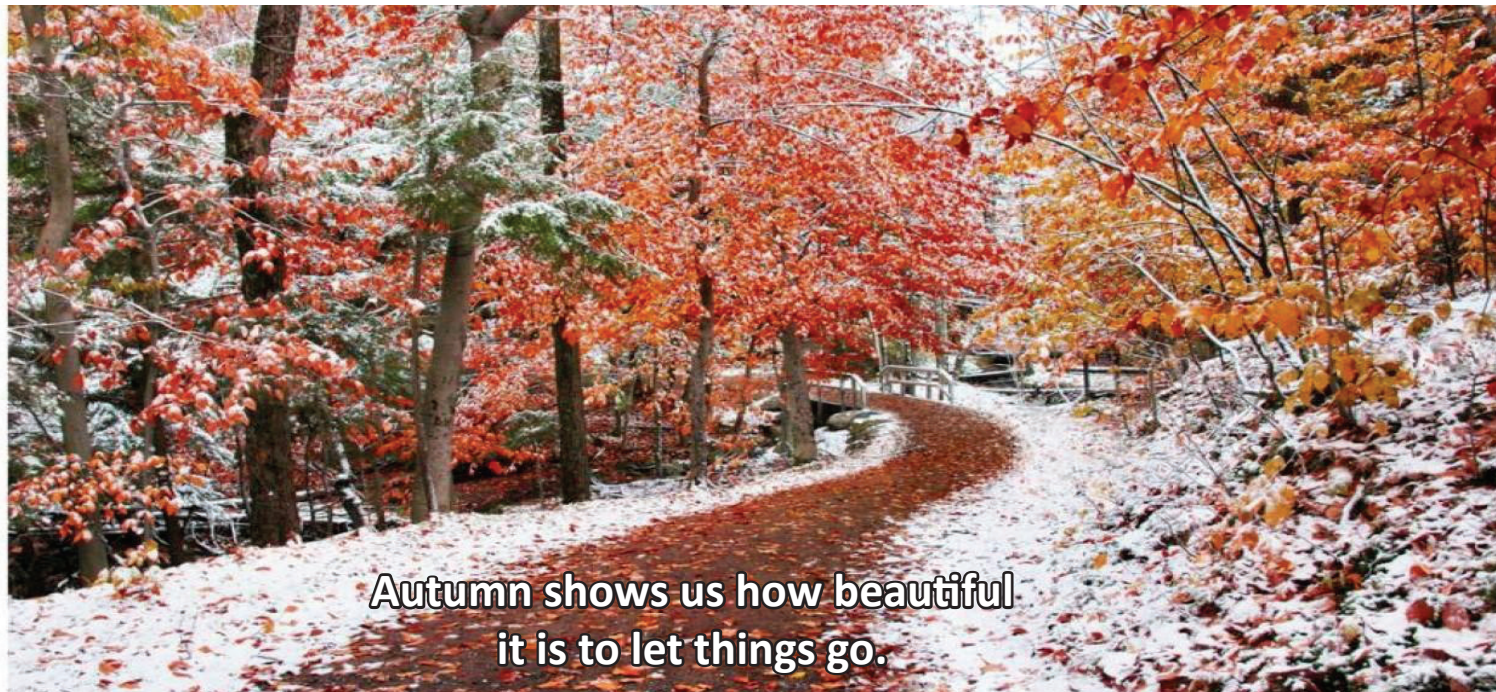


The Spiritual Caregiver

A Newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute for Pastoral Care



Autumn shows us how beautiful
it is to let things go.

My Reflection

By Denise Green, Executive Director

The weather has a crisp chill in the air and every year at this time I reflect on the past year. I remember the happy memories I experienced during the year. I remember the stressful and sad times. I am reminded of the grace God has provided me to accept the changes in my life and I am thankful for the gifts I have received.

Knowing I am not alone that God is with me, gives me peace. I sometimes question why things happen, why is there suffering throughout the world? I don't have the answers, but

I believe God wants me to love everyone and have compassion and understanding with no judgement. Most of all, I need help those that are in need whether it is a physical, mental, spiritual need in whatever way I can.

When I talk to God I ask for his forgiveness and for guidance. I pray for my family, friends, and all those that are going through extreme stressful situations and for everyone that needs comfort from your son, Jesus's teachings.

And then, I look forward to the new year with hope, joy and anticipation.



The Ecumenical Board would like to thank recent retired board members: Elaine Doorenbos and Marcia Young for their dedicated service to the EI Board. We wish them well and appreciate their contributions to Ecumenical Institute.

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† Robert C. Alexander (1993-2003)

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**

Introduction to Ecumenical Institute

More than 34 years ago, Father Eugene Sitzmann and Reverend Robert Alexander saw a spiritual need for caregivers from all denominations to minister to people no matter what their need. Both Father Gene and Reverend Bob worked at Cherokee Mental Health Institute at the time they established the Ecumenical Institute (EI) to provide clinical pastoral education (CPE). EI is a 501c3 non-profit organization and an accredited CPE center through the national ACPE (Accredited Clinical Pastoral Education).

