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## A Sacred Presence in the Community

By Leland Seese, Board Chair



When an organization that provides mental health services understands itself as a sacred presence in its community, this presupposes an understanding of its work as systemic, and not discrete and individualistic. In other words, such an organization recognizes the connection between the work of a mental health provider, its particular clients, and the wider community.

To be a sacred presence in the community is to honor the truth that the Hebrew word *shalom* means balance, peace, and wholeness for each and for all. The *shalom* of each member of the community is not fully realized unless it is integrated into the *shalom* of the whole community. When Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), he spoke in the plural. Abundant life, in the mind of Jesus, was necessarily both communal and individual.

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## Sacred Space

By Peggy Hansen

What do these words mean to you? How do you define sacred space and, then, how do you relate to your ideas about it? These questions feel very wide and deep to me. Complex, daunting, intriguing, and, yes, spacious.

I’m curious about the ways in which our various cultures, our faith backgrounds, and our individual experiences influence what we believe about what is—and what is not—sacred.

I’m often struck by the resonance among the disparate things I read and hear when I’m exploring something interesting and important. New information that is coming from a different perspective echoes something I’ve heard before. In different language, a different setting, perhaps, but a kind of intersection of similar messages.

For example, right now—as I puzzle over how to live in this world of 2022—I’m standing in the intersection of a succession of voices... Brooks, Oliver, Niebuhr, Stockdale, and Kimmerer.

In a recent PBS Newshour, David Brooks spoke of this time as “an atmosphere of menace.” That helped explain the heaviness, the dread, that I feel in response to the multiple threats human beings are being faced with. Much of what I think of as sacred is suffering great harm.

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# The Samaritan Community

## Clinical Staff

Kay Abramson, MS  
 John Baumann, MDiv  
 Mary Kay Brennan, MSW  
 Grace Carpenter, MS  
 William Collins, PhD, LMFT  
 Sean Eagon, MA, LMHCA, NCC  
 Robert Erickson, MS  
 March Gunderson, MDiv, MEd  
 Colleen Kelley, MC  
 Leo Kiralla, MA, LMHC  
 Natividad Lamug, MA  
 Isaiah Lin, PsyD  
 Heather Macdonald, PsyD  
 Matthew Percy, PsyD  
 Therese Quig, LMHC, MHP  
 Jim Ramsey, MA  
 Beverley Shrumm, MC  
 Kimberly Snow, PsyD  
 Mary Stanton-Nurse, MA  
 Gary Steeves, MEd  
 Eric Stroo, MA  
 Tita Subercaseaux, MS  
 Neal Teng, PhD  
 Deb Thomas, MS  
 Carl Hilton VanOsdall, MDiv, LICSW  
 Nathalia Mora Worms, MSW, LICSW  
 Katherine Yoder, MA

## Counseling Locations

### Seattle

Main Office (Green Lake)  
 Rainier Beach Presbyterian Church

### Bainbridge Island

Rolling Bay Presbyterian Church

### Bellevue

Bellevue Presbyterian Church  
 St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

### Spokane

First Presbyterian Church of Spokane  
 Opportunity Presbyterian Church

### Colorado

Teletherapy only

## Board of Directors

Rev. Leland Seese, *Chair*  
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 Rev. Scott Anderson  
 Rev. Scott Lumsden, *ex officio*

## Administrative Staff

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 Matthew Percy, *Clinical Director*  
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 Heather Macdonald, *Director of Testing and Assessment*  
 Eric Stroo, *Community Relations Director*  
 Katherine Yoder, *Director of Administrative Services*  
 DeAmber Clopton, *Consulting Accountant*  
 Jesse Dobner, *Administrative Lead*  
 Joyce Pham, *A/R Specialist*  
 Serena Streitman, *Intake Coordinator*

## Professional Resources

Dr. Jeffrey Sung, *Consulting Psychiatrist*  
 James Furrow, PhD, *Consultant*

**The main office of Samaritan Center of Puget Sound is located at 564 NE Ravenna Blvd, Seattle, WA 98115. We can be reached by calling 206-527-2266.**

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An individual clinician in a mental health organization with this awareness is continually mindful of the connection between her work and wider issues of healing, justice, and love. Whether he is working with an individual client, a couple, a child, or a family, the clinician's starting place is the reality that these people are members of larger networks of relationships. Thus, the client's experience of their own personhood in community — as spouse or parent or sibling or child, according to their gender identity, racial identity, cultural identity, and so on — is inextricably tied to their *shalom*, their opportunity to live an abundant life.

