

CATALYST

2008 NACSW CONVENTION: FLORIDA, HERE WE COME!



Just several more weeks until North America's Christian Social Workers arrive in the beautiful city of Orlando, Florida! The Planning Committee has been working hard and is proud to announce over 100 high quality workshop and poster presentations. The special workshop track this year is *Social Justice, Human Dignity and Worth*



Mallory Hansen

and will provide professional insight on human trafficking and other social injustices that are prevalent in our work as social workers. A *Child Welfare* track has also been added to accommodate the many presenters who have a passion for child welfare and wish to share their expertise with others.

The Convention is being hosted by the Holiday Inn—International Drive Resort of Orlando. This beautiful hotel is located on famous International Drive near Universal Studios, Islands of Adventure & Citywalk, Sea World Disney & Discovery Cove, and the Walk Disney World Resort. Feel free to bring your family as well! Kids eat free at the hotel restaurant, and they will love the outdoor pool and area attractions. The traditional Convention schedule has also been revised for Saturday so attendees are able to take advantage of the wonderful Florida weather. Enjoy a lunch by the pool with other attendees or explore the gorgeous surrounding area on Saturday afternoon.

Because you do not want to miss this great opportunity be sure to register by January 18th. After the 18th, rates will go up by \$25. You can register online by visiting the website at www.nacsw.org. If you would like to receive the special NACSW rate of \$119 per night at the Holiday Inn, make your reservation by January 16, 2008. For reservations, call 407.351.3500. We look forward to seeing you in Orlando!

Mallory Hansen
NACSW Student Board Representative

NACSW'S FEBRUARY 25TH AUDIO CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY- CENTERED FAITH- SECULAR COLLABORATIONS

NACSW is delighted to announce that it will be offering its next audio conference workshop on February 25, 2008 entitled "Community-Centered Faith-Secular Collaborations" from 1:00 pm–3:00 pm Eastern Standard Time.

This audio conference, presented by Katy Tangenberg, Ph. D., will discuss various forms of community-centered faith-secular collaborations with specific attention to practice issues relevant to professional social work. Examples will include situations such as the new sanctuary movement where clear tensions exist between legal and theological perspectives, and others such as holistic service delivery for homeless families. Discussion will also include events planned between a

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Katy Tangenberg

AUDIO CONFERENCE

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Christian university and a state department of Child and Family Services to enhance services for foster youth and partnerships. This presentation will also focus specific attention on the social work relevance of increased evangelical efforts of the faith community to address poverty, illiteracy, child maltreatment, and health dangers both in the U.S. and internationally. Projects undertaken by mega-churches such as Willow Creek and Saddleback will be discussed in relation to professional social work interventions targeting similar concerns.

Katy Tangenberg is associate professor of social work at Azusa Pacific University. Dr. Tangenberg received her Ph.D. in Social Welfare from the University of Washington, Seattle in 1998. Her doctoral dissertation explored the physical and spiritual ex-

periences of mothers living with HIV/AIDS, and their implications for social work practice, education, and research. Katy's publications include articles in *Social Work*, *Families in Society*, *Affilia*, the *Journal of Mental*

This presentation will . . . focus specific attention on the social work relevance of increased efforts of the faith community to address poverty, illiteracy, child maltreatment and health dangers . . .

Health and Aging, and the *Journal of Social Work Research and Evaluation*. Her social work practice experience includes home-based family counseling, hospital social work specializing in women's health, and case management with adolescent parents.

Audio conferences have been designed so that any person or group can participate simply by calling a telephone number provided by NACSW from any telephone in the US or Canada. For additional information (including workshop description and learning objectives), and/or to register on-line, you can go to NACSW's website at www.nacsw.org, or you can contact the NACSW office tollfree at 888-426-4712 to register on the phone.

Registration rates for NACSW members are just \$35 for NACSW members, \$25 for student members, or \$75 for organizational members (for prices in Canadian dollars, simply multiply by the current exchange rate). Participants can also sign up for continuing education contact hours approved by the Association of Social Work Boards for an additional nominal fee of only \$5 per person.

We hope you are able to join us on February 25th for our next audio conference workshop!

CATALYST

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Rick Chamiec-Case, Ph.D., MSW
Executive Director & *Catalyst* Editor

Catalyst is published 4 times a year for members of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work. The purpose of *Catalyst* is to inform the membership regarding the mission and programs of NACSW.

Catalyst is intended to be an open forum for members to express their perspectives on a wide range of issues of interest to Christians in social work. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of NACSW.

Publication in *Catalyst* in no way implies endorsement or certification of the authors' qualifications, ability, or proficiency to practice social work, or to integrate faith and practice. Similarly, publication of an advertisement in *Catalyst* does not imply endorsement by NACSW of any services or products advertised.

