

Sacred Synergy

A Newsletter for the School of Sacred Ministries
April 2004

Hello current students, alumni, faculty, advisors, and prospective students!
Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Sacred Synergy: a Newsletter for the School of Sacred Ministries!*

This newsletter is designed to help create a greater sense of community among all those connected with the school. It will be one of our easiest ways of communicating with one another. It is also hoped that the articles, stories, dreams, essays, poems, and announcements will inspire each of us in the ministry that we are called to do.

Among the regular features we plan to offer are:

- 1) **Feature articles** informing us of what a few of our alumni, current students, and faculty are doing in their lives and their ministry,
- 2) **Essays** submitted by you sharing some of your thoughts and revelations concerning things you've been reading about, experiencing, or dreaming about,
- 3) **Networking opportunities:** job openings, scholarship opportunities, requests for service, etc.,
- 4) **Learning opportunities:** new classes or seminars offered by the school, Pebble Hill Interfaith Church, or faculty members, or other courses offered elsewhere related to interfaith ministry,
- 5) **Advisors' announcements** regarding events, changes, issues, requests, and new classes for the school
- 6) **Professional announcements**, such as: Who has been accepted to or graduated from which programs, invited to speak at a conference, received a special grant, become a pastor or chaplain?
- 7) **Social announcements:** Who is celebrating the birth of a child or grandchild? Who is throwing a party or organizing a reunion? Who needs help moving?
- 8) **Prayer requests**,
- 9) **Whatever else you all would like to see!**

So far we see this as a bi-monthly publication which is offered via email to those with that capability and in printed format to those without email. All articles, ideas and announcements can be submitted to the editor, Rev. Cindy Greb, via email: cindygreb@aol.com or via phone: 215-766-9456. If any of you have more experience with publishing and want to help create a new look or add photos or whatever, I am very open to your assistance. I am only marginally able in computer-oriented efforts and would need assistance with any improvements in that regard.

Thank you! I look forward to getting to know you all better and to having more opportunities for connection. I see this as an extremely valuable tool in strengthening and growing our school. I see our stories and accomplishments inspiring one another. Most of all, I see this as a way of creating community. We have had many powerful and beautiful people pass through this school already. Let's get to know, love and support one another. I know we are each vehicles for Spirit's work on Earth at this time. When we come together more as a spiritual community of sisters and brothers (even if at first only a cyber-community!), our Light is apt to shine more brightly in this world.

Love and Blessings,
Rev. Cindy Greb

CONTENTS:

Welcome, by Editor, Rev. Cindy Greb

Upcoming Events:

Day Fair for Body and Soul – A Fundraiser for the School! by
Alix Amar, '04

Sacred Dance Workshops! by Revs. Gary Culp and Denny Daikeler,
Class of '00

SSM Open House!

Weeklong Conflict Resolution Intensive with Dudley Weeks!

My Experience with Clinical Pastoral Education, by Lady Burke,
Class of '04

**Where Does One Start? (My Evolving Ministry since Graduating
from the SSM)**, by Rev. Ken Mangano, Class of '00

Thank You!!! from Rev. Melissa Mantha, SSM Administrator

Other Announcements

**Professor Kofi Opoku Honored for Contributions to Study of
African Religions**

An Interfaith Dream, by Rev. Cindy Greb, Class of '02

School of Sacred Ministries Holds 2nd Annual Day Fair

By Alix Amar, Class 2004

On **Saturday April 24th**, the Pebble Hill School of Sacred Ministries will be holding its 2nd Annual **Day Fair for the Body & Soul**. This event, which was well attended last year, is a day of health and wellness featuring artists, holistic health practitioners, readers, bodyworkers and vendors with related products and services.

There will be free workshops all day presented by experienced practitioners on topics such as yoga, shamanism, spirituality and bodywork. It will be held at the **Plumsteadville Firehouse** at 5640 Stump Rd. in **Plumsteadville, PA**. The admission is \$5 per person and \$20 for a family of four or more. There will be delicious food available all day.

At this time, we still have space for more vendors and practitioners and are putting together a comprehensive program booklet with ads ranging in size from business card to full page. The ads are for vendors and non-vendors alike.

We are also in need of volunteers to work at the day fair for part of the day, to make food, and to recruit vendors and obtain ads for the program. This is an important fundraiser for the school as proceeds go to the **Shoshana Richmond Scholarship Fund** which provides scholarships to our students. Please consider taking out an ad or being a vendor. We appreciate your support!

For more information e-mail Alix Amar at amar-lawrence@dca.net, call Terri at 610-316-8177 or call Alix at 215-635-7144.

Hope to see you there!

UPCOMING SOUL IN MOTION WORKSHOPS!

Saturday, April 3rd, 9:30-5:30 at Denny's beautiful studio in North Wales, PA

Experience the art of movement and sacred dance with Gary and Denny at a wonderful day-long workshop. Cost is \$65. For more info and to reserve space, call 215-822-9820.

**Friday, April 30th, 7-10pm and Saturday, May 1st, 9-3:00
Health and Wellness Center in Warrington, PA**

Denny and Gary bring Oregon's Vinn Marti to east coast to teach, direct and guide his own "mystical movement ministry" in this very powerful Soul in Motion workshop. Marti says, "All movement is a divine dialogue with everyone and everything that surrounds us."

Come experience for yourself the expression: We are all connected!

Cost is \$125.

For more info, call 215-822-9820 or the Health and Wellness Center.

School of Sacred Ministries
OPEN HOUSE at Pebble Hill Church
Sunday, May 16, 2004, 1:30-4pm

As a means of introducing the school to prospective students, another wonderful open house is scheduled to be held in the Red Barn at Pebble Hill. Professor Kofi Opoku has been invited to address the gathering that day and will also speak at the morning celebration which begins at 10:30am.

In between the morning service and the open house will be a Peace Soup luncheon. This is a delicious lunch featuring an assortment of homemade soups and salads, breads, beverage and desserts. Proceeds will benefit the school.

This is a special opportunity for us to reconnect with one another and especially for us to bring friends and others we think might be interested in the school. Hope to see you there! (Please see related article on recent honors bestowed upon Kofi, as well as a report from Melissa on the previous open house.)

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
Weeklong Intensive with Dudley Weeks
Saturday, June 12th
(for new people, Intensive begins Sunday, June 13th)

\$515 for the week. For more information, call Rev. Kathy Sweeney at 215-822-8723.

My Experience with Clinical Pastoral Education

by Lady Burke, Class of '04

This past summer I applied for a course at Jefferson University in Clinical Pastoral Education. My classmate, Doris, and I completed the extremely intense, and extremely valuable, program in December of 2003.

I should have been forewarned by the application process. It was very similar to that of the School of Sacred Ministries...intense! I was asked to make sense of my life in one sitting. But having explored some of the bigger questions already for SSM, I banged out a pretty darn good application...foundation of family values, major crises overcome, life fallen apart and put back together at least a few times, inspirational teachers, and sense of being led by Spirit. You all know...it's OUR story. Then came the interview. Rev. Joe Leggieri was like a sponge...he took it all in...didn't miss a drop. He was warm, engaging, and I knew right away that his small stature was a trick of nature, disguising one of the biggest souls I would ever meet. At the end of our meeting he said that I was "*overripe for CPE*" and welcomed me to the program. As I walked out the door, cocky and elated I was thinking, "I'll ace this program, I'm overripe. That means I already know most of it." Well, I was only several weeks into the program when I realized what he must have meant...without CPE, my work as a full time hospice chaplain might have *gone bad* if I hadn't backed up to receive the proper training! Maybe he took me into the program more for our poor patients and families than for what I brought to the program!

I now know that **CPE** really stands for **Cataclysmic Psycho-spiritual Evolution**. They just call it Clinical Pastoral Education so as not to scare you away! For 15 weeks, 25 hours per week I was supported through facing every demon, wound, and fear I had managed to collect over the years. Here is how the program was broken down:

?? One double shift (15 hours) overnight per week per student as **solo on-call chaplain**. Duty included coverage of Thomas Jefferson University Hospital as well as Jefferson Hospital for Neurosciences around the corner. Rounds were to be made on 8 to 10 different intensive care and critical care units. Immediate response was required for every emergency room trauma, transfer (in from another hospital), violent crime, code blue, and death. Additionally, one would be paged by any staff at any time to support any patient (or staff member) on any unit (i.e. maternity, psych). These calls could be anything from a baby blessing for a stillborn

to delivering a bible, rosary, or escorting a family to the morgue to view the body of a departed loved one.

