

# The Spiritual Caregiver

A Newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute for Pastoral Care



## SPRING 2022

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.*

*-Colossians 3:23 (NIV)*

## The EI Experience

by Mary Mortenson, Chaplain, Avera McKennan Hospital, Sioux Falls, SD

As I write this, I have just finished a six-month CPE unit with the Ecumenical Institute for ACPE. This was my second unit, but my first through EI. Even though my class was exclusively via Zoom, I found it to be a powerful balance of challenge and affirmation. It is also clear that EI is an organization for which the Holy is important. In every conversation - no matter how intense - it was clear that we were treading on holy ground. Another characteristic that was evident early

on is that the values of EI live up to their name: Ecumenical Institute. I loved the openness and inclusivity with which topics were approached. Also, EI "hires well". Rev. Roger Cauthon embodies all the values that seem so evident. He is a powerful and faithful voice for all that EI has to offer. For having the experience with EI, I am not only a better chaplain, I am a better human being.

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## Leaving a Legacy for Your Community

**Times are  
definitely changing.**

**Our nation's future  
is unknown.**

**Our future  
with God is known.**

Is there something you can do for EI to continue our legacy of faith based training?

The value of some assets like farm land is high. What planning can you do this year to optimize your taxes and also help your favorite charities including EI?

Contact Denise for more information at 712-225-0202 or [denisegreen608@gmail.com](mailto:denisegreen608@gmail.com)

# CPE Reflection: Spring 22 Units for Ecumenical Institute

Roger Cauthon ACPE Certified Educator  
Ecumenical Institute

What do CPE students accomplish as they do clinical (ministry) hours? I reflected on the recently ended units offered through Ecumenical Institute. There were twelve students in two groups. These people served in hospital, hospice, home health, parish, mental health, military, and community-based settings.

They were scattered across Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

From September 2021 to March 2022, these students each gave at least 300 hours of ministry. As I write these things come to mind...

Chaplains and pastors sitting with family members  
with a loved one dying from Covid19

Listening to a young Native American in a mental health unit struggle to find hope.

Regularly visiting an elderly parishioner who is alone.

Serving as a National Guard chaplain call to deployment over Christmas

Just being with a young father who child died unexpectedly.

Hearing the stories of abuse and violence in homes.

Preaching for renewal and change in a parish

Hearing the confession of a doctor losing his career due to addiction

Bring communion to a long-term parishioner who is nursing home bound

Taking time to know the often-overlooked hospital custodial worker.

Making time for a colleague to support a seriously ill son

Sharing with colleagues our own fears, frustration, and bewilderment

Hearing the story of a man losing his marriage and business and attempting suicide

Sitting on the church step and listening to an angry, delusional person

Attending to the dialysis patient who sits alone for long periods of treatment.

Helping families manage their dysfunction and loss in times of grief.

Holding sacred space for a person's last moment of life

Supporting exhausted nurses and hospital staff.

Supporting a young child as her just a few years older brother has died.

Sharing with a person about mysticism and listening to the stories never told.

Giving presence to people of other traditions so they may find comfort

Offering prayers of spontaneous nature and prayers from prayer books

A definition of pastoral care goes like this:

*Pastoral Care is learning the language of fear, pain, frustration, anger, and bitterness so as to walk with a person through the twisted valley of the shadow communicating, 'I am with you.'*

These twelve students did all of that and more during this unit. I am pleased to have learned and worked with each of them. They will say, as does the Biblical text, 'We are only doing what is expected of us.'

But we can say, "Thanks be to God" for chaplains and pastors like these!

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## We are proud to announce we have received a donation for scholarships thanks to Michael Bechtel Scholarship Foundation.

Gifts to the scholarship fund will go entirely to support students gain pastoral care training.

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# Spring 2022 Testimonials

Clinical Pastoral Education offers students the opportunity to improve their listening skills, leadership, conflict resolution, self-understanding, counseling, and compassion ministry. The training provides self-directed learning, experiential learning (not academic), focus on people-helping, supportive small group process, emphasis on understanding and helps build essential people skills.

Here are some former students' quotes.

"My experience with Ecumenical Institute was truly a "God thing". CPE came at a difficult time in my life, but I'm convinced God intended it that way. My life was certainly changed because of CPE."

"Thank goodness or should I say thank GOD the Ecumenical Institute has

long distance learning. There is so few CPE training centers and most offer in person training, which is difficult when you work full-time, and have to take time off and drive hundreds of miles to attend. Thank you EI, my experience was enlightening and life changing."

"In the fall of 1978, I met Fr. Gene Sitzmann and Reverend Alexander while I was just out of seminary. They were providing CPE training at Cherokee Mental Health Institute. Today, board certified is the gold standard for a professional chaplain and best practice healthcare. A few years ago, I decided to become a Board Certified Chaplain. Imagine by joy and delight in reconnecting with Fr. Gene Sitzmann after all these years-to hear his voice, his love and experience his passion. What a gift to discover that Gene continues to be involved with and an advocate for EI. With deep gratitude I wish Gene and all of you at the Ecumenical Institute the very best in the difference you are making as you participate with God in what God is doing for the sake of the world!"

"While I only need four units of CPE for my Certification in ACPE, the lessons I learned and the growth I experienced was so valuable that I would definitely

consider taking additional units at the Ecumenical Institute."

"CPE helped me form a greater understanding of pastoral care. If we are going to care for others, we must not be afraid to come close to people and open our hearts."

"CPE at the Ecumenical Institute is unlike any other class or program I have ever attended. I was provided the tools and the space to explore who I am and where God is leading me. Additionally, Roger fostered a rich chemistry of diverse perspectives in our cohort, allowing us to support and learn from one another. As a direct outcome of my experience at the Ecumenical Institute, I recently enrolled in seminary. I have shared my story with other students who are seeking a distance learning CPE program. I have been asked if I would enroll in additional units of CPE at the Ecumenical Institute after I complete seminary. Absolutely! While I am still discerning my call into ministry, I had such a positive CPE experience at the Ecumenical Institute, I would not only recommend the program to others, I would also continue my education in CPE at the Ecumenical Institute following my graduation from seminary."

## Venmo Donation Option Now Available!

We now offer Venmo on the EI website for easy access when donating. Check it out at [ecumenicalinstitute.org](http://ecumenicalinstitute.org)



If you choose to make a donation through Venmo, please **MARK FRIEND AND FAMILY**, not business, when making your payment.

## Training Faith Based Caregivers





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## Donating

None of this work is possible without the generous support of donors. Since the inception of the Pastoral Education Center in the late 1960's, the number of students participating has now grown well past a thousand. Imagine the countless lives these students have touched with the skills they've learned. With your assistance the number of students will continue to grow.

Please consider supporting the work of the Ecumenical Institute for Clinical Pastoral Education.

- New Gift for Ecumenical Institute
- Enclosed is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- Please send information about a stock transfer.
- Memorial Gift in the name of \_\_\_\_\_
- A Donation for the Scholarship Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Thanks to those who have helped plan for the longevity of Ecumenical Institute. These fine individuals have given; and their gift will continue after they are gone. If your name was inadvertently missed or you would like to be added, please contact Denise Green.

## Thank You

Special thanks to the  
Erlandson Foundation for  
their continued support.



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