

Life in the Spirit By the Rev. Darryl R. Barrow

Drumming – a way into sacred time

The heartbeat is still the first rhythm I teach in drum circles. Along with our breathing, it is the most fundamental aspect of our lives, and just one of many basic things we do not pay attention to. Hence, I used drumming as a spiritual formation process of paying attention to God, to others, and to nature. Now, begin to vocalize the rhythm of your voice. When you feel comfortable sounding out your heartbeat, try playing it on your drum, using your hands or a mallet. Try it for five minutes, and see if you don't feel both relaxed and energized. The point of using the heartbeat is for us to begin to get acquainted with our internal rhythms, and also to help us feel more relaxed. This rhythm of the heartbeat along with drumming as a practice of building community is a good exercise to enhance listening skills, concentration, and intimacy.

This synchronization is called entrainment, the force that brings two

or more bodies vibrating with similar rhythmic cycles into alignment. Go into a music store and strike an A tuning fork, and all the A strings on all the guitars along the walls will begin to vibrate in sympathy. Sit in a drum circle and lay out for a second, and your drum will still vibrate. That many things happen without our "help" is a huge lesson.

Drumming has therefore been a positive revolution in my life. Like most of us, I grew up in that either/or, right/wrong worldview. Let's just say I did not flourish there. I see more possibilities on the margins, and luckily, in a drum circle, everyone is on the margin. The people who come to a drum circle are the ones who are supposed to be there, to energize the spirit and explore unity through music. No words are needed. If you are six or 90, broken or whole, happy or depressed, tuned in or out of touch, blind, deaf, lame, too smart for your own good or not

too bright, a democrat, or republican, you have a place in the circle. You are a part of the community. Rhythm is a universal language, and you are the rhythm! I like the image of a circle – in a circle, everyone is equidistant from the center. There is always room for anyone to come and go. All the members are equal in the circle, each with a voice that can be heard by everyone else. Everyone takes turns leading the transitions to new rhythms. The kind of music that is made in a circle is based upon that circle's relationship with itself rather than any externally imposed expectations.

I used to be affected by the rhythms of everything and everyone around me. It was distracting and depressing. I felt out of "synch." We often say that when we are getting sick. Trying to play to another's rhythms amid the noise and haste, helps me to find and maintain my balance. Drumming has also enhanced my abil-

ity to listen, increased my level of patience, helped to work through grief and frustration, and given me a much more relaxed and positive outlook on life, because of its unique ability to ground me and bring me into the place of sacred time.

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Financial Perspective By Pat Curtin, NCNY Conference Treasurer

This month's column is more personal than usual, not really related to finance at all. How many times have you had an event occur that really grabs you, makes you stop in your tracks and realize how fortunate you are? On Valentine's Day my husband, Ray, and I went to Gore Mountain in the Adirondacks for a one-day skiing get away. A cozy mountain inn sounded so inviting and relaxing. But breaking my right hand in a skiing accident has given me a new perspective.

This is not life threatening, just an inconvenience. Losing the use of my right hand, and facing being in a cast for

six months makes me greatly appreciate the ability to perform routine tasks with a strong wrist, firm hand and all five fingers. There are some tasks that I enjoy asking Ray to help with – doing the ironing, or carrying items that will spill if they are not carried with two hands, or putting my earrings and jewelry on me. But the fun things like tennis and swimming will be sorely missed this summer. I had never thought about looking forward to being able to use a pair of scissors again.

My primary ministry work outside the Conference is volunteering at St. Camillus Health and Rehabilita-

tion Center in Syracuse. I have so much more respect for those with long-term disabilities and serious illnesses now that I have experienced this short-term inconvenience. The perseverance of people to overcome adversity with a good perspective is truly wonderful.

The only other time that I have had long-term health issues in my life was two nine-month pregnancies, and those ended with very good outcomes!! I'm confident that my hand will heal after the six-months of being in a cast, and there won't be any late night feedings to deal with.

So please forgive me if this column is shorter than usual. Typing with one hand is very slow.

Peace and all good things.
Pat Curtin, Conference Treasurer



Applications being accepted for the 2007 Franklin J. Sherman Scholarship

PURPOSE:

The Franklin J. Sherman Scholarship Fund was established in 1981 to honor Franklin J. Sherman who had been for many years a teacher and a member of the clergy in the United Methodist Church. Today the scholarship is awarded in memory of his life and ministry.

QUALIFICATIONS:

The scholarship is to be awarded annually to one or more persons enrolled in a seminary accredited by the United Methodist Church, who is preparing for service as an ordained minister, a Minister of Christian Education, or Director of Christian Education. The award will be given in addition to scholarships awarded by the North Central New York Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. A person may receive the scholarship more than once.

APPLICATION:

Application for the scholarship is to be made to the Franklin J. Sherman

Scholarship Committee, JUMC, PO Box 916, Jordan, NY 13080 or by e-mail to jordannyumc@verizon.net with "Sherman Scholarship Application" in the subject line.

AWARD:

The scholarship committee, in determining the award, is to give preference to applicants using the following order:

1. A member of the Jordan United Methodist Church.
2. A member of a church in the Crossroads District.
3. A member of a church in the North Central New York Conference.

The 2007 award will be governed by a number of factors including the financial need shown, and the number of credits being taken in the current academic year.

DEADLINE:

Applications must be received on or before June 30.