At the Samaritan Center of Puget Sound this is the mode of seeking to be a sacred presence in the community. The Center's use of the phrase "spiritually integrated counseling and education" rests on the notion that its work at all levels serves individuals and the community, with an awareness that the two are bound together. Thus, the Center's openness to people from various faith traditions, diverse political and social communities, and all economic levels, is grounded in a shared calling to serve *shalom*, to seek abundant life for its community and community members.

In the United States, and in the wider world, we are living through a time of upheaval, in which anxiety and depression, loneliness and despair rub shoulders with momentous changes. Some fear that their world is vanishing. Others fear that the world they have always hoped for will never be. At the Samaritan Center of Puget Sound, this means seeking to be sacred presence that is responsive to opportunities to build diversity, equity, and inclusion among individual clients, staff, board, and supporters. And this is what it means to be a sacred presence in the community.

## Clinical Staff Additions



Just as we have seen the recent departures of long-serving and well-loved therapists, we have been tremendously fortunate to be joined by a pair of talented and experienced clinicians. In the spring, **Carl Hilton VanOsdall** moved to the area and quickly began to build his practice. He holds a Masters in Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, as well as a Masters in Social Work from Rutgers University. This background affords him a range of options: to counsel with couples and individuals (to include Medicare clients), and to consult with pastors and congregations.

Of his fundamental approach to therapy, he writes, “We find psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual health when we are true to ourselves and more authentic in our relationships.”

Summer sees the arrival of another fine addition, **Therese Quig**. Therese brings a strong familiarity with the local mental health scene, having worked since 2015 with Valley Cities Behavioral Health, Meridian Center. She earned her BA at Seattle University, and her counseling psychology training from City University of Seattle. She is opening her practice to adult individuals who are experiencing any of a wide range of issues, including PTSD.

Therese describes her practice in brief as an effort to meet each individual where they are, “in sensitive discernment of their needs. We may use mindfulness techniques to facilitate mind-body connection, as well as engagement with emotions, and increased insight into easing or resolving current life challenges.”



## Help Us Make a Difference



### To Be a Healing Presence

“Life isn’t always easy to navigate or easy to understand. Samaritan Center exists to help people cope, rebound, and heal from the unexpected difficulties life can bring.” In the third year of pandemic-driven change, we are determined to continue to live vibrantly into that mission.

No matter their ages or their circumstances, our clients tell us they are weary, worn thin by the stress of isolation, unpredictability, and the incessant troubling news. For example, there is the woman in her 70s who meets with her therapist every other week. She lives alone in low-income housing, is largely estranged from her adult children, and worries continually about her health, her finances, and the uncertainty of the future. She talks about her faith and experience of decline: “You’re the only one I have to talk to,” she says. “I don’t know what I would do without being able to meet with you.”

Those of you who so generously support this ministry make it possible for us to continue to be a healing presence for people who are in need of care. Without these donations from our spiritual partners – church congregations and individuals – helping those in need simply can’t be done. We pray that you will stand beside us in this difficult time. We thank you.

*Beverley Shrumm, Executive Director of Samaritan Center*

**To contribute, please use the envelope enclosed with the newsletter or donate at the Samaritan website [www.samaritanps.org](http://www.samaritanps.org)**

## Sacred Space, *continued*

(Continued from page 1)

And then, Mary Oliver's voice could well be mine, in her poem, "I Go Down to the Shore".

*I go down to the shore in the morning  
and depending on the hour the waves  
are rolling in or moving out,  
and I say, oh, I am miserable,  
what shall--  
what should I do? And the sea says  
in its lovely voice:  
Excuse me, I have work to do.*

The sea, in its sacred space, tells me it has its own work to do, and I imagine it's suggesting that I find the work that is meant for me to do.

That gentle admonition—speaking of resonance—reminds me of the original version of Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer:

*God, give me the serenity  
to accept things  
which cannot be changed;  
Give me the courage  
to change things  
which must be changed;  
And the wisdom  
to distinguish  
one from the other.*

These words feel more muscular, more active, than those of the version we've become familiar with. It speaks of things "that *must* be changed" and the need to "*distinguish*"—to intentionally discern—when to step back and when to step forward.

So much in this troubled, sacred world needs to be changed. I feel like apologizing to God for the mess we've made of this beautiful creation. Did God have any idea of the havoc that bestowing free will on human beings would cause? How self-indulgent choices would lead to resounding harm?

When we contemplate the enormity of today's problems, we feel very small in comparison. What do we have to offer? How could we possibly make a difference? Too often, our imagined answers lead us away from engaging with the reality of the complex distress.

That takes me in the direction of the Stockdale Paradox, referenced in Jim Collins' book, *Good to Great*. "Productive change begins when you confront the brutal facts.... You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, and at the same time, have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be." This echoes Niebuhr's praying for "courage"—that beautiful, brave, determined persistence that is stronger than the fear of failure.

