

Responding to Requests to Expand Our Programs and Services

Expanding our Culturing Compassion retreat-offerings to include college students and adults

Adults who have mentored youth on our weekend retreats, which focus on issues of local poverty and homelessness, have encouraged us to provide a similar opportunity for parents/guardians and other interested adults.

We have also been contacted by staff at SCSU, CSB/SJU, and Newman Center to design a college-age model.

With input from various community organizations in the St Cloud Area Homeless Concerns Group with whom we are partnered, we have developed outlines for these new retreats, and will be piloting them beginning this fall.

If you would like to participate in one of them – and/or encourage a group with whom you are affiliated to do so – give us a call!

Developing interfaith youth leadership opportunities

Prompted by the power of the encounters we witnessed at CHS and FUMC (*see separate article about: Building Community Across the Lines of Race, Culture, and Religious Faith*), we began exploring models for developing youth leadership skills via interfaith communication and collaboration.

We visited with leaders of the “Interfaith Youth Leadership Council” initiative in the Twin Cities (co-sponsored by the St Paul Council of Churches and the Jewish Community Relations Council). (See: www.spacc.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={1EC1B333-0BE0-4CF9-AD90-B2574CEDF493})

We also observed a session of “Communicating Common Ground”, a partnership between SCSU’s Communications program and District 742 (St Cloud) and District 47 (Sauk Rapids/Rice), focused on cross-cultural communication. (See: [HTTP://MINNESOTA.PUBLICRADIO.ORG/DISPLAY/WEB/2010/04/23/ST-CLOUD-REDUCING-TENSIONS](http://MINNESOTA.PUBLICRADIO.ORG/DISPLAY/WEB/2010/04/23/ST-CLOUD-REDUCING-TENSIONS))

We have shared what we learned with several teachers in area schools and youth ministers in area congregations, and with one of the imams at the Islamic Center of St Cloud. They are very interested in partnering with us – as are the youth with whom we have discussed such an opportunity.

While it is not yet clear what the specifics will be – we are still in the early planning stages – it is clear that significant opportunities and impacts are possible.

If you are aware of youth who might be interested in this effort – and/or teachers or youth ministers – encourage them to contact us!

Developing learning resources for schools and faith-communities

“We’ve been thinking,” Kate and Johanna (two Peace Studies students at CSB/SJU) said to me. “The workshop we led at the conference felt worthwhile, and we enjoyed doing it. But wouldn’t it be great if high school students could have some kind of ‘Intro to Peace Studies’ experience in the curriculum in their schools?”

That conversation took place in the fall of 2008. In the spring of 2009, they, along with two other students in the Peace Studies program (Caitlyn Lothian and Lindsey Waytashek), designed and taught a short unit in Eric Johnson’s US History class (11th grade) at CHS.

This year, Elizabeth Gleich, Chris Morgan, and Jeff Carey picked up the project, revised the unit, and again taught it in Mr Johnson’s class.

And we have begun a conversation with Ron Pagnucco, chair of CSB/SJU’s Peace Studies program, about how to further develop and promote this resource in other area schools, as well as faith-communities, in 2010-11.

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About a year ago, we were contacted by the assistant producer of “Soldiers of Conscience”, a film that was initially broadcast on PBS in November, 2008.

The film explores the process of discernment and decision-making that soldiers engage in when they experience challenging moral questions. Viewers witness a variety of responses, ranging from those who choose to remain in the military and those who apply for conscientious objector status.

[For information about the film, see: www.soldiers-themovie.com]

[Several video clips from the film can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/SoldiersOfConscience]

He had heard of our work with young people, and wondered if we would be interested in collaborating on the development of curriculum resources that could be used in conjunction with the film.

Over the past six months, we have worked together to design several resources, and to distribute them, along with preview DVDs of the film, to teachers and youth ministers.

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If you would like to promote either of these resources in a school or faith-community with which you are affiliated, let us know!