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NACSW-IN CHAPTER UPDATE

The Indiana NACSW state conference was held on Friday, September 21, 2007 at the Salvation Army in Indianapolis. Featured speakers included: Dr. Carrie Yocum, who presented on "Ethics: Theory, Decision Making Models and Day to Day Examples from a Christian Worldview;" Dr. Tim Heck, who presented on "Sacred Healing of Marriage;" and Dr. Garrett

Higbee, who presented on "Counseling from a Faith Based Perspective: Does it make a Difference?"

During the conference, the chapter held officer elections. We are pleased to report that Jeff Bryant was elected as chairperson for the Indiana Chapter.

Carla J. MacDonald
NACSW-IN Chapter



(left to right): Jeff Bryant, Tim Heck, Carrie Yocum and Garrett Higbee

AN ASSOCIATION AT A CROSSROADS— OR RANDOM PARTING THOUGHTS ON NACSW.

This will be my last column for the Catalyst due to my term as a board member ending December 31 (I have served for two consecutive terms—the most allowed under NACSW by-laws before having to take at least one year off). As I contemplated my time on the board in preparation for this final column, I came to the conclusion that it was full disclosure time. Some may see this as a bit disingenuous, especially as my time on the board is ending, but I prefer to look at it as a time of reflection as I transition off the board. My thoughts are not aimed at any person or group in particular and, in some respects, may be reflective of all of us—or maybe it's just me.

Over the past few years the board has struggled with a variety of issues. There has been a diversity of opinions on the board, but we have struggled together to try to move forward in the following areas. It hasn't been easy and there is still a long way to go. Below are my thoughts (random or not—you can decide) on some of these issues:

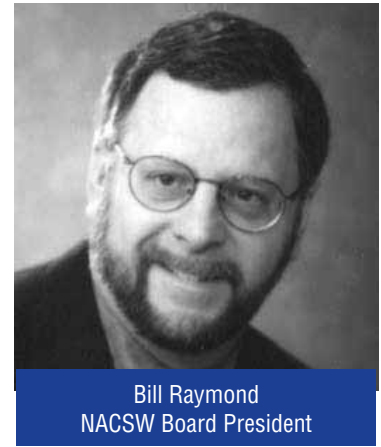
Increasing/retaining membership—after almost doubling our number of members between 1997 and the mid-2000s, our membership seems to have reached a plateau. It goes up temporarily, only to settle back again. It's a little like two steps forward and one step back—except when it feels like one step forward and two steps back.

Developing chapters—on paper we have a wonderful array of organizing chapters listed, with contacts for many states. The only problem is that most of the chapters do not meet regularly and some exist in name only. There are a few exceptions (Eastern Canada and Indiana, for example), but for the most part chapter development has been stagnant. As a board we're not quite sure what to do or even if we should do anything. Some see this as a major shortcoming of the association and others say that the chapter model is simply outmoded and should be jettisoned. In our in-

creasingly busy lives, are chapters a haven for connection, learning and growth or are they just another drain on our busy schedules that sound nice in theory but only serve to add to the fragmentation of our lives?

Increasing our fundraising revenue through voluntary contributions or foundation/government grants. Let's face it; we're social workers—either clinical practitioners or academics—not exactly a cadre of high-powered fundraisers. Those of us who do have some experience have the primary purpose of raising funds for our own organizations and devoting time to a voluntary association can be seen as an ethical and/or practical barrier. NACSW is not exactly an easy organization for which to raise funds. We don't work directly with hurting people and the “case” for NACSW to outside funders can come across as rather sterile. We've tried to raise funds through specific grants, but we don't quite fit the guidelines or expectations of many grant making organizations. We're not exactly a think tank or a policy development organization. We don't engage in formal consultation with groups, nor do we have a well organized critical mass of specifically dedicated theorists who can develop research projects that build the knowledge base of social work. Don't get me wrong - we have many talented academics who engage in research, but typically these are more individual or institutional projects that don't really work as a way to raise funds for NACSW.

In addition, grants are typically very project oriented and represent new endeavors that have specific guidelines for funding. Our need is for additional daily operating revenue and, given the nature of who we are and how we're organized, that is a tough sell. We don't have the strong emotional pull that is typically necessary to generate a strong base of private donations. Let's face it, our primary constituency is us, and although



we're not exactly overpaid, we're not poverty stricken either. Our mission doesn't really qualify us as prime recipients of private dollars.

The primary way many associations raise the necessary funds is through membership fees. NACSW's membership fee is quite reasonable, but to be honest we struggle to make ends meet with the number of members we have and the amount that comes in each year from our roughly 2000 members. Should we increase the membership fee? Do we rely on increasing the membership and hold fees to inflation increases only? These are not easy questions and I've wondered what would happen if we did recommend an increase in the yearly membership fee. I contemplate questions about what holds us back from increasing dues. Is it fear, lack of desire to pay more, uncertainty of how membership will respond, fear of loss of membership or something else? Then I think about the axiom - if we do what we always do, we'll get what we always get. We seem to be spinning our wheels regarding moving into the future with a Catch-22 approach. We can't move forward because we don't have the resources, but we don't have the necessary resources to build in the personnel to help us move forward.

