



Common Good News

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 16, 2017

Message From the Executive Director

Like many of you, I am deeply troubled by the current political and social landscape that is weathering an antagonistic climate, further enflamed by recent political appointees and executive orders. A conflict of ethics, values, and morals seem to be ripping through the fabric of friendships, family-ties, work relationships, and ally-ships in our communities. I am hearing more and more people say in exasperation that they are severing their relationships with those on the "other side."



In these contentious times, are you struggling about how to have respectful, open and honest dialogue with people you care about but fervently disagree with; or how to be in constructive conflict with strangers that you may have irreconcilable opposition of values and beliefs with? In the difficult balancing act of tolerance, are you wondering where to draw the line - as well as when and how to hold the line - without losing recognition of the other side's humanity?

At the Center for Ethical Leadership, we often talk about "[Leadership by asking compelling questions](#)." Compelling questions can stimulate storytelling that help build trust and relationships; create a relational field to help us better understand and equip ourselves for traversing the landscape we share; help probe and hold discomfort to deepen our learning and work; and foster possibilities that bridge differences. Click here for a [tool](#) with examples of compelling questions that invite people to delve more deeply into relationships and the journey of learning and change.

In thinking about how best to make a meaningful difference in the current political ecosystem, and holding the Center's work of helping individuals, organizations and communities build capacity to navigate, negotiate and bridge differences, some of the compelling questions that have surfaced include: Why is it so easy to divide *We the people*? In what ways are the schisms in our society being manipulated? When are we able to find common ground? Who am I [othering](#)? How can we create belonging without othering? How can we end marginalization without marginalizing?

The answers are multilayered, complex, and likely different for different people. Cultivating understanding of the layers, complexities and plurality of these answers is crucial in advancing a healthier, more just and inclusive society. Building pathways to equity through the lens of [intersectionality](#) - understanding and addressing how power, privilege and oppression in all its forms intersect, interact and impact people - are critical leadership skills for the 21st Century.

However, this all takes time, effort, trust, relationship, and resources. It's an investment. Another compelling question we can ask ourselves is: how much am I/are we willing to invest to create a better world for *all*?

In community,
Waing Waing

P.S. - What compelling questions do you have? Go to the [Center's Facebook](#) page and share your compelling questions with us!

Gracious Space at School

Article by Pat Hughes, CEL Senior Affiliate, and Susan Anderson, Principal of Our Lady of Grace School

When the kids of Our Lady of Grace School are out on the playground this year, they no longer have to look at blank white walls on the side of their building. A pastoral mural was painted there this summer by the art teacher, Barbara Westerhoff, and some parent volunteers. A sign hangs from the tree, stating this is a "Gracious Space."

"The bench below the mural is for children to sit on when something happens on the playground and they need time to think about better actions they can take," says Principal Susan Anderson. The mural project was an idea that Susan hatched last year, during her first year as principal at the Catholic school located in Castro Valley in the East Bay near Oakland, CA. Susan has taught at the school for 30 years, but was new to principalship in the 2015-2016 school year. She wanted to do something that helped the faculty, staff and student body of 230 kids in K-8 grades, plus the pastor and members of the diocese, emphasize calm, peaceful and beneficial ways of working together.



"Watching students sit together chatting over what they could do better, so as to show how they are living out the school's core values of Unity, Truth, and Love is inspiring," Susan says.

Susan is the big sister of Bob Anderson, who recently retired from Horizon House after serving as CEO for 16 years. Bob was a Legacy Award winner in 2015, recognized for bringing the principles and practices of Gracious Space to that organization and the aging industry. He told Susan about Gracious Space because he had a feeling it would be a good match.

"When I first read the book, Gracious Space, the definition of it as a "spirit and setting where we invite the stranger in and embrace learning in public" resonated within me," Susan says. "It seemed that our school was the perfect setting to accomplish this. Accentuating the positive and bringing out the good in each other helps us live out our Mission statement whereby we try to maintain a balance among spiritual, social, and academic growth.

"Gracious space is affording all in our parish to reap the benefits of focusing on staying true to our values while looking at what we have in common. We can raise critical issues minus negative consequences merely by remembering to practice gracious space."

Register for an upcoming [Gracious Space training!](#)

We can create big change! - Interview with CEL Board Member Serena Maurer

Interviewed by Shelly Najjar

Serena Maurer, who serves on the board, is this month's spotlight in our interview series, where each of the board members introduce themselves to you and share some of their experiences.

Thanks for your time, Serena. Why do you support the Center? How did you come to join the board? I believe in the Center's goals of bringing people together to build trust and



community, engage in difficult conversations, and lead their communities towards and through change. I met Waing Waing through a mutual friend and was really interested in the work she was doing at the Center. We started off with a long conversation about connections in our work and I ended up joining the Board soon after!

What are some of your other projects, interests, and passions? I bring together compassion, social justice and mindfulness frameworks in work with individuals and organizations. I'm currently developing a mindfulness program for staff of local non-profit Casa Latina, teaching bilingual yoga and mindfulness, researching and developing a mindfulness and social justice curriculum for elementary school teachers, and developing equity and social justice programming for Buddhist organizations. I also do social justice work with King County that is rooted in mindfulness and compassion and teach for the Children's Program at the Puget Sound Zen Center. When I'm not doing this work, I like to hang out with my family, talk with friends, listen to music, move with the fabulous Lara McIntosh dance community, do yoga outside, meditate in community, get out in nature, and write.

What leadership advice would you give to others? When we come together with openness, vulnerability and commitment, we can create big change.

The next question is just for fun: What is your favorite animal, and why? My dog Frida, a powerful force and one of the best beings to hug when I need it.

Is there anything else you want to tell the readers? We have built a strong, insightful and dedicated Board of Directors in the last year. We'd love to talk with you about the Center's exciting and inspiring work!

Readers, if you are committed to the Center's mission and interested in supporting and growing the organization, please email [Steve Stapleton](#) for more information about board membership.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Racial Healing Circles: Exploring Race Matters

February 25, 2017 12:30-5:30pm - \$64

Theme: Getting Started with the Conversation

Many times our approach to racial healing is in response to a crisis in community. We are offering a different way of talking about race that is preemptive rather than waiting for the conflict. Will host 5 monthly half-day sessions beginning February 25th, 2017, utilizing the Peacemaking Circle process, each on a different topic. Participants can register for individual sessions that are of interest, or the whole series.

[Register Now!](#)

Introduction to Peacemaking Circle

March 11-12, 2017 - \$275 includes lunches

Peacemaking Circles provide space and opportunity to develop leadership capacity through reflections on personal values, honoring the stories of others, and the practice of speaking authentically in public. Participants intentionally create a sacred space that lifts barriers, opening fresh possibilities for connection and collaboration.

[Register Now!](#)

Introduction to Gracious Space

March 15, 2017 - \$60

Participants will learn the leadership skills to support an environment which honors diverse and dissenting opinions and how to help teams and individuals "learn in public."

[Register Now!](#)

Courageous Collaboration with Gracious Space

March 30-31, 2017 - \$250 (\$200 per person for teams of 2 or more registering at the same time)

With Gracious Space, we can tap the great potential in groups and organizations ready to advance the common good.

The deep dive into Courageous Collaboration with Gracious Space is a powerful and immediate way to make those connections and collaborations. *The two-day training experience will help participants develop their leadership skills to promote stronger relationships, have courageous conversations, and create better results.*

[Register Now!](#)

We cannot do our work alone. We need the gifts and support of the community. Please consider participating in one of our programs or making a financial contribution.

[Make a difference today
DONATE NOW!](#)

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