?? **Weekly didactic presentations** – educational programs on various topics such as Social Work, Critical Care Nursing, WOAR, Infant Death, etc. These were always exceptionally useful.

?? **Weekly clinical verbatim reports.** These were killers. Actually, they offered the greatest insight. By recording (as well as one could remember) word for word the meaningful interactions with patients / families / staff, one could really get a look at the filter of one's own assumptions, prejudices, fears, beliefs. This in turn allowed the student to step back and really examine what we bring to an interaction and begin to approach visits with greater consciousness, presence and less (ideally *no*) agenda. Witnessing fellow students' verbatim reports was equally enriching as of course we always find parts of ourselves in others' experiences. Our co-facilitator Rev. Marianne Klumph invited students to mine the meaning even in the physical presentation of the verbatim (punctuation, etc...amazing). I cannot stress the value of this part of the program. Going into it, I would have sworn I knew all of my filters. I now know that I probably never will. That is why it is so crucial to maintain some formal self-examination process as part of an effective pastoral care practice.

?? **Weekly group processing.** This was time set aside for the group of students (moderated by the 2 department chairs) to discuss, challenge, and support each other. This time was often used to process feelings left over from verbatim reports, tackle theological discussions, or share honest feedback about how we were being perceived in our ministry. One can imagine the enriching discussions that grew from people of all faiths coming together in ministry and engaging with each other so intimately for 15 weeks. Powerful!

Spirit was visibly at work here. Without fail, we had the opportunity to tackle our most powerful memories, losses, and fears throughout the 15 weeks. I have no doubt that most CPE programs offer this kind of growth opportunity but what strikes me as unique about Jefferson's training are the following:

?? Facilitators who are not only compassionate and competent experts in their field, but who are open minded, open hearted, and deeply

committed to learning from each and every student and/or encounter. (They were also available 24/7 for support and/or backup as needed).

- ?? The opportunity to “hit the ground running” and encounter extremely diverse pastor care situations in a short period of time.
- ?? A rich professional environment in which pastoral care is valued and utilized.
- ?? An eclectic peer environment which encourages personal and spiritual growth.

There are several programs in the area (Penn, Einstein, Holy Redeemer, and Abington do or have had programs). One unit (450 hours) of CPE is required for most seminaries. For people who expect to make chaplaincy their ministry, 4 units are recommended for national accreditation. For more information on CPE in general, go to www.acpe.edu. The application form used by many of the programs (including Jefferson’s) is on this site under “forms” and “application for CPE”. To contact Jefferson’s CPE department call 215-955-6336.

For inquiries about this article, Lady can be reached by email at ladyhelenburke@comcast.net.

Where does one start....?

By Rev. Ken Mangano, Class of 2000

Greetings to all the students and ministers of Pebble Hill Community from your fellow journeyer in New Mexico. May this find you well in mind, body and spirit.

The story has been told again and again. But one more time couldn't hurt – too much, anyhow.

It's hard to believe it's already 3 years since I arrived in New Mexico; so full of excitement at taking all I learned at the School of Sacred Ministries. I thought I would be joining a group of like-minded men who were caring for those in the last stages of AIDS. It made perfect sense that I would enter this ministry. I am a long-term survivor of HIV/AIDS and have been friends and studied with some of the brightest Lights. I felt ready.

It only took six weeks to realize nothing was as it appeared. The person who ran the Community of Damien of Molokai, and the founder of the program here in New Mexico, was affected by bipolar disorder. He hadn't taken his lithium for three months prior to my arrival and went into a major manic phase. He cursed Angel, another brother for leading me astray by my alignment with him and soon thereafter accused me of trying to steal his ministry. Locks had to be changed as he took to the streets and for months the phone would ring in the middle of the night with threats and more accusations.

I kept the AIDS house open for another year; no small feat as I had to raise all the money to pay the bills for our six inhabitants. Added was the responsibility of working several overnight shifts and maintaining the property. I wondered what would have happened if I hadn't moved here, but always knew Creator had a plan.

New Mexico AIDS Services opened their own housing program and removed their clients just in time for me to take a few classes that would benefit a change in jobs. Public speaking, Spanish and, of course, more classes in world religions.

I was contracted by the All Indian Pueblo Council to conduct HIV/AIDS education sessions among urban Indians and in the 8 Northern Pueblos. Because they were soon to go bankrupt, this was to last only three months. But another opportunity was right on its heels. Creator is generous like that. This is when I began contracting with the Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board. I worked as a contractor for over a year before I was hired as a full time employee. I cannot express how much I love my current job. I travel throughout New Mexico and Southern Colorado, serving seven non-pueblo tribes.

I meet people I would never meet otherwise and share information about HIV/STD's and hepatitis. I attend their feast days and ceremonial dances and share food at the tables of some of the most wonderful people.

Recently, the accountant, Joe, and I have decided to sell the former AIDS house and go into something new. With the money from the sale, I plan on offering spiritual retreats for persons living with HIV/AIDS. There are Christian groups throughout the country that do this but I have not seen these retreats done from an Interfaith perspective. Labyrinths, journaling, mindfulness meditation, deathing practices and more will be offered.

I am beginning the process of buying my own home (my first ever!!!) and pray I can get a mortgage by June. The AIDS house goes on the market in April.

Creator has blessed me with a second family – that of Marie Kirk, my boss and friend, her wonderful husband, Mike and daughter, Melissa. Melissa has a five year old, Dakota and a son, Hunter, is two and a half. They are from Isleta Pueblo, just south of the city and have blessed my life greatly. There are others who speed my spiritual growth also. Corie Adakai, an Ojibwe and her husband Frank, a Navajo, are teachers of the highest order whose work focuses on Wellbriety. Corie's keen sense of humor, like that of many Indian people I know, makes learning effortless.

Creator continues to bless me each day. I walk in beauty finding myself in harmony with all beings. The road has been long with many turns and obstacles, but Creator continues to guide me on the Path of Beauty.

May Creator bless your path; giving each of you the opportunities necessary for you to walk the Blessing Way. I look forward to our next meeting and pray for your wellbeing.

In peace and Light,
Ken Mangano

Ken can be reached by email at Damien1925@aol.com.

Thank You Notes

from Rev. Melissa Mantha, School Administrator

- ?? The **Celebration of Service** at Pebble Hill Interfaith Church last November was a wonderful success. People were thankful for both the service and the ritual. Thank you to Betty, Becky, Paula and Lady for your beautiful participation in that ritual!
- ?? Following the service was a **Peace Soup** lunch which netted the school \$200. Thank you to all who contributed the nourishing food and to those who contributed their time setting up and cleaning up. Tim also sold cards for us which brought in an additional \$144.
- ?? Our first **Open House** was a wonderful success, well-attended by both graduates and current students. It seemed we were eager to hear Tom Legere once again and to connect with one another. The school's breath and life filled the Yellow Barn!!! The afternoon resulted in five very interested potential candidates for the school. We were also blessed with the presence of husbands, a father, a daughter, and a fiancé of graduates and current students. Maybe we'll see you at the next one on May 16th!
- ?? Many blessings and great gratitude to Larry Hall for the incredible **new brochure**, ads and flyers. What a wonderful job you did. Thank you. (Readers wishing to obtain brochures to give to friends and potential new students, please call Roberta, the Pebble Hill administrator at 215-348-3428. If you want a packet of information sent to a specific person or persons, give the names and addresses to Roberta and she will send them out!)
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NEW WEBSITE!

Rev. Ren Porter is working hard to get a website up and running for the school. If you have any photographs or art to include in the web page, please contact Ren as soon as possible at renpo@yahoo.com. These can be photos of classes, retreats, lectures, rituals, or non-specific photos that reflect the nature of the school. Ren can tell you how to send them. (Thanks, Ren!)

ALSO: Any changes to email address, phone number or address, should be forwarded to Rev. Melissa Mantha @ revmelissa@spiritedceremonies.com.