Statement of Faith and Practice—does it capture who we are? Who are we now compared to who we were over 50 years ago when our statement was first crafted? How open are we to new members who identify as

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PRAYER CORNER JANUARY 2008

You're asking the wrong question... There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do (John 9:3. The Message).

The deadline for this column has come and gone while I was struggling to condense all I had learned in the past few months into a few short paragraphs. As a social worker with a specialty in program evaluation, I could see so many problems in the personal and organizational lives of the new community I had moved to just a few years ago. And of course as a true professional I believe I have the answers to help solve many of these problems. And so I sat down and wrote a number of draft columns full of human wisdom to share with you, my fellow Christians in the social work community. But each successive column left me colder than the previous one and I deleted them one by one. Meanwhile I prayed anxiously to God seeking His guidance for what I should write.

What bothered me in my writings was the reliance on human wisdom, the cause and effect rationale of social work programs and organizational management tools. I questioned where God was in all of this. And then the words of the scripture passage above during my morning devotions reminded me that the battle is not ours, it is His. Last Sunday, after singing *For the*

Battle is the Lord's during our worship service, I went home and looked up the following reference in 1 Sam 17:47: *All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's.* And I was struck by the NIV footnote stating that both armies will be shown "the error of placing trust in human devices." My struggle with the tension between the spiritual and the professional started earlier in the year while researching and trying to write about the spirituality of Jean Vanier, founder of The L'Arche community and Henri Nouwen, one of the best known spiritual writers of the past century. Both men left their professional lives as professors in prestigious settings to live with the developmentally handicapped.

I share this struggle with you with a sense of humility, and do not claim to have the answers to the tension between the professional and the spiritual. Let us pray to seek God's wisdom in our own lives as professional social workers in how to balance and integrate the social and the spiritual aspects of the gospel. And let us ask God to forgive us for the times when we take on a battle that is not ours.



Magda Wills

RETIREMENT, GOD'S WAY

As I settled into a fairly predictable retirement routine as a retired social worker, I found myself doing volunteer work to fill up my time. It wasn't long before I was approached by Eugene Smith, my Pastor, to help out at the church. Several years earlier, Pastor Eugene had looked into a recovery program called *Celebrate Recovery*, a registered program established by Rick Warren of Saddleback Church (author of *A Purpose Driven Life*) which focuses on recovery from and healing of life's "hurts, habits, and hang-ups." After doing some reading on the program, I realized this Christ-centered 12 step program with a very specific structure would take a substantial team of people. Much to my surprise, God began to bring in the laborers needed for just such a program and in February of 2007, after 3 months of training, we began weekly group meetings where this outstanding team of faithful people began to minister to men, women, and their children.

As this newsletter goes to print, *Celebrate Recovery* at Orlando City Church in Sanford, Florida will complete its first year. On a weekly basis we now minister to approximately 100 people from both the church and the community at large. It has been an incredible privilege to observe what God is doing in the lives of the participants, their family members, and the team members! We have had reports of broken addictions, of emotional healings, of life commitments to the Lord, of broken families restored, of personal communication improvements, and of relationship issues being resolved.

From this experience, I'm guessing I will never actually retire from the helping professions. God has invested much love in me. He has given me many talents and has trained my abilities; he has given me a strong body and good health, financial secu-

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UPCOMING NACSW AUDIO CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

TITLE/THEME	DATE
Collaborations between FBOs and other Sectors in the Service Delivery System Katy Tangenberg	February 25, 2008 1 pm – 3 pm Eastern Standard Time
Faith-based Responses to Domestic Violence Rene Drumm	April 28, 2008 1 pm – 3 pm Eastern Standard Time
Understanding and Responding to the Needs of International Women-Wives-and Mothers Cindy Sutter-Tkel	November 29, 2008 1 pm – 3 pm Eastern Standard Time

For more information about any NACSW audio conference workshop, please contact the NACSW office at info@nacsw.org 888-426-4712 (toll-free), or visit our website at www.nacsw.org.

FAITH AND PRACTICE ON THE STAND

Imagine defending the integration of faith and practice on the witness stand. Maybe a few of our readers have already done that.

Months ago, I received a call and an e-mail message from an attorney. He represented a client, a Christian, who was in danger of losing a social work position in a civil service context because, as I understood it, the social worker was evangelizing clients and co-workers while on the job. The attorney had taken notice of NACSW, our journal *Social Work and Christianity*, our newsletter *Catalyst*, and this column. He needed an expert witness to address the integration of faith and professional social work practice, and he asked if I would be interested in serving in that way.