Finally, I appreciate the scientific and Indigenous wisdom of Robin Wall Kimmerer. In her remarkable book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, she notes, "Many Native peoples across the world, despite myriad cultural differences, have this in common—we are rooted in cultures of gratitude." What would it feel like if we were to begin each day with a specific and vocal statement of gratitude? Would that quiet our apprehension about the very real distress

*(Continued on page 5)*

## A Few Farewells

### Anne Perry

We are bidding farewell to our beloved colleague, Anne Perry, who joined the Samaritan clinical staff in 2004. She had previously worked in the area of pastoral counseling, training, and personal development since 1985.

In addition to her work with us, Anne has been a significant presence in a number of areas: as a coach, teacher, and mentor; in the work of collaborative law; and – as she would enthusiastically share with others – in the innovative area of body work, both as a client and a practitioner. We have all benefited from being part of her courageous, always-inquiring journey.

Here are Anne's words as she moves into this next chapter of her life: "Reflecting on my ongoing career of learning and development, I am grateful to have called Samaritan my home base, grateful to have grown along side so very many outstanding colleagues, grateful to have been a witness to a variety of clients on the walk toward wholeness. Grateful, too, to now be able to have exclusive time to devote to deeper healing, reflection, and understanding within myself in this mysterious and full time of life."



### Mark Houglum

In May, the agency celebrated the career of Mark Houglum, who concluded 27 years as a Marriage and Family Therapist with Samaritan Center. In his time of service, he won the admiration and affection of colleagues as a model of insightful, compassionate listening, and intervention.

As a practitioner, Mark brought faith values that are notable for their breadth and depth. His work was informed by religious studies at Warburg Seminary (M.Div.) and Vanderbilt University, where he obtained a Ph.D. in Religion and Personality. He devoted the early years of his career to ministry as a Lutheran pastor in Alaska and Washington State. Along the way, his engagement with Indigenous communities was especially formative.

Looking back, Mark spoke appreciatively of the sacred terrain we have walked together. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to have been part of the mission of Samaritan. Extending compassion and being a conduit of blessing and healing have been enormous gifts to me. It has been a gift to walk alongside people, to be a therapeutic companion, and then bless them on their way. I'll miss the support and insights of my colleagues enormously. This is not work I could have done alone. It's shared work, and it helped me grow as a person, spiritually as well as professionally."



*(Continued from page 4)*

around and within us, and help us move toward understanding what we might do with this single, particular hour?

What if we were to stay with the hard questions, less attached to the outcome. If we continued to ask: "Today, what can I do that would help to ease the suffering of someone?" "What can I do that will reflect my appreciation of being one small part of this very large and sacred world?"

## Meeting Transition

Therapist John Baumann has been in discernment around a need to refocus his time and energy. His initial inclination was to retire fully, but (happily for us) the course of his discernment has led instead to a decision to specialize in areas of greatest interest and reward. Here is his reflection on the change.



“A weekend anchor for one of the national networks ends each broadcast with, ‘Thank you for the privilege of your time.’ The privilege of time spent together also stands at the core of my experience with colleagues, both staff and fellow therapists, at Samaritan Center. The experience has been life-giving. And so it was with much regret that I began to share the news that I intended to retire.

But what began as “complete retirement” from this work has been modified to a transition. What changed? A colleague in a small group asked if I was going to continue to work in the areas that were most life-giving for me. I was moved to revisit my discernment and discuss my options with our agency director. I am pleased to report that I am going to continue my clinical work, with a focus on marriage preparation. I am also open to working with individuals and couples struggling to deal with grief and loss. Clearly, the privilege of time spent together is a powerful force.”

## Sacred Presence: A Meditation

*By Gary Steeves*

Sacred Presence is Here.

And Now.

Always.

All-ways.

Sacred Presence is in everything.

All material and immaterial reality is Sacred Presence.

Sacred Presence is my body, brain and heart.

In counseling, it is not a matter of calling the Sacred to be Present.

The Present is already Sacred.

The space, time and energy between the therapist and client is Sacred Presence.

And the Sacred Presence is WITHIN the therapist and the client.

Both therapist and client are the conduits of God.

The task is to stay mindful (an intentional awareness) and remain connected and attached with that Sacred Presence.

And aware when I am not.

My eye contact, both nonverbal and body movements, express this quest to stay connected and attached to my heart of God.

My best self is to show up with compassion, mercy, forgiveness and grace to those parts in me that are not at peace, are anxious or depressed.

All these forces are to merge together into a Sacred Wisdom where and how to take my next step forward.

The task is to ACCEPT my human condition in the faith I am created in the image of God.

My human condition haunts me.

I long and hunger for more Sacred Presence.

The Surprise of Liberation from this human condition will come to me someday.

Sacred Presence.



## Resource

### Braiding Sweetgrass

Review by Peggy Hansen

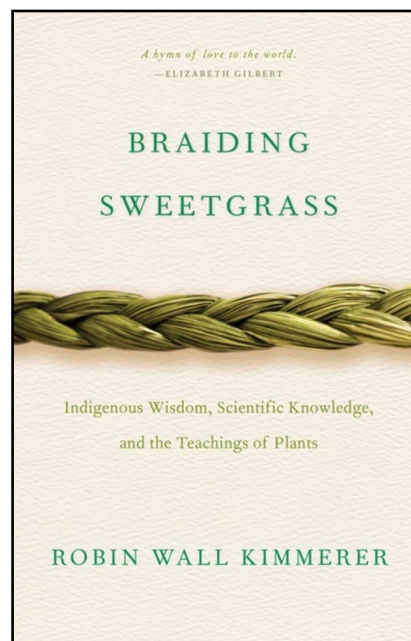
In the preface, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes: “I could hand you a braid of sweetgrass, as thick and shining as the plait that hung down my grandmother’s back. But it is not mine to give, nor yours to take. *Wiingaashk* belongs to herself. So I offer, in its place, a braid of stories meant to heal our relationship with the world. This braid is woven from three strands: Indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge, and the story of an Anishinabekwe scientist trying to bring them together in service to what matters most.”

In this beautifully written book, Kimmerer moves back and forth between stories of relationships with her family and her students, very detailed and scholarly descriptions of the plants she loves and their (and our) endangered environment, and the beloved traditions and wisdom of her elders.

She describes the ceremonial giveaway, the *minidewak*, one of her peoples’ oldest teachings. “Generosity is simultaneously a moral and a material imperative, especially among people who live close to the land and know its waves of plenty and scarcity. Where the well-being of one is linked to the well-being of all. Wealth among traditional people is measured by having enough to give away.... In a culture of gratitude, everyone knows that gifts will follow the circle of reciprocity and flow back to you again. This time you give and next time you receive. Both the honor of giving and humility of receiving are necessary halves of the equation.”

She introduces us to the Thanksgiving Address, which embodies the Onondaga relationship with the world. “Each part of Creation is thanked in turn for fulfilling its Creator-given duty to the others. It reminds you every day that you have enough,” she writes, drawing on the words of Freida Jacques, a teacher at the Onondaga Nation School. “Gratitude,” says Kimmerer, “doesn’t send you out shopping to find satisfaction, it comes as a gift rather than a commodity, subverting the foundation of the whole economy. That’s good medicine for land and people alike.”

The recognition of loss is also a theme of her book, as she recounts the taking of children from their tribe and families, isolating them in boarding schools and forbidding them to speak their native language. She mourns the ecological destruction that has changed her beloved Onondaga Lake into “the most chemically contaminated lake in the United States.” But she says: “Despair is paralysis. It robs us of agency. It blinds us to our own power and the power of the earth. Environmental despair is a poison every bit as destructive as the methylated mercury in the bottom of Onondaga Lake.... Restoration is a powerful antidote to despair. Restoration offers concrete means by which humans can once again enter into positive, creative relationship with the more-than-human world, meeting responsibilities that are simultaneously material and spiritual.”



*Robin Wall Kimmerer is a mother, a scientist, an author, and an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She lives in Syracuse, New York, where she is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology, and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment.*

# Samaritan

Center of Puget Sound

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## New Offerings for the Pastoral Community



### Suicide Prevention: Essentials for Clergy and Church Leaders

“Suicide is preventable.” That has been the consistent, hopeful—and evidence-based—message from psychiatrist and award-winning trainer Dr. Jeffrey Sung. In collaboration with the Samaritan Center, he is offering an overview of the principles of suicide care, designed for clergy and lay church leaders, who often play a crucial “gatekeeper” role with individuals in crisis. This 3-hour program will be presented online to registered attendees in November 2022. See details at the website.

**Register** online at [www.samaritanps.org](http://www.samaritanps.org) **Questions?** Email [registrar@samaritanps.org](mailto:registrar@samaritanps.org)

### Mental Health Consult: A Resource for Clergy and Pastoral Care Leaders

For the remainder of 2022, beginning on October 6, the agency staff will be piloting a new offering for clergy and other congregational leaders with pastoral responsibilities. Registrants will be able to join an online consult group to discuss the mental health issues that are facing congregants. These consultation opportunities will occur virtually from noon to 1pm on the first Thursday of each month, October through December 2022.

**Register** online at [www.samaritanps.org](http://www.samaritanps.org) **Questions?** Email [clergyconsult@samaritanps.org](mailto:clergyconsult@samaritanps.org)