Professor Kofi Opoku Honored for Contributions to the Study of African Religions

(excerpted from the website for Lafayette University: www.lafayette.edu)

The African Association for the Study of Religions has honored Kofi Opoku, professor of religious studies, for his outstanding record as a scholar and teacher of African religions.

The AASR gave him an award at a conference held this month (February 2004) in Ghana in conjunction with the regional conference of the International Association of the History of Religions. The award includes the citation “in recognition of your contribution to the study of religions in Africa.”

Opoku has received awards from Lafayette and the ANKH Society Award for Excellence in Scholarship. He is the author of seven books, including *Healing for God’s World: Remedies from Three Continents*, *West African Traditional Religion*, and *Speak to the Winds: Proverbs from Africa*. He has written chapters included in more than 25 books and published more than 40 academic journal articles. He also has given talks at 45 conferences and other academic meetings, and participated as a scholar in the four-part *Priesthood and Ritual in Ghana* video documentary series.

Opoku has earned an S.T.M and B.D. from Yale University Divinity School in 1965 and 1962, respectively, also studying at the University of Bonn in West Germany from 1963-1964. He graduated with honors from the University of Ghana with a degree in geography in 1959.

Editor’s note: Kofi reported to me that his usual custom is to prepare copious notes for a speech at a conference such as this, but this time he felt led to allow the spirits to speak through him. What resulted was a very well-received speech in which he spoke from the heart about the responsibility of Africans to not lose sight of the faith of their ancestors. He said that the beliefs, practices, and proverbs from those who have lived before us add great depth to our spiritual experience and must not be forgotten. This is not to say that we should necessarily abandon the faith we have adopted (Christian or Muslim, for instance), but that by focusing on these “newer” faiths exclusively, we lose not only our heritage, but a valid, wise and useful way of looking at our world.

Professor Opoku may be reached by email at opokuk@lafayette.edu.

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An Interfaith Dream

by Rev. Cindy Greb, Class of 2002

I am an avid dreamer and have been recording my dreams in my journals for fifteen to twenty years. Currently I am cataloguing them and beginning to organize a book called Sacred Dreams. In it I intend to share my experiences with those profound dreams which have touched my soul in some way. I would love to share some of those dreams with you in the future. For right now, however, this I found this one particular dream as I was doing some research and it seemed particularly apropos to us as a group.

Bernadette was a self-described “dyed-in-the-wool Catholic” who felt a “burning desire to know about other belief systems, what great minds had thought in other cultures, what *their* experience of God was like.” But leaving “Holy Mother Church” remained a daunting prospect. (This was before the Vatican II reforms, when the Church still decreed which books were best suited to the faithful.)

In the midst of this longing for knowledge, she had an extraordinary dream:

“It is a jungle scene. I see a person frantically hacking a path through the vegetation. Then I seem to recede back until I can see the entire earth. From this aerial viewpoint, I perceive that this person is trying to get to the Land of Light, which in the dream is located at the North Pole. But I see with happy surprise there are many paths leading to this Land. Some appear as footpaths and have scattered travelers, others have ruts made by wagon trains, some are very broad, tree-lined avenues, some are even superhighways, but they all end up at the same place. I also notice that many of the travelers are not getting to their destination. They pause to embellish the path, or create edifices alongside the path which they then stop to worship.”

Bernadette was reassured by this vision, went on to study a variety of spiritual paths, and eventually became ordained as an interfaith minister.

Isn't that a great dream? It's probably one that any one of us could have had.

This dream was excerpted from the wonderful book, **Healing Dreams**, by Marc Ian Barasch, p. 273-274. I appreciated this book so much when I borrowed it from the library that I found I had marked the small 380 page volume with about 80 post-its. I asked the library if they would allow me to buy them a new book so I could keep this one for myself, rather than have to take such voluminous notes. They said yes, and that's what I did!

I would be very grateful to have companions with whom to share and discuss dreams. If anyone is interested, please call me at 215-766-9456. Thanks!

A Closing Note:

What a wonderful, thriving school we have. Thank you so much to all who contributed to this first edition. I look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming events and I can't wait to see what you all report and contribute for the next issue.

"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master."
- Ernest Hemingway

BLESSINGS TO EACH ONE OF YOU!!!