At first, I didn't know what to say. Suddenly, there was a lot at stake. This was no longer a topic for a class discussion on religion and ethics, nor an interesting exchange of ideas on an e-mail listserv. This was even more serious. Someone's livelihood appeared to be at stake.

Why me? Several other folks came to mind who, I thought, could address the questions involved with more authority and credibility. Why not one of the editors of our journal, *Social Work and Christianity*? How about others who have written journal articles and presented workshops more recently on the subject? How about Lawrence Ressler who has shown persuasively how the NASW Code of Ethics is fully consistent with a Christian worldview? How about our Executive Director or our Board President? I swallowed hard and told the attorney that I looked forward to speaking with him more about the specifics of the case, and we agreed to stay in touch.

I began to imagine the questions which could be put to me and especially my responses to a hostile cross-examination. After a review of my professional experience, including my own sixteen years spent in the public



David Fritz

social services, and an assurance that I was familiar with the facts of the case at hand, what then? Under what circumstances is it acceptable for a professional social worker to share religious beliefs with a client? Or with a co-worker? Is it an acceptable practice to pray with a client? Have I ever done either of these things? Have I attempted to steer clients in need of services toward providers or clergy from any particular faith tradition? I imagined having to discuss the concept of dual/multiple relationships between social workers and clients and whether there is a point at which the professional relationships become compromised. I also imagined discussing the difference between demonstration and proclamation of the gospel, with the help of some of NACSW's own recent literature.

In a more general sense, I imagined addressing questions having to do with the values a social worker brings to her/his work. Just for fun, I imagined turning the tables a bit by pointing out that the work and vocation of all professionals, including the presiding judge and the attorneys of record in this case, are influenced by their own values and beliefs, even religious ones, and that the development of the legal profession is partly indebted to no less an influential figure in church history than Augustine of Hippo.

I never heard from that attorney again. Despite my initial reservations, I was disappointed. Why not me? How about you?

NACSW BOARD MEMBER MICHAEL SHERR AUTHORS SOCIAL WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS



Two of the major players in the nation's social welfare system—the social work profession and volunteers within faith communities—historically have had an uneasy relationship.

Professionals often have not appreciated volunteer efforts sufficiently, and social workers, likewise, have often had misconceptions about the reliability and capability of volunteers.

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NEW PUBLICATION BY NACSW MEMBER LARRY RENETZKY

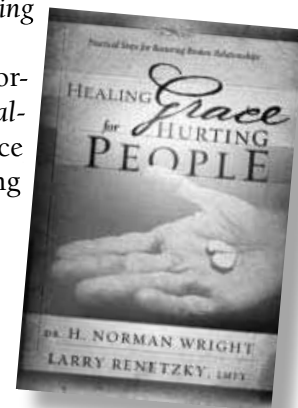
NACSW is pleased to announcing



the publication of a new book by Regal Books co-written by long-time NACSW member Larry Renetzky, a clinical social work and licensed marriage and family counselor in Amarillo, TX.

The book, co-written by H. Norman Wright, is entitled *Healing Grace for Hurting People: Practical Steps for Restoring Broken Relationships*.

Larry and Norman explain in *Healing Grace* how grace is the key to working



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PURSuing SOCIAL JUSTICE: A CONFERENCE FOR CHRISTIAN SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

On October 12-13, over ninety social work students from the Midwest and beyond took time off to attend the North American Association of Christians in Social Work's (NACSW) first student conference. The theme of the conference was, "Pursuing Social Justice: A Conference for Christian Social Work Students." This conference, held on the campus of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, included visiting social work agencies and tourist sites in Chicago, as well as breakout sessions and networking opportunities between students and professionals.

Students began the conference on Friday morning by listening to Arloa Sutter, Executive Director of Breakthrough Urban Ministries, speak on the importance of social justice. Students then split into four groups and visited different agencies: Onward Neighbor-

hood House, Lawndale Christian Community, Jane Addams Hull House, and Olive Branch Mission. After visiting agencies, Trinity students led visiting colleges through the city of Chicago on a scavenger hunt.

The following day, students had the opportunity to attend breakout sessions on topics including social justice, health care, aging, and domestic violence. Speakers included Sally Youngquist and Allan Howe of the Reba Place Fellowship, and Amy Wiatr from the U.S. Administration on Aging, as well as several others. Students also displayed posters from their own research projects and networked with professionals and organizations such as the Salvation Army, Evangelical Child and Family Agency, and others.

*Kendra DeBoer
Student at Trinity Christian College*



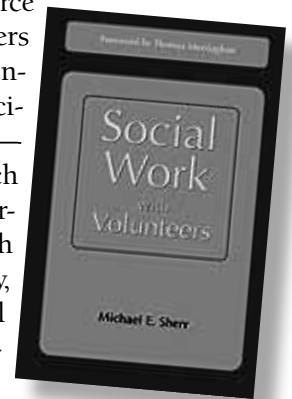
SHERR

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The problem is simply too big for us not to find a way to work together. *Social Work with Volunteers* specifically addresses this troubled relationship, explains its origins, provides compelling reasons for finding common ground and offers practical methods to do so.

Sherr applies rigorous research and provocative analysis to the exploration of this subject. He does so out of a deep desire to find more effective ways to address social problems. "Developing volunteer partnerships to become more active in addressing social problems is as much an ongoing philosophy of how to approach social work practice as it is a specific intervention," Sherr said.

Social Work with Volunteers is a useful resource for integrating Christian faith and professional social work practice. "Matthew tells us the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few," Sherr said. "I wrote this book as a reminder and a resource to help social workers partner with volunteers to address society's harvest fields—social problems such as growing polarity between the rich and poor, illiteracy, racism, and global warming." For additional information about Michael's book, you can go to: <http://lyceum-books.com/SocialWorkwVolunteers.htm>.



RENETZKY

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relationships and for healing those that are not. It identifies problems that lead to broken relationships and numerous examples of how practical appropriation of God's grace through Jesus can heal and restore even severely damaged marriages, families, and other relationships.

CONVENTION 2008 WORKSHOP ABSTRACTS TO WHET YOUR APPETITE!



To provide a preview of some additional quality workshops that will be offered at the 2008 Convention in Orlando in February, this article features abstracts of several workshop presentations for the convention:

Abstract #1: “*Understanding and Responding to the Needs of International Women-Wives-and Mothers*” – **Cindy Sutter-Tkel, MSW**. This workshop is critical for social workers not only in urban areas but increasingly in diverse rural communities. This workshop will examine how to support women as they integrate into the fabric of American life. Participants will discuss managing a culturally diverse group, parenting and marital values in other cultures, and the use of a culturalgram as an assessment tool.

Abstract #2: “*Integrating Immigration Rights, Social Justice, and Social Work Practice with Latino Communities*” – **Sister Maureen Himchak, Ph.D.** This paper presents a value orientation approach for teaching immigration rights of Social Justice, Social Work Values and Latino Cultural Values. Utilizing the Tropman model of ethics, this paper creates a framework for incorporating these value systems in Social Work Policy and Practice among the immigrants in the Latino Culture.

Abstract #3: “*The Present Success and Future Possibilities for the Federal Faith-Based and Community Initiative*” – **Ben O’Dell**. For the past six years, the Faith-based and Community Initiative (FBCI) has impacted the conversation about the role of faith and community-based organization that serve those in need. These impacts will be examined in this presentation and different scenarios for the future of the FBCI will also be explored.

Abstract #4: “*Child Abuse in a Conservative Christian Church: Effects on Spiritual Life*” – **Rene Drumm, Ph.D.** This presentation highlights a regional and community study on abusive relationships in a conservative Christian denomination. The analysis focuses on the childhood experiences of adult church members and notes the effects of child abuse on current spirituality. This analysis demonstrates a consistent negative impact from child abuse on adult spirituality.

Abstract #5: “*Preventing Violence Against Women in Rural, Christian Colleges*” – **James Vanderwoerd, Ph.D.** This presentation reports on lessons learned from an evaluation of a project to prevent sexual assault and violence against women on a rural, Christian college campus. The project, funded by the US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, included voluntary and mandatory interventions over one academic year.

Abstract #6: “*Integrating Christian Faith with Teaching: Social Justice and Biblical Scholarship*” – **Cheryl Brandson, Ph.D.** Integrating faith into social work teaching is difficult for many social work educators in Christian colleges. This paper (1) presents several models for doing so, recognizing that few social work educators are biblical or theological scholars; and (2) using social justice as an exemplar, presents one framework appropriate for classroom use.

CALL FOR PAPERS SPECIAL ISSUE OF SOCIAL WORK AND CHRISTIANITY

Topic: Administrative Practices in Religiously Affiliated Organizations

Date of Issue: Summer, 2009

Guest Editors: Michael Sherr & Robin Rogers

Deadline: September 15, 2008



Michael Sherr, PhD, LCSW
Assistant Professor, School of Social Work
Baylor University



Robin Rogers, PhD
Associate Professor, School of Social Work
Director, Center for Literacy
Baylor University

A special issue of *Social Work and Christianity* (SWC) in 2009 will focus on the contribution of professional social work to administrative practices in religiously affiliated organizations (RAOs). RAOs is an inclusive term for organizations that are somehow affiliated with a religious group. RAOs range in size and structure from small congregations to large international organizations. Professional social workers have a long history of being at the forefront of developing and working with RAOs. Social work literature, however, has devoted relatively little attention to administrative practices in religiously affiliated settings. This special issue seeks to emphasize and encourage the use of the assets and skills that social workers bring to administrative leadership and management practices in RAOs.

Submissions describing administrative practices or approaches used by or appropriate for RAOs in urban and rural communities are encouraged. In addition, papers are sought that profile examples of social workers’ performing administrative practices in religiously affiliated settings, including (but not limited to) a focus on: fundraising/ grant writing; fiscal management; staff development and supervision; volunteer management; strategic and operational planning; formative and outcome evaluation; program development; board development and management; collaboration with public agencies; and integrating spirituality with administrative practices.

All potential authors are strongly encouraged to contact either Michael Sherr (Michael_Sherr@baylor.edu) or Robin Rogers (Rob_Rogers@baylor.edu) to discuss ideas for paper submissions. The deadline for all paper submissions is September 15, 2008.

Speaking Out...

NACSW MEMBERS AND FRIENDS SHARE THEIR VIEWS.

It means a lot to me to be a member of the NACSW, since it is my great inspiration and a major source of support for me as SW Faculty! . . . I look forward to seeing you in Florida and will make sure to bring special Croatian chocolates for you!

*Dada Maglajlic
Bemidji, Croatia*

<< *Editor's Note: During the month of November, I received an email from Bruce Thyer, a social work professor from Florida State University and editor of Research on Social Work Practice, who is not a NACSW member. He was requesting that NACSW post on one of our listservs a request for information for an article he will be writing provisionally titled, "Religious Discrimination in Academic Social Work: An Ongoing Problem?" for the Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work. What follows is his initial request as well as responses from several NACSW members which appeared on the NACSW educator's listserv in November. >>*

Dear Colleagues,

I am preparing an article provisionally titled: "Religious Discrimination in Academic Social Work: An Ongoing Problem?" for submission to the *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*. I would appreciate listserv members sending me any examples of students or faculty experiencing religious discrimination while involved in academic social work, for possible inclusion in my article. Any examples should be 'blinded' with respect to personal or institutional identity. This could be discrimination in admissions to social work programs, students who experienced discrimination in the classroom or field setting as a result of expressing their religious beliefs – es-

pecially when these were at variance with instructor preferences, etc. . . .

*Bruce Thyer
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL*

Hi, Bruce. Thanks for submitting the below posting to NACSW's educator's listserv. . . . Can I ask you a favor? Will you provide some additional background information related to context of your request? As with many listserv postings, yours will likely stir up a bit of controversy (a good thing for a listserv, I believe!). For some of our members who have perhaps observed or experienced what they feel is unfair treatment because of their or others' religious traditions, there will likely be a strongly supportive reaction to that material you are gathering for a journal with signifi-

"It means a lot to me to be a member of the NACSW, since it is my great inspiration and a major source of support for me as SW Faculty!"

cant credibility in our field. Other members, however, will be concerned that additional focus on this topic might have the unintended consequence of reinforcing a sometimes-perceived schism between people of religious faith and those who do not affiliate with a religious tradition within our field – and/or possibly reinforcing a stereotyping of people of religious faith that sometimes occurs in our field.

In any case, as I hear back from NACSW members, it will help me to have a better sense of the context behind your request so that I can re-

spond appropriately to the reactions I will likely receive from either direction. Any help you can provide in this regard will be most appreciated.

*Rick Chamiec-Case
Executive Director, NACSW*

Hi Rick,

Well, I definitely have an agenda. I have seen, over 25 years of involvement in academic social work, that students and practitioners and faculty who do not enthusiastically embrace selected interpretations of 'social justice', particularly those held by faculty and communicated to students, or those espoused by the NASW and CSWE, get branded as heretical, and sometimes even attacked as not suitable persons to be involved in social work. This occurs, most conspicuously, in committed Christian students who may mildly demure in class with the professor's assertion that abortion upon demand, for any reason at all, is a woman's right, and we all must be committed to this ideal. Or that promoting legal marriage for Gays is isomorphic with social justice, and if one does not support such legislation, one is a bad person, equivalent to a racist/bigot.

I have seen the snickers emitted by faculty reading aloud a student's personal statement, during an admissions committee meeting, ridiculing the student's sincere expression that they believe they have a true 'vocation' for social work, motivated for religious reasons, and suggestions given that so and so not be admitted because they are 'too religious'.

I have seen religiously affiliated social work programs (e.g., Yeshiva, Catholic U., BYU, etc.) derided by secular faculty as second-rate institutions, because of their religious foundations.

I have seen Muslim students gossiped about by faculty, because of the student's choice to wear a head scarf, consistent with her religious beliefs.

I have seen near universal condemnation of the President's initiative to promote federal funding of secu-

lar social services delivered by faith-based organizations, in blissful ignorance of the exceedingly important role that religious organizations have played in the establishment of social work in the UK and USA, and of the continued important contributions of faith-based social services programs offered by Protestant, Catholic and Jewish organizations.

A month or so ago the National Academy of Scholars issued a critique of social work education, pointing out with three case examples, how religious or conservative students have been horrendously discriminated against because of their principled beliefs that differed from those of faculty. This NAS report was picked up and written about by George Will, in his nationally syndicated column. The NASW/CSWE response? Almost exclusively defensive, attacking the motivations of the NAS, and defending their (NASW/CSWE) practices. No one seems to have acknowledged that maybe, just maybe, there is some reality behind the NAS allegations. That maybe, just maybe, a proactive response would be to reiterate that aspect of the NASW Code of Ethics that says, very clearly, that we should not discriminate against people because of their religious beliefs. That maybe, just maybe, we need to pay some serious attention to providing better operational definitions of what we mean by 'social justice.' Currently it is so vague as to be pretty useless as a guide to practice.

Oddly, Rick, I write the above, not from the perspective of a person of faith (I am not), but from that of a secularly oriented social worker who espouses the best of the ideals of what was meant by a classic liberal education, one who is pained by the hypocrisy of those in our field who delight in deriding/ discriminating against people of faith.

I am a long-term member of the NASW and of the CSWE and I fear for the long-term health of these groups because of the way they treat persons of faith. I want them to return to a more inclusive orientation, and not covertly try and exclude persons

of faith from expressing their views as legitimate alternative perspectives from mainstream social work.

I am not worried about any perception of a schism between people of faith and selected moral/ethical positions supported by mainstream social work groups. There IS such a schism. One way to heal it is to document it, alerting folks to its reality, illustrating how this really injures the field. Just as 30-40 years ago instances of racism were documented to motivate folks

“A proactive response would be to reiterate that aspect of the NASW Code of Ethics that says, very clearly, that we should not discriminate against people because of their religious beliefs.”

to change (pretty successfully, IMO), we need systematic documentation of discrimination on the basis of religion (or its lack), and how this is morally equivalent to discrimination on the basis of race, gender, etc.

I can't imagine anyone seriously complaining that my efforts to gather case examples will reinforce stereotypes, anymore than providing examples of racism back in the 1960s reinforced racial stereotypes.

You are welcome to share the above remarks with anyone who queries you about my motivations.

I am not interested in muck-raking. Or of creating a problem where no one exists. I want to present a carefully crafted, sober, analysis of a continuing, very real, problem within social work education. If I can obtain some legitimate case examples provided to me by members of your list-serve, that will be very helpful.

Bruce Thyer
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida

Dear Bruce:

Greetings! First, there is a “debate” that addresses some of the issues that you are considering, in the book *Controversial Issues in Social Policy* (Third edition, Karger, Midgley, Kindle and Brown, eds. 2007). Debate 10 is entitled “Does Social Work Discriminate Against Evangelical Christians?” The “Yes” was presented by David Hodge, and I wrote the “No” half of the debate. Although framed in a debate format, I wrote my response in a vacuum--I don't think either David or I knew what the other person was writing so it lacked some of the elements of a debate but still might be interesting for you.

I think that religious discrimination is an important topic for social work education and the future of the profession. However, I am a bit concerned about using anecdotes about discrimination as these tend to be one-sided and risk imprecisely or even inaccurately attributing an action (such as denial of admission) to religious discrimination when there are a range of variables that shaped decision making. I also wonder to what extent does attributing social work faculty members' or administrators' actions to religious discrimination blunt self examination, and how do we manage critiquing our or others' actions but not unfairly blaming victims? I think we might gain something as a profession by looking at best practices, examples of negotiating and supporting religious differences, and mutual learning.

Among the thousands of faculty members, administrators, and field instructors in social work education, are there people who have been unfair and discriminatory, ill-informed and ignorant, or reactive and prejudicial? I have no doubt that students and faculty can identify examples of religious discrimination. As in most circumstances, there are multiple interpretations and perspectives that may or may not be reflected in these examples. Are

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CROSSROADS

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Christians but who don't feel that the language in our current statement of faith and practice resonates with their religious tradition? How do we struggle with more openness to new members, while at the same time making sure we are true to who we are? Does the current statement of faith define or limit who we are?

The board has struggled with this question for the past few years and we do not have a definitive answer. Board members come down on both sides of the issue and we continue to struggle for discernment on this issue.

As you probably have ascertained, all of these issues are interconnected with many cross-implications. They are not isolated and must be looked at together. My prayer is that the board and the members will continue to struggle with these questions and discern where God would take NACSW in the future. I have truly enjoyed my time on the board of directors and having the opportunity to work with many wonderful people. My prayers are with you all.

RETIREMENT

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rity, children and grandchildren that I cherish, as well as other people in my life that I love. He has told me that "from everyone who has been given much, much more will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48b NIV).

If we believe we have been called to the helping professions by God's will for our lives, can we do any less in our "retirement" years than in our wage-earning years? My own personal answer to that question is now "no." I have decided to stay on the front lines wherever He will have me. I hope to see you there, too!

*Julie Zahn
Orlando, Florida*

SPEAKING OUT

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there examples of respect, growth and learning, affirmation, flexibility, negotiation and safety? I wish we were collecting these examples. With regard to religion and social work, there are large and complex issues worth examining. Is there a lot for all of us to learn through these conversations and debates--most definitely.

Best wishes as you consider this interesting and important topic.

*Gary Anderson
Program Director,
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI*

I am deeply concerned about this research project at this point in time. As we all teach our students, "all research is political." This is certainly no exception! With the current attack by NAS and the subsequent flurry of discussion about social work education, I am concerned about how this project will be used, regardless of Bruce's intent. I am also concerned that there is not a parallel look at religious tolerance and respect for religious diversity within our profession. It seems to me that these two investigatory streams should flow in parallel. Those are my two cents!

*Diana Garland
Dean, Baylor School of Social Work
Waco, Texas*

I don't see two streams, one more positive and one more negative, regarding research on tolerance within our profession. I see one stream, and if the researcher does a good job both sides of the same coin (to mix metaphors) will be represented, at least in the collected work on the subject. So I applaud Bruce Thyer for addressing this issue, on the assumption that he will do a good job of representing the

issue. If this were "advocacy research" it could be a real hatchet job, but I am confident that Bruce is going to put the data in context, but he can only do that if people reply to his response with an accurate representation of the positive and negative they have observed.

I for one have seen some, but not seen the degree of negativity that he describes, and will let him know. I suspect Christians in secular academia may actually see less of this because they are known as Christians and others avoid offending them out of politeness. Maybe this is some of what it means to be salt and light. Based on Bruce's comments, I suspect more negativity goes on in circles where none of those "Christians" are around. If that is the case, he would have observed more of this than I.

For this to be good research, we need to give Bruce a fair representation of our experiences. To do otherwise would create bias. Yes, not participating is research is just as political as the research itself. There is some risk, but the risk is based on whether the researcher does a good job. In this case, we are fortunate to have someone of Bruce Thyer's stature address this topic, and I think we should give him as much data to work with as we can. Opportunities like this do not come along every day.

Regarding the NAS flap, the best way for social work to deal with this as a profession is to shed as much daylight as possible, and where there have been examples of intolerance, let the it be seen so we can clean our own house before others like NAS feel the need to do it for us. I suspect that might be Bruce's thought. He sees problems in the profession regarding incongruence between our rhetoric and our practice on tolerance, and to his credit he wants to collect some data and analyze it.

*Terry Russell
Program Chair,
Frostburg State University
Frostburg, Maryland*



NACSW EDUCATORS CALENDAR

- **Annual Forum for Christian Social Work Educators:** At NACSW's Convention 2008 in Orlando, Florida, Feb. 8, 2008 7pm-9pm.
- **Annual Dinner at BPD:** At the Annual Conference of BPD, March 5-9, 2008, Dustin, Florida
- **Annual Dinner at CSWE-APM:** At the Annual Program Meeting of CSWE, Oct. 30-Nov. 2, 2008 in Philadelphia Pennsylvania

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Details forthcoming.
For further information,
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LISTSERV INFORMATION

NACSW invites you to subscribe to one or more of its Internet mailing lists or "listservs," which enable NACSW members to easily connect with each other "across the miles" on topics of special interest to Christians in social work. Currently, there are nine listservs available to members:

- | | |
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NACSW MISSION

NACSW supports the integration of Christian faith and professional social work practice in the lives of its members, the profession and the church, promoting love and justice in social service and social reform.

Its goals include:

- *Supporting and encouraging members in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice through fellowship, education, and service opportunities.*
- *Articulating an informed Christian voice on social welfare practices and policies to the social work profession*
- *Providing professional understanding and help for the social ministry of the church*
- *Promoting social welfare services and policies in society which bring about greater justice and meet basic human needs*

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Member interest groups are officially recognized NACSW groups that promote discussion, share information, and pool resources related to topics of special interest to NACSW members. However, NACSW's recognition of member interest groups is not meant to imply endorsement of group members' views or actions taken by the group on any particular issue.

Community of Scholars groups are comprised of NACSW members and friends with special interest and expertise in a given topic with a commitment to making a tangible contribution to scholarship in that area.

Current Member Interest Groups

Congregational Social Work
International Social Work
Religion and Social Work Ethics
Social Work Education

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Community of Scholars Groups Leader Contact Info

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