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SAMARITAN CENTER AT 60

An Interview with Reverend Leland Seese



Leland Seese is the pastor of Mount Baker Park Presbyterian Church in Seattle and Chair of the Samaritan Center Board of Directors. A long-time supporter of and advocate for the agency, he is serving on the board for a second term.

Lee, how did your involvement with Samaritan Center begin?

My mother sought out family counseling for herself, my two sisters, and me after my dad divorced her and moved out. We were all struggling with grief and depression, but we had few resources in those days (1979) to understand what we were experiencing. Through the skilled work of a therapist with

Presbyterian Counseling Service (as it was then known), we were able better to manage our new reality, and to be more compassionate toward each other and ourselves.

What do you see as the unique attributes of the agency and its role in the community?

Samaritan Center stands out as a faith-identifying agency that respects the spiritual dimension of people's lives as they experience changes, loss, and challenges of all kinds. The balance of a faith-identifying stance and an openness to meet clients where they are in their spiritual lives—rather than proselytizing or pressuring—is a singular strength of this agency and its work.

What have you been able to contribute to the agency over the course of your involvement?

I hope I have contributed a sense of gratitude and affirmation for the way Samaritan Center has been a significant help in my life and calling as a pastor. In addition to the counseling my family received in

1979, my psychological testing required for ordination to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA) was administered through Samaritan Center, and I received invaluable training in systems theory applied to congregations through a workshop led by Samaritan Center staff. I also hope I have helped the agency remain vital and responsive to changing needs as a member of the board.



Photo: Jim Ramsey

The Samaritan Community

Clinical Staff

Kay Abramson, MS
 John Baumann, MDiv
 Mary Kay Brennan, MSW
 Erinn Cameron, MA
 Grace Carpenter, MS
 William Collins, MS
 Robert Erickson, MS
 March Gunderson, MDiv, MEd
 Margaret (Peggy) Hansen, MS
 Beth Hess, MS, MSW
 Mark Houglum, PhD, MDiv
 Colleen Kelley, MC
 Natividad Lamug, MA
 Isaiah Lin, PsyD
 Heather Macdonald, PsyD
 Matthew Percy, PsyD.
 Anne Perry, MA, EdD
 Jim Ramsey, MA
 Michael Rogers, MDiv, MA
 Beverley Shrumm, MC
 Jonathan Siehl, MDiv, MSW
 Jocelyn Skillman, MA
 Kimberly Snow, PsyD
 Mary Stanton-Nurse, MA
 Gary Steeves, MEd
 Eric Stroo, MA
 Tita Subercaseaux, MS
 Neal Teng, PhD
 Deb Thomas, MS
 Katherine Yoder, MA

Counseling Locations

Seattle

Main Office (Green Lake)
 Rainier Beach Presbyterian Church

West Seattle

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
 West Side Presbyterian Church

Shoreline

Shoreline Free Methodist Church

Bellevue

Bellevue Presbyterian Church
 St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

Renton

Fairwood Community United Methodist
 St. Stephen the Martyr Parish

Spokane

First Presbyterian Church of Spokane
 Opportunity Presbyterian Church

Board of Directors

Rev. Leland Seese, Chair
 Douglas Farnham, Treasurer
 Rev. William McIvor, Secretary
 Mary Denny
 Colleen Chinen
 Doug LeRoy
 Liz Covey
 Rev. Scott Lumsden, ex officio

Administrative Staff

Beverley Shrumm, CEO/President
 Matthew Percy, Clinical Director
 James Ramsey, Director of Facilities
 Heather Macdonald, Director of
 Testing and Assessment
 Eric Stroo, Community Relations
 and Marketing Coordinator
 Katherine Yoder, Director of Admin-
 istrative Services
 John Poole, Senior Accountant
 Jesse Dobner, A/R & Billing
 Min Park, A/R & Billing
 Daniel Keyes
 Reception/Admin
 Emerald Lynch, Admin Assistant
 Konrad Schaller, Admin Assistant

**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.
 More information about therapists, locations and programs can be found on our website at www.samaritanps.org.**

(Continued from page 1)

Why do you think Samaritan Center has succeeded in reaching the age of 60?

Quite simply, Samaritan Center has provided consistently excellent services throughout its life. As a pastor, whenever I feel the need to refer congregation members for counseling, regardless of the particular issue, I refer them to Samaritan Center therapists.

What do you believe are the greatest challenges that Samaritan Center faces today?

As the Puget Sound area goes through profound changes in population, economic stratification, diversity, and mobility, the Samaritan Center is challenged to remain responsive and accessible. This literally means re-thinking how to provide affordable services and offer those services in a way that people can access—if they do not have means of transportation, financial constraints, or limited technology for remote care.

What are your hopes for Samaritan Center for its next decade and beyond?

My main hope is that Samaritan Center can hold its balance of flexibility and foundation in the years to come. The Center staff will need to be flexible to meet the challenges and rapid changes of a burgeoning region in a country whose cultural shifts and tensions have increased rapidly. But it will also do well to hold to its convictions about honoring the whole person as its therapists do their essential work of “restoring hope, reconciling relationships, and transforming lives.”

This Time of Transition

Resilience and In-Between Time

By Beverley Shrumm, President of Samaritan Center



I became anxious when I kept going in and out of remembering that I had a very rare social event on a Saturday evening: dinner with dear friends (all of us vaccinated) of many years. So, I set an alarm to tell me when it was time to get out of my comfort clothes and leave home. I am seeing markers of being in transition: often I experience feeling disoriented and disengaged.

William Bridges in his book *Transitions* asserts these feelings of disorientation are indicators of an *ending phase*, a noteworthy contribution to our thinking—that a transition begins with an ending. The ending phase leads into two other phases: a creative neutral zone, followed by a phase of new beginnings .

My thoughts about engaging transition are to allow time for deep reflection, be guided by beliefs and values, and hold steady with life-giving practices. Notice what is ending, including the losses. Be watchful for signs of “new” to emerge internally or externally, and as new ways of being or directions are embraced, grieve what is lost.

We have more requests for service than we can meet: depression, anxiety and relational conflict are elevated in our community. Our therapists continue with teletherapy service, mostly from their homes, and via video-conferencing, we “gather” for staff meetings, consultation, trainings and our spiritual integration groups. The administrative staff steadfastly works in our Ravenna facility, which feels somehow older for its awful emptiness. Our board and staff review our statement of values and strategic plan for guidance and markers.

We have become more adept at being remotely connected and functional which supports geographical stretch. We have resumed services for Kitsap County and recently began service in Spokane. We are to partner with NW Coast Presbytery to bring services into Snohomish County. While the core of our ministry is steady and constantly affirmed, I can feel we will emerge from this time changed in ways that we can’t yet see. I miss my colleagues.

We were going to throw a big party this spring in recognition of our 60 years of ministry. I hope we will throw that party in the spring of 2022. We will acknowledge the grief of many losses, offer gratitude and celebrate our shared Life.



Photo: Daniel Keyes

Our 60th! - More Conversations...

Gary Steeves

Gary is a pastoral counselor, integrating spiritual and holistic health with individuals, couples and families. He has been with Samaritan Center for 34 years and still counting.

You have a long history with the agency, Gary. When did your involvement begin?

It was on February 14, 1987, Valentine's Day, when I received a call from the Director of Presbyterian Counseling Service, Doug Anderson, offering me a position to join the "Family." I was informed that my role was to expand counseling services in South King County. We not only began to increase our staff size, we began to have our counseling offices in other denominations. I opened offices in Kent United Methodist and First Presbyterian of Renton churches. The discussion of "how small or large do we become" continued on for many years. I believe we have answered that question now with over 30 therapists on staff serving the greater Puget Sound region and, most recently, two new offices in Spokane.



Along with this growth, what sorts of changes have you observed over the years?

As with any organization, Presbyterian Counseling Service has continued to evaluate itself. We have evolved our mission statement, and we changed our name to Samaritan Center of Puget Sound. Connections with local denominations became strong as we offered education and consulting services to enrich their congregations. A special Samaritan Fund was established, with an annual appeal, to support low income clients and those therapists serving their needs..

As you know, Gary, past decades have been difficult for faith-integrative counseling agencies. What do you think has kept us viable?

You're right about that. I have seen our colleagues in some other pastoral counseling agencies closing their doors due to financial strains. And another agency had to close due to conflict between the staff and the board. Samaritan Center has encountered its own ups and downs through all this, of course. But what has kept us alive, I believe, is that the leadership consulted for guidance and support. There are very few Samaritan Center agencies in the country that are as large and successful as ours.

Times have indeed changed. Has the community changed with them?

The term "Family" no longer describes us well due to our size and diverse locations. The word "Heart" best describes us now as we meet less often, now on Zoom/Teams. What keeps us connected is our Peer Groups in case consultations, SERT groups that discuss in depth our experiences with spiritually integrative ways to grow. Our agency is not so much "top-down" and is more inclusive of staff members serving in leadership roles. We are inclusive because each one of us matters.

We are a flexible agency, willing to bend into changes to adapt to the environment. For example, we have been open to expanding our services to the entire State of Washington, especially to those areas where services are limited. Spokane is our first movement into that expansion. And teletherapy now allows that service to increase in determining best care for the person, couple or family anywhere in the State.

When I accepted the invitation to be a part of the "Family" in 1987 I was aware of a common question to any new possible hire, "Would you grow old here?" Well, it certainly is the case in my situation, as it is with several of my colleagues. I was formed in the process not to do this work alone. Having a peer consultation group has led to the best care of both myself and the clients. There is a synergy here. A Spirit of God flows through our strengths and weaknesses and guides us to live our lives fully. There is much gratitude for each "part/person" that makes it greater than the "whole/community."

Karen McMichael

We describe Karen as a triple threat: valuable as a former member of the clinical staff, one-time board member, and fundraising wiz.



Could you describe your earliest involvement with Samaritan Center?

My earliest involvement with Samaritan Center occurred when a staff member at Samaritan asked whether I might be interested in working with what was then Presbyterian Counseling Service. I had worked as a therapist in Northern California for about 10 years before moving to the Puget Sound region. I was definitely interested in the possibility of being able to integrate my religious beliefs with therapeutic work. It seemed very clear to me that when the Lord is in the mix and a unique opportunity comes along, I should pay attention! I wanted to let God lead the way in my eventual outcome.

What do you see as unique attributes of the agency and its role in the community?

What now stands out for me, having been retired from clinical practice for several years, is the integrity of Samaritan's therapists; the wide range of training as marriage and family therapists, social workers, psychologists and pastoral counselors; and the opportunity that is provided to clients with these different clinical orientations. Also very positive is the providing of a sliding fee scale and the establishing of a low fee clinic. The clinic addresses both the needs of low income clients and the need of externs who require many hours of supervised client service for state licensure.

What have you been able to contribute to the agency over the course of your involvement?

Commitment to Samaritan's goals and mission has been an integral part of my connection to the agency. After practicing as a staff member for 6 years in Burien and Federal Way, I became a member of the Board for another 6 years. I've been involved in planning and supporting the fundraising activities of the agency. I feel that being a mother, wife and a therapist helps me focus more effectively on reflecting the values and mission of service to others in my community and my own church home.

Why do you think Samaritan Center has succeeded in reaching the age of 60?

Rev. Neal Kuyper, founder of Presbyterian Counseling Service, would indeed be surprised at how times and people have changed. Reaching this milestone has required particular attention to the changing needs of our community, and the ability to be flexible and to adapt to change. An important aspect of this lies in the leadership and support structure of Samaritan. An example of this is the commitment to ongoing staff clinical trainings and the weekly small group consultations where therapists give and receive feedback within an honest and safe setting.

What do you believe are the greatest challenges that Samaritan Center faces today?

Homelessness, COVID 19 and awareness of such things as gender differences, ethnic and racial diversity, income inequality and Zoom were not such prominent factors earlier. The present challenges we face are not simple ones to resolve. Traditional sources of funding that are affected by political and economic change require innovative efforts to maintain the affordable excellence that Samaritan is known for and committed to.

What are your hopes for Samaritan Center for its next decade and beyond?

I am hopeful and confident based on my belief, knowing that the Lord is in the mix. Samaritan will adapt to the economic challenges of the time and remain a place where those who have the courage to walk through the door of a therapist's office to receive help will always be met with compassion.

