging Oldsmobile. On Tuesday its transmission went out. Wednesday the Rabbit got whacked. But the week wasn't over yet. On Thursday our computer stopped working (I can't recall what happened on Friday but I'm sure there was something!) I had been feeling pretty good about the New Year... the car was completed, work felt increasingly rewarding, the kids were doing well in school, and my wife was smiling at me even more than usual. And I'd set some creative and exciting goals for the year. But now this. I recalled Garrison Keillor's words: "Just about the time you think you've got things figured out, life happens to you."

When life happens, it can really throw us, and some days we feel as if we've received the fullest measure. My story pales, of course, alongside some of the life events people who come to Samaritan Center are encountering – grief over the death of a loved one, loss of a job, major health issues or broken relationships. I found myself reflecting on conversations my clients and I have shared, reminding ourselves of simple truths.

This too shall pass. Today is not my whole life. What happened today may have been very difficult but that doesn't mean that tomorrow will be also. Who knows what the next day may bring? It may be full of joy and rich meaning. Scott Peck once wrote that "life is difficult." And it is. But so is a mountain trail to a serenely beautiful viewpoint. Since the accident, I've felt renewed gratitude for my family and health and also a deeper hope for the future. Those days of January have led me to embrace life all the more.

One day at a time. Jesus tells us not to fret about tomorrow; that the day's troubles are enough. Today is all we really have. Can we handle today? Fact is, if we are even here, thinking about today, we are weathering the storm. We've made the journey called *today*. When a client comes to me saying, "I'm overwhelmed," we may go over each painful story of the day or the week. In the sharing and the listening, the disturbing events are not quite so wounding, the days to come not quite as daunting. Tomorrow can bring new strength both physically and emotionally.

God is good. I can't possibly wrap my mind adequately around this truth but I dare to believe that, even when life happens in the worst way, there is something else at work in the world. The Easter message is that bad things do not have the last word. This ancient message tells us that out of the darkest evil came the greatest good. It is a profound mystery. But because I believe in that mystery, I may be down but never fully defeated. I hold hope as a way of life – not a "cheap" hope but one that is tempered amidst the fires and floods of my life. I believe that things will be all right in the end, however distant that may be. And I find encouragement in believing that – especially when life happens.

Dave has been a member of Samaritan Center's clinical staff since 2004. He is a marriage and family therapist with offices in Seattle and Issaquah. He also is an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

A Spring In Samaria . . . (continued from page 1)

Providing counseling services to men, women, youth and families who find themselves in difficult or desperate circumstances is our primary mission at Samaritan Center of Puget Sound. You probably have heard of our Women's Fund. You may have also heard of our Men's Fund and Youth Fund. What you may not know is just how great the need is for these services.

Our Women's Fund had to be closed to new applicants at the end of this March. The demand for counseling for low-income women is at least two or three times as great as our contributions from donors will currently allow us to serve. Our Men's Fund, which is smaller and funded mostly by our staff, was able to accept new entrants for only two of the past 12 months. In other words, the demand is six or more times greater for counseling services for men than our funds can meet. The situation is similar for youth. With economic times becoming more difficult, the need for these services will only grow. That is why I thought it was important to be a little vulnerable and share this with you, because if you don't know the extent of the need, you can't help.



You can tell I believe in this ministry. Like the old story says, it is better to teach someone to fish than just give them food. There are many ministries that help feed the hungry. There are few ministries like this that help people develop the tools to lead healthier, happier, more productive lives. People can lose years of their lives by not getting help when they need it. They can live years in states of crippling depression and become a drain on their families and societies. Or, they can discover how to cope, then hope, then live and then become a source of God's life to others around them.

Jesus said something along these lines to a Samaritan woman he met at a well in a village in Samaria. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life." At Samaritan Center we believe what Jesus said in John, chapter four is true. We help people find the spring that wells up and flows over to others around them. My prayer is that you will join us in doing whatever you can to help people find this spring of water that wells up to eternal life through Christ.

Gerry joined Samaritan Center as Vice President of Finance in August of 2007. He considers it a gift of God to be able to use his background in finance, consulting and ministry as part of a team dedicated to the healing of the whole person and the enriching of their relationships.

Linus Tumbleson Retires (Once Again)



He was the person who could always be counted on to bring a sense of optimism into the room with him. His face was the one that could break into an infectious smile on an instant's notice and when anyone asked how he was doing, the answer was invariably an enthusiastic, **"Perfect!"**

Linus served as Samaritan's Vice President for Development for more than five years, coming to us after he'd "retired" from the business world. We have appreciated his leadership in fund raising, acquiring grants for our youth and family services and serving as a link between Samaritan staff and our Board of Directors.

While he says he's *really* retiring this time and has significant golf and travel plans with his family, Linus promises he will keep Samaritan in his sights. A long-time member of Overlake Park Presbyterian Church in Bellevue, there's a pretty good chance he'll be involved in the planned expansion of Samaritan's counseling services on the Eastside.

I Am . . . by Rachel Sisley, 10 years old



I am my dog's black fur on a sunny day
I am the words in a good book
I am the animals I see everywhere
I am the shiny pink sky when it sets
I am the love in my family's eyes
I am my galorious bed
I am the red on my dog's faded collar
I am the gleaming water I swim in
I am nature itself standing in front of me
I am the blue tears you see when I am sad
I am the amazing family I have
I am the shelter I wake up in every morning
I am the world sitting right next to me
I am all of the good things that happen in the world
and some of the bad
I am the people that are just waiting to burst out of
their shell
I am the red roses I see in the park at springtime
I am the baby birds I see chirping and peeking their
heads out of a hole
I am the happily ever after in the end of a fairy tale

Samaritan Center therapists are experienced in caring for children and their families.
Call 206.527.2266

Samaritan
Center of Puget Sound

Formerly Presbyterian Counseling Service

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