



Annual Report 2018

Connections
COUNSELING
a trusted referral resource

www.connectionsounselingwa.org



Message from Laura Wall

Recently I was asked whether Connections Counseling is still active. My answer is—emphatically—yes! While Connections Counseling no longer has an office at Aldersgate United Methodist Church, where the ministry first began 4 years ago, we still operate in Seattle, Shoreline, and now the Skagit Valley.

The past year has brought shifts and changes, but our pastorally trained counselors are more committed than ever to bringing God's grace to the clients they serve. And, the subsidy fund helps to make that happen. Read our client snapshots to see the diversity of clients who benefit from that important source of support.

This Annual Report is our way of staying in touch with our congregational communities and all those who support our mission. As always, we keep you in our hearts and prayers.

With the Peace of Christ,
Laura

God is always in the room ...

Many of the people that benefit from the Connections Counseling subsidy fund are not Christian. Many do not attend church of any kind. In fact, many of them have had painful experiences within a religious setting, or have a conflicted relationship with the church.

So they may not know, as every Connections Counselor knows, that God is always in the room with them. That is one of the most important gifts we as spiritually trained counselors have to offer.

Does this mean that we proselytize our clients? Most definitely not. Introducing the topic of God, or Jesus, or even spirituality in our counseling sessions would betray the professional ethics to which we are bound, unless the client initiates this conversation.

But then, we don't have to have a conversation about God, to know that God is already there, with us, with our clients, loving them, guiding them, and perhaps – even guiding them to work with the Pastoral counselors at Connections Counseling.

In the same way that we know God loves us, we are able to offer God's love to our clients—even if we never say it aloud. And—should any of our clients want support in their spiritual seeking, or struggling—we can meet them there as well.

Yes, God is in the room, and we as pastoral counselors know that makes all the difference.



Our Newest Counselor!



Connections Counseling welcomed Mary Stanton-Nurse as our newest counselor in June of 2017. Mary completed her Master of Arts in Couples and Family Therapy from Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry in 2016 and completed a clinical internship at Atlantic Street Center, which was founded by United Methodist Deaconesses over 100 years ago. Mary is also in the candidacy process to become a Deacon in the United Methodist Church.

The focus of Mary's clinical practice is working with individuals, couples, and families in transitions, which so far includes a lot of premarital counseling. Mary's practice is hosted by Ronald UMC in Shoreline. We are thrilled to have her gifts and graces as part of the organization!

Subsidy Fund: Client Snapshots

The subsidy fund, thanks to your generous donations, remains able to support about 6 clients per month, or approximately 1 per counselor. All subsidy clients pay at least \$10 per session, and most pay between \$20 and \$25. The subsidy fund reimburses the counselors for the remainder, at a base rate of \$60 per session. This is based on the model of other pastoral counseling organizations across Washington.

We thought you might like to "meet" some of the clients supported by the fund in 2017.

- A young married woman staying home with her infant son who needed intensive surgical interventions.
- A single man in mid-life, living with long-term disability yet committed to anti-racism work.
- A young immigrant woman who fled a domestic violence situation and is applying to a graduate program that will help her "pay forward" all the support she has received.
- A lesbian in mid-life finding her voice in her faith community while recovering from significant spiritual abuse as a child and adolescent.
- A mother of two young children, working full-time as a medical technician, who left her husband when he began using drugs.
- The father of a young child, struggling to provide for his daughter while he negotiates both a very challenging divorce and a job search.
- A woman with a history of significant trauma, studying to become a music therapist so that she can help others with a similar past.
- A woman just completing her second Master's degree, whose necessary medical procedures kept her out of the job market for several months.
- A young woman recently relocated to Seattle after completing college, living into her calling to faith-based social justice and community organizing work.

We are so grateful to be able to serve these clients through the grace of your donations.

Support the Fund

Our counselors continue to see more clients at subsidized rates than the subsidy fund can sustain. **You can help them continue this important work by donating to the fund:**

- 1. Click the Donate button** from our website at <http://www.connectionsounselingwa.org/>.
- 2. Give through your workplace:** If your company has a corporate giving campaign, select Connections Counseling as your designated charity. Corporate matching funds double your giving!
- 3. Donate from your PayPal account.** When sending money, simply enter Therapy@ConnectionsCounseling.org as your recipient.
- 4. Shop on AmazonSmile** and select Connections Counseling as your charity.

Spotlight:

Marie Veith



Marie is an unsung hero of Connections Counseling and we've decided that it is high time to sing! She has

been volunteering her time as the Connections Counseling Treasurer since the organization began. Despite regular requests that she accept some remuneration, she just as regularly refuses! So this spotlight is to express our sincerest thanks, and introduce you to Marie—or those of you who have not yet had that pleasure.

Marie has a long history in accounting. She served as the Bellevue High School Athletic Secretary and the Associated Student Body Accountant for over 12 years. She has been the Treasurer for 8 years at Aldersgate UMC, and for 2 years at Bellevue First UMC. She lives with her husband, a retired Boeing engineer, and is a busy grandma of 4 grandsons! She loves to quilt, read, and garden and has lived in Bellevue for—well, she told me to “just say eons.” We appreciate her honesty, diligence, dedication, sense of perspective and optimism! Thank you Marie, for all that you do and are!

OTHER counselor HIGHLIGHTS

Peter recently presented at the monthly meeting of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors



– NorthWest Region. He shared a comparative between Spiritual Direction and Pastoral Counseling, which fostered much thoughtful discussion.

In addition to his private practice, Peter is on staff at Companis Mission Workers Association in Seattle.

Katie is on a sabbatical year from her ministry roles at Redmond UMC, where she has been appointed as Deacon since 2010. Katie's Seattle practice is expanding to include more writing, teaching, and clinical supervision of early career therapists.



Laura moved in July to the beautiful Skagit Valley, where she works full time in community mental health as well as maintaining her counseling practice.



Gretchen continues her practice out of Seattle First Baptist church and is gearing up for another planting season at Garden + Soul (www.gardenandsoultherapy.com) where she explores the intersections of gardening, the life the Spirit, and the healing that comes by engaging in intentional creative practices.



Jenn continues her counseling practice in Queen Anne, and last year began offering a monthly spiritual gathering where all are welcome to “celebrate the sacred Earth.” The gathering is held in Seattle, the second Sunday of every month at Natural Rhythms Integrative Medicine in Seattle.



What's Next?

As we enter a new liturgical season, we are searching our hearts for ways to stay connected, to thoughtfully enrich our offerings as a group and individually, and to nurture this organization that is still fledgling in many ways. Pastoral counseling is a special calling. It also seems that we are at a generational intersection, where the “old guard” is seeking to pass on its wisdom while the “new

guard” is still forming. Through our relationships with the AAPC Northwest region, with each other, and with the organizations we serve; through the ministries we continue to develop and the connections we continue to make—and perhaps most importantly, with your prayers and the indwelling spirit of Christ—we have every intention of carrying this work forward.