Practice Matters

Devices and Desires

By Jocelyn Skillman

Dr. Doreen Dodgen-Magee PsyD joined our staff for a timely training on technology and deepening counseling practices in digital spaces. Doreen is an award-winning author, psychologist, and activist. She specializes in the impact of technology on mental health and how the digital domain shapes us and our world.



Doreen Dodgen-Magee

In our training, Doreen prioritized kinesthetic and bodily engagement as a working model for how we can deepen embodiment and connection with those we serve. Doreen's work emphasizes cultivating balance, moderation, and informed intelligence in how we utilize technological platforms for connectedness – a critical mission as we round a year of pandemic life. Doreen can be found @drdoreendm, with pieces in the New York Times and Washington Post. She is the winner of the 2019 Nautilus prize for her encouraging and helpful book *Devised!*

Doreen provided rich learnings on current research, brain science, and the broader concerns and benefits afforded us through digital domains of connection. As a vocation, in-person therapy was, she observed, seen to be a 'last bastion' of embodied work, profoundly rooted in office spaces, in the body, as a crux of healing. We grieved and dreamed together, with her help, of ways to integrate more powerfully the presence of our bodies, the echoes of our offices – elevating rhythms of care to serve both therapist and client during this disembodied and agonizing time.

Doreen closed out our time of learning with a helpful meditation:



Imagine yourself as a dock on a chosen body of water. The water flows in whatever lucid and wild ways it does - under, and around you. It does not impact in any way your steady dock-grounding. Anything distracting that arises in your mind, heart, and body: place on a boat far in the distance. Breathe.

As Christian therapists we are given to name Jesus as our dock, the One who profoundly, intimately, and eternally grounds us in His Life rather than our own. He invites us to walk to Him on the rough water – with our eyes on Him we walk together in faith through this storm. Our time together with Doreen reminded me that we are not alone as we wade through these strange telehealth encounters - we sit in the same chaos-boat and chaos-waters

of community-upheaval. Rooting in presence brings us close to God and to each other. May Christ enliven our service in the Body as we wade through this time, not gathered, yet deeply gathered together in Him.

From the Depths

How Not to Disappear (Pandemic Style)

Elya Barden

Take your temperature. Blow up the same red balloon at irregular intervals; expel your breath into the sink. Schedule Zoom calls with your dog. Screen share every pimped, buck-toothed photo of your younger self to remind you who you were and whom you've tried to leave behind. Read every story you can find on the 1918 Spanish Flu: how it spread, how it ebbed, how it returned, how it killed and how quickly history wiped 30-50 million souls from its pages. Scissor your old love letters and yesterday's obits into a collage of loss. Google the word for "death" in 27 languages. Drift through every new Facebook group, mushroom clusters of panicked souls searching for connection, liking random posts in a Morse code of caring. Name your age spots "freckles" and play connect-the-dots along your arms in sidewalk chalk as you wait in six-foot intervals outside the only local Trader Joes not closed for illness. Magnify every detail of your shrunken life: post photos of yet another home-cooked meal, your sleep-curling cat, the first lemon fattened on a branch, the hummingbird sexing your pink hibiscus. Fill a jar with the dimes and nickels of these moments, a currency you'll invest in poems to remember what we'll all soon try to forget, clutching at our memories of "normal" like fragments of last night's dreams.

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ONLINE WORKSHOP FOR THERAPISTS

Working with Suicidal Clients: Hope and Recovery in Suicide Care

This one-day workshop is designed for mental health professionals who want preparation and insight beyond the fundamentals of managing suicidal patients, to provide guidance in their ongoing treatment. The workshop meets requirements in Washington State under the Matt Adler Suicide Assessment, Treatment and Management Act of 2012, and is open to anyone in the healthcare field.



Instructor Jeffrey Sung, MD, is a Seattle psychiatrist and acting instructor with the University of Washington Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. A leader in the field, Dr. Sung was awarded the Sue Eastgard Training Excellence Award in 2015 for his suicidality workshop.

Register online at www.samaritanps.org

Questions? registrar@samaritanps.org

Next online workshop: Friday, June 11, 2021, from 9 am–4:30 pm.
6 Units of Continuing Education Cost \$185

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