

~~I am saddened to say that~~ Last Sunday, Humboldt county lost a soul of wide caliber. I am talking about my friend Rev. Ken Meece, who served for many years as chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital. Ken had a compassionate spirit and inquiring mind. His knowledge of Christianity and Eastern religions was staggering; and his varied interests in things from the writings and theories about Shakespeare to the Turkish ruins at Göbekli Tepe, from Carl Jung's Red Book to quantum mechanics-- equally impressive. He was fascinated with life. Ken also loved silence and taught dozens, perhaps hundreds, the ~~contemplative~~ practice of centering prayer. He was a deeply spiritual man, who ~~nevertheless~~ was very involved with this community—a community that he dearly loved.

As an example: about 16 years ago violence in Eureka seemed to be escalating out of control; upon hearing of yet another senseless homicide, Ken organized a rally at Redwood Acres to pay tribute to a young student whose life was taken not too far from the Redwood acres facility. A large crowd filtered into the stadium to hear several victim's families affirm the need for the violence to stop. Ken was the type to stand for justice, for peace, for deeper mutual understanding across all the boundaries that can divide us. Ken was co-founder of the Humboldt Peace Prize ~~along with Leo Schenberg~~, and he was deeply involved in the Eureka Interfaith Fellowship: a group of pastors and other spiritual leaders who meet every month.

Ken was ~~compassionate and professional in the best sense~~. He dealt with sick, dying, recovering people for many years at St. Joseph Hospital and Health Care system. I learned a lot from him about how a person could show compassion toward those who were suffering; so did many others whom he trained ~~to do work~~ as chaplain's volunteers. He was well versed in medical ethics and had thought through the pros and cons of many issues relating to health care and life: euthanasia, abortion, war—all considered from a deeply spiritual plane, with immensely practical implications. He was especially concerned with end-of-life issues. About a year ago Ken was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. ~~He was in a sense relieved to have a diagnosis, but distressed by the direction the disease was taking him.~~ Rather than mope and mourn ~~with~~ *over his* Parkinson's, Ken went to work to find out about therapies that help those with mobility issues. He purchased a theracycle, which is kind of like a motorized stationary bicycle; the theracycle has been shown to help those with Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis. Soon Ken went looking for ~~local~~ grants to purchase another theracycle for the ~~St. Joseph Rehab Center~~. A few weeks ago the Eureka Rotary Club gave Ken a grant to purchase ~~that~~ theracycle and place it at St. Jo's Rehab. Ken was greatly heartened by several Parkinson's patients who had a hopeful perspective on life because of their opportunity to use the theracycle.

Ken ~~and I were both men of the cloth, but rarely agreed on any of the major issues, doctrines or ethical issues; that made our times together so engaging.~~ He could talk for hours about important issues, not just to show off his intellect, but with an eye toward finding truth and respecting the opposing view—which I was happy to supply. Ken was generous and compassionate: a friend who was always there when I needed him. ~~The community has lost a servant, and I have lost, along with many who knew him, a thoughtful, compassionate friend.~~

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Ken's wife Lynne, daughter Sara and son in law Carl. Friends from ~~of~~ the many walks of Ken's life are cordially invited to his memorial service on Saturday, March 31st at the First Presbyterian Church of Eureka at 2:00pm.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment