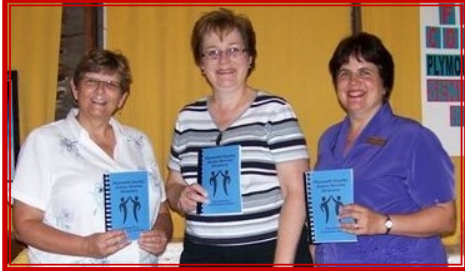


# The Spiritual Caregiver

A Newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute for Pastoral Care

## EI Distributes Plymouth County Senior Service Directories



*Pictured at the Plymouth County Fair are Elaine Sohl, Sandi Bolton, and Karen Borchers. EI was fortunate to share a booth with the Floyd Valley Hospital Auxiliary*

The long awaited Senior Service Directory (SSD) was released at the Plymouth County Fair at Le Mars this summer. As promised, it is a guide for what seniors can do to help the community and it also directs them to services which they may need. 5,000 copies are being distributed throughout the county.

You can get your copy at one of the following locations:

- Public libraries in Le Mars, Akron, Merrill & Kingsley
- Le Mars Chamber of Commerce
- Akron Senior Center
- Akron City Hall
- Floyd Valley Hospital, Le Mars (at the front desk, education department and community relations office)
- Farmer's Savings Bank, Remsen
- Westel, Remsen
- Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Remsen
- Plymouth County Extension
- Park Place Estates
- Plains Area Mental Health

Sandi Bolton, EI's administrative assistant, was at her doctor's office when another patient said to her, "Have you seen this directory? It is filled with such good community information. Everyone should have a copy!" Sandi just smiled . . . she had put it together! †



## Mobilizing Pastoral Care In Northwest Iowa

### EI Welcomes New Supervisor

Having shared long years together as supervisory colleagues with consistent growth in mutual respect for each other, it gives me great joy to have Steve Pohlman step into my shoes this fall as EI supervisor. Steve has the ability to connect well with students, is vastly experienced as a CPE supervisor and has long held admiration for EI and our mission.

Welcome Steve, and thanks for joining us!

- Fr. Gene Sitzmann



### CPE Class of 2008-09



*Front: Karol Gafkjen, Kolleen Queener, Stephanie Prince, Back: Craig Cummins, Terry Pollard, Karen Borchers*

**Check out EI's new website:  
On line October 20th  
[ecumenicalinstitute.org](http://ecumenicalinstitute.org)**

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**SAVE THE DATE!**

**THE NEXT  
REUNION FOR EI  
CPE ALUM IS  
APRIL 26, 2009  
2-5 PM**

# Ministry in Action



## CPE at the Frontlines

- by Father Miles J. Barrett—Class of 1981

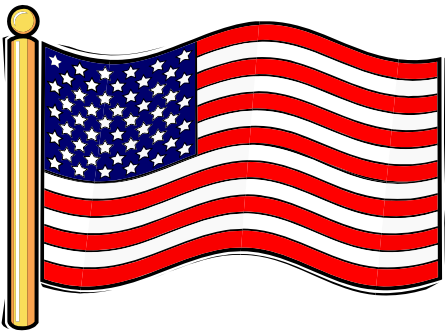
*(Editors note: we realize that some of our readers may not support the war in Iraq, but all of us support the troops who are there. In that spirit we present this somewhat graphic article. One goal of the CPE movement is to address national pastoral shortages. These shortages are most acutely felt in our military chaplaincy programs.)*

The soldier was married one week before his second tour in Iraq after two years of college on a sports scholarship. The doctors saved his life after a bomb took off both of his legs. But, *who would save his spirit?* He had lost his will to live, as would many of us in the same circumstance.

My CPE training helped me bring him the Sacraments of the Sick, hear his confession, anoint him, bring him the Eucharist, and listen without judging. The training helped me walk with him in his wounded spirit and not be afraid to be a human in need of God. After he was flown back to the States the next day, both the doctor and a surgical nurse stopped me and thanked me for his 180° attitude change that most likely saved his life. I pointed out to them it was not as much me as his faith that healed him, and the Catholic sacraments he believed were an encounter with the living Christ—a life-changing encounter in a violent world where bad things do happen to good people. He phoned back from Walter Reed and thanked all the staff, reporting about his five surgeries in twenty days. He and his wife were doing fine with his new legs. That's an example of things working out – thank you Father Gene and Pastor Bob!