Students of the CPE program are ministers, priests, reverends, hospice care and social workers, counselors, caregivers and laypersons. Students are supervised by an Accredited Clinical Pastoral Educator. EI has two Educators. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) helps students express their faith through the everyday caregiving ministry to others. Several years before Covid 19, EI switched from in-person training to online training for convenience to the students who currently work while taking CPE units/or unable to travel long distance to a training center. The students work in congregations, hospitals, factories, with family members, care

facilities. In the professional field, EI's training is recognized as one of the few in the nation accredited training centers for Clinical Pastoral Education by ACPE. Educators can train a maximum of seven students in one unit at a time. Many denominations require CPE units to seminary students prior to ordination. EI provides one through four units. Students are from all over the United States and recently Africa. More than four hundred students have taken CPE through EI. Our mission lies within this transformation training accomplished through professional in-depth sessions, consisting of four hundred hours of instruction and active practice per unit. Many denominations provide partial or full tuition funding for their students. The Ecumenical Institute has a scholarship fund to assist students that do not have the support or resources to pay the tuition.

By understanding and knowing about the Ecumenical Institute and explaining to our neighbors, civic groups, congregations, friends, and families your monetary donation to the Ecumenical Institute and/or the scholarship fund can help keep Father Gene's vision going well into the future.

John Cullen, age 74, is president and retired publisher of the Storm Lake Times Pilot, Cherokee Chronicle Times and Aurelia Star.

He grew up in Storm Lake and graduated from St. Mary's High School in 1968, and from the University of Notre Dame in 1972 with a degree in American Studies.

Since graduating from college his entire career has been spent as a journalist, working at newspapers in Sedro-Woolley, Washington; Algona, Iowa and Storm Lake, Iowa. From 1984-90 he was assistant director of public relations at Buena Vista University. In 1990 he founded The Storm Lake Times and in 2022 bought the competing Storm Lake Pilot-Tribune and merged them into the Storm Lake Times Pilot.

John and his wife Mary, a retired teacher and children's librarian, have two grown children (both Notre Dame graduates): a daughter living in suburban Chicago and a son in suburban Washington, D.C.

John has also served on these non-profit community boards in Storm Lake: Hy-Noon Kiwanis Club; Chamber of Commerce; St. Mary's School; Buena Vista Work Activity Center; Faith, Hope and Charity. In Algona, he was a member of the St. Cecelia parish council.

"Tend the flock of God which is your charge..."

Often this verse from the New Testament is the closing statement to a CPE group meeting. It sums up the process of Clinical Pastoral Education as we share verbatim, insights, and concerns.

CPE is not about doing it "right," it is about learning from peers to help each of us have more awareness and consciousness to care for the people

of God.

The Ecumenical Institute is offering this training to thirty-six students in six groups of CPE. These students are from across the country from Florida to California, New England to Texas. Serving in major urban areas from San Francisco to Tampa and Miami, rural parishes in the upper Midwest, major medical centers, the Veterans

Administration, military units, and hospice facilities, the Ecumenical Institute are training students. The distance education program for Ecumenical Institute makes it possible for the Cherokee, Iowa, based Ecumenical Institute to have such a national influence.

A call came today from a former student asking if we are still doing distance education. In saying "yes" to him, he shared that a colleague of his needed CPE training and she lives in Puerto Rico. The Ecumenical Institute can provide the education model and training needed.

The ongoing support of the Ecumenical Institute makes this work possible.

Ecumenical Institute has two Certified Educators, The Reverend Tania Hammer-Luken and The Reverend Roger Cauthon. The ability to foster more conscious and effective pastoral care in a wide variety of places is through the generous support of people like you.

Blessing on you! Please know that you are helping to "tend the flock of God" through your support of the Ecumenical Institute.

Student Testimony from Madelynn at Vanderbilt Divinity School:

My name is Madelynn and I am a third year MDiv student at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

When I was told that I would need to complete a unit of CPE for my ordination process, I will admit that I was apprehensive: how would I manage the spiritual and educational demands of a chaplaincy internship at the same time as grad school and another job? What I have found, however, is that CPE will not leave me to navigate the challenges and demands of chaplaincy on my own. Instead, the strength of this program is in the group process. Every other week, my peers and I come together to check in about our different experiences. We share Verbatims, anonymized case studies of situations we have encountered, and reflect together on the theology, presence, and learning moments of the interactions. I have

learned a great deal from my peers who work in situations I have never experienced, like military hospitals or long-term memory care facilities, while bringing my own experiences in providing spiritual care at a residential alcohol and drug addiction recovery center to the group as well.

In the first two months of my six-month extended CPE unit, I have watched myself gain a great deal of confidence. I have built relationships with residents, led groups relating spiritual practices to the 12 steps, and offered prayers with and for residents in some of life's toughest moments. It has been an honor to witness their journeys, to see the truths of new life from death, reconciling grace, and love for self and neighbor begin to take root in their lives. I cannot wait to see what the next four months hold.

Student Testimony from Mila in Los Angeles:

Another powerful meeting again today. I am sometimes overwhelmed, sometimes surprised but always deeply moved by these meetings. I am changing, learning, and accepting- Thank you for that.

This last week was interesting- people seem to be coming out of the wood work for talks and conversations- like I am wearing a neon sign that says

"I will Listen to You" I even had a very deep conversation in a Home Depot with an old African American man- his Mom is 93 and the next day was his birthday. He loves plants and nature- on and on. I used my (new) skills and it was so powerful- he walked away so happy, and I felt that I gave him some gentle power to just be him.

This stuff is awesome!

Venmo Donation Option Now Available!

We now offer Venmo on the EI website for easy access when donating.

Check it out at ecumenicalinstitute.org

Choose friend or family option, not the business option.



Thank You Recent Donors of Ecumenical Institute

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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 \$ _____

Please note personal prayer concern below.

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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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Ecumenical Institute is Accredited to Conduct
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