Here's another story where things didn't work out quite so well: Just thirty minutes before me and another non-CPE trained chaplain ministered to him, a Marine explosive ordinance Sergeant had watched his Corporal and good friend blown up by an IED. Bloodied and in shock, the sergeant's right ear was deaf, his eardrum shattered. A non-CPE trained chaplain left quickly to get a small four-foot quilt made by a Girl Scout troop. He had his camera ready as he read the three paragraphs why this quilt had meant so much to the girls who made it, but the sergeant pleaded with him not to take any photographs in his bloody state. He took a picture anyway – lower legs only with the quilt. The senior chaplain and I admonished this chaplain on this invasion of privacy (not to mention failing to follow the tailights). Our words fell on deaf ears. My conclusion - there is no substitute for brains and heart, and caregiving training and experience in combat ministry.

It was the CPE group dynamics that . . . laid the best foundation for just listening and being human in need of God's healing Spirit in the moment.



Military Chaplain ministry is not for everyone. Pushing age 58, I wish I was able to start again; it has been so rewarding and fruitful on so many levels. CPE should be required in my opinion. The chaplain has to be able to walk the walk with the troops and live the ethical high ground within their combat environment, bringing spiritual wellness and strength in many difficult and raw situations.

I was blessed to have heard confessions in an Army Bradley and convoyed seven-ton Humvees, and with Army and Marine units between helicopter flights, ministering in an area about the size of the state of Utah. I offered 14 Catholic services per week, flew in combat, and offered services around the five chapels in Al Asad Airbase—besides serving a small Army unit for two days one week and a Marine unit the next week during all of last year. There were Catholic Iraqi translators in my Bible studies. Still as the only Catholic priest most the year at Al Asad, I facilitated for the Jewish and Muslim services each week and helped the twenty-two Protestant chaplains on the base serve their community. God blessed us all. It was the CPE group dynamics that first split the atom of love inside me and laid the best foundation for just listening and being human in need of God's healing Spirit in the moment. I've seen a lot and CPE has helped tremendously! †

# Ministry in Action

## BEING UNDERSTOOD - MY CPE STORY

By Pastor Al Walck—Class of 1975

*(Editor's note: Many people would have considered Reverend Al Walck's career largely over after serving 26 years as a missionary to Papua, New Guinea. Transitioning back to the states, Rev. Walck took CPE in both 1975 and 1978. Here are some recollections.)*

Growing up in a Lutheran parsonage in St. Paul was quite different than serving in Papua, New Guinea from 1946 to 1972. My wife, Marion, and I were married there, and our four sons were born and raised there. I worked first as a station missionary, then the headmaster or principal of a middle school, and finally, the editor of the church paper in three languages. That was a different world with different needs, activities and people - quite different from life and work here in the USA.

When we returned to the States in 1972, I was invited to do a "reorientation" pastorate for nine months at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Rochester, Minnesota. There I was reintroduced to preaching in America, women's work in the church, youth work, council meetings, and confirmation classes.

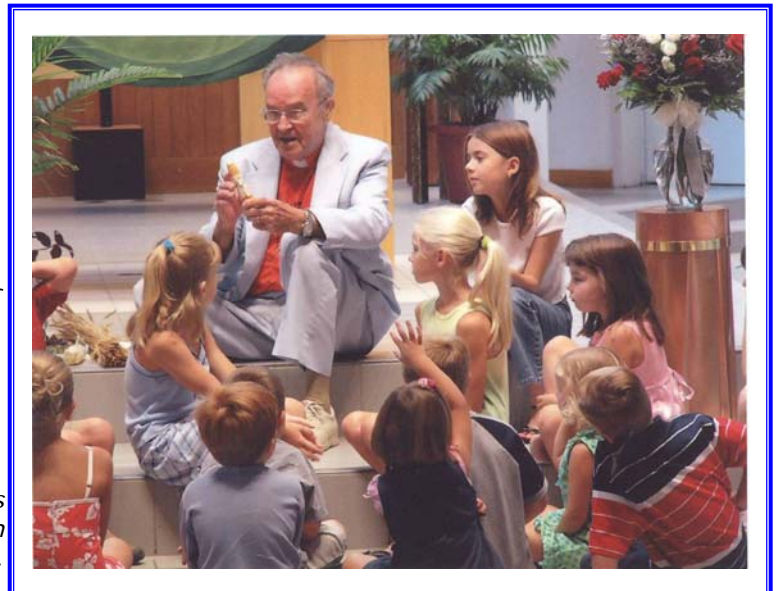
In 1973 I was called to Trinity Lutheran Church at Linn Grove Iowa. After several years there I wanted to connect better with the people in the congregation, so in 1975 I enrolled in Ecumenical Institute's CPE class. I soon discovered that the staff seemed to know more about me than I knew myself. For example, Rev. Bob Alexander mentioned to me once in the course of a verbatim discussion that he had noticed on my first day there that I seemed to be very much afraid and suspicious, because he had observed how I had walked down the hall looking right and left into each room, without turning my head, just to see who or what was there. He was correct! In other ways the staff, including Fr. Gene Sitzmann and Sr. Michaela Galles, helped me to find myself, my fears, my weaknesses and strengths. They helped me live outside myself and my narrow view. Their honesty, frankness and humor helped me through a lot.

One of the things I learned was the **importance of a person's name**. The staff called me by my name from the first day and somehow that made me feel very good. Later there was also a good discussion on the importance of names by Bob Alexander. From then on I made it a point to learn people's names and to call them by name while serving communion at the church service (not advisable if some names are unknown) and at other times, too. I did that in the parish I was in at the time, in the next parish, too, and in interim pastorates—the people are still expressing their appreciation for that practice. I found that was a good way to connect to people. I was also made aware of the importance of, and some of the techniques of, **listening**, and I'm still working on that. A discussion on **people folding their arms** helped me realize how folding my arms was shutting people out of my life. Better yet, the following class sessions helped to free me from that practice.

After moving to Sioux City I took a course in CPE at St. Luke's Hospital with Chaplain Steve Pohlman, where **life and death** situations were often handled. While in that area I participated in several of Marian Health Center's **Grief and Growth** programs as a facilitator. After moving from Sioux City and serving in several congregations in which I served as interim or assistant pastor, I helped establish Grief and Growth groups. At one church I adapted the program to a group of divorced people also. In one of those churches the Grief and Growth program has now been going on for 14 years.

Today, at age 87, I'm thankful to be able to conduct monthly services, with my wife accompanying the hymns, at two retirement centers in Des Moines. She and I have been married 61-½ years. (At the time we were married it was required that written permission be given by the government District Officer because Marion had not quite attained the age of 21. I'm sure glad he gave his permission!) I appreciate the CPE program very much, remembering many of the lessons I learned there. I have a warm spot in my heart for the staff and the program. †

*Al delivering a children's sermon at his 60<sup>th</sup> Ordination Anniversary celebration at Faith Lutheran Church, Clive, Iowa, in July of 2005.*



# Ministry in Action

## Awakening My Gifts for Ministry

- By Hollie Holt-Woehl—Class of 1990



My denomination required one unit of CPE for ordination and my summer at Cherokee was very good for me. During that time my pastoral identity was solidified. I found that I “took to” the mental health field quite easily, even though I didn’t have any prior experience. That summer awakened in me gifts for ministry that I did not know I had. I gained confidence in my pastoral care skills and learned humor can be used in pastoral care.

The experience became a launching pad for my life of ministry. I learned the tools of pastoral ministry. Everything else since has been colored by the experience. The axiom “what is most personal is most general,” has stuck with me all these years.

“CPE awakened in me gifts for ministry that I did not know I had.”

In regards to the people with mental illness at Cherokee Mental Health, I remember Bob and Gene saying, “what you see here, you will see in the parish in lesser degrees.”

I entered a Ph.D. program in Pastoral Care and Counseling out of a sense of a calling to educate those training for pastoral ministry. In the course of my study, two passions came together: my passion for the parish and my passion for those marginalized by society. Putting those two together, the topic for my

*Hollie Holt-Woehl '90 recently completed a Ph.D. focusing on congregational ministry to people with mental illness.*

dissertation was: “Congregations as Trinitarian Communities: Accepting, Welcoming, and Supporting Those with Chronic Mental Illness.” I researched congregations who have welcomed people with mental illness into the life of the congregation. I believe my time at Cherokee opened my heart and my mind to the pastoral needs of those with mental illness. That summer in Cherokee laid the foundation for my doctoral work, and my calling to champion the needs of those with mental illness. †

*Editor's Note: Hollie M. Holt-Woehl ('90,) has been an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for fifteen years. She has served congregations in rural, urban, and suburban settings. Presently she is Interim Senior Pastor at River of Life Lutheran church in North Minneapolis. River of Life Lutheran is a consolidation of two congregations with a multicultural membership. The multicultural heritage of the members includes African Americans, European Americans, and West African Immigrants. In 2007 she completed a Ph.D. in Pastoral Care and Counseling, with particular emphasis on the congregation. Hollie is married and a mother of two teenage sons, 15 and 13 years old.*



The Alumni who attended the reunion—front row: (left to right): Gene Sitzmann, Edna Miller, Dawn Freese, Elaine Doorenbos, Mike Hittle, Sherry Hittle, John Cain, Karen Borchers  
Back row: Le Roy Rupp, Armand Bertrand, Cary Brown, Vera Ludwig, Bev Hurni, Janice Hoffman, Jesse Schlichting, Brenda Lindokken, Alice Sporrer, Deb Mechler, Cory Harman, Harvey Hanson, Mike Stover

### 35 Attend Alumni Reunion

Ecumenical Institute's first alumni reunion included fellowship, workshops, and idea sharing. Workshops included: *How to Handle Stress*, *How to Pray with Someone*, *Celebrate Recovery from Addiction*, and *Relaxing Touch*.

We met at Cherokee Mental Health Institute, and many people enjoyed the fellowship and ideas shared. An alumni directory was distributed as well.

If you would like a DVD of one of the sessions, these two are available: *How to Handle Stress* and *How to Pray with Someone*, or to receive a directory of an alumni listing, contact Karen at (712)368-2500.

The next alumni reunion will be Sunday, April 26, 2009, at Cherokee Mental Health Institute from 2 – 5 PM. The only requested change from this year is that the workshops should be a little longer. Save the date and spread the word! †

## Ecumenical Institute Welcomes Steve Pohlman As Supervisor of the Fall/Winter CPE Class



Steve Pohlman says,  
"CPE is so invigorating and life giving."

**Here is an interview with Steve:**

### **What motivates you to supervise CPE?**

After graduating from college I attended seminary on a Rockefeller Foundation Trial Year Fellowship. I enjoyed theological education so much I became committed to ministry and completed my studies preparing for parish service. In the churches I pastored, I was active working with youth and visiting the elderly. I took district youth groups to Chicago, New York, Gettysburg and Washington D. C. addressing social issues and learning about the church at work in this country and around the world. I also led adult United Nations study seminars to New York City. My ministry over twelve years in rural parishes and a large city parish, where I was an associate pastor, provided many opportunities for pastoral care to families in crises, persons dying, and youth work. The combination of developing educational and fellowship experiences for youth and adults and the ministry of pastoral care to persons in all stages of the life cycle led me to become a Hospital Chaplain and CPE Supervisor. I'm doing the same work now as then, perhaps in a more structured and credentialed way.

### **What rewards have you seen from CPE for your students?**

The rewards of this work are seen as students in CPE grow personally and professionally. Many students have deepened their self-understanding and integrated their life experiences to feel more whole, free, and authentic as persons. Many students have also become more competent professionally as pastoral care providers learning the art and skills of active listening and being an incarnational presence to those in fear or pain. This integration as person and professional is a maturing process. One can move from "unconscious incompetence" where they are unaware of their behavior which was not even competent ministry, to "conscious competence" where good competent ministry is accomplished with hard work and deliberate focus. An even greater reward for me is to see a student achieve "unconscious competence" where competent ministry begins to happen unconsciously or naturally. At this point ministry and personhood are fully integrated. One student told me she came to CPE expecting to be told what to do in her ministry and how to do it. Instead she was challenged to develop her own authentic style of ministry. This frustrated her, yet she was up to the task. As she left CPE she said, "I came expecting to learn to paint by the numbers, instead I was told to create my own masterpiece."

### **How has CPE impacted your ministry?**

Well, I'm still doing it. I can't seem to quit, because it's so invigorating and life giving. I've failed retirement. I retired in 2004 but I'm still involved in CPE. †

"I came expecting to learn to paint by the numbers, instead I was told to create my own masterpiece."

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Will & Traci Houts in honor of the birth of their daughter



Bernie Vant Hul in memory of his wife



### Leaving a Legacy For a Lifetime

Ecumenical Institute (EI) is so grateful for our hundreds of donors that help to train spiritual caregivers for Northwest Iowa every year. EI would like to have the opportunity to expand and provide pastoral caregiving training for many generations into the future. Our finance committee knows the only way this is possible is to have the strength of planned estate gifts.

Are you a committed supporter that would like to help solidify this plan? Would you consider leaving a legacy by planning an estate gift for EI? If you've given during your lifetime, why not have your gift continue giving after you have gone to heaven?

We'd like to encourage estate planning by letting our supporters know those that have planned an estate gift. We would like to share that joy of giving with you and tell others so more will do likewise and help ensure our future success. We'd also like to give you a special book, [My Beautiful Broken Shell](#) as a thank you gift. Call Karen to talk about your plans or make note of your plans with the response devise enclosed with this newsletter. ✚



**Denise Green for overseeing the compilation of the Senior Service Directory at CMHI.**