

Why So Much Focus These Days on NACSW's Emerging Leaders?

I have been working for NACSW for almost 20 years now, and before that I was on NACSW's Board of Directors starting back in the late 1980s. In fact, though it might be hard to imagine looking at me now, when I first became involved in NACSW, I was a young, emerging social work leader, having recently graduated with my MSW, just beginning my career as a social worker, and just starting my family.



Rick Chamiec-Case

I remember vividly how vital NACSW was to me in those younger years as I was trying to figure out who I was as a social worker – and particularly, who I was and was becoming as a Christian in social work. I remember sitting at a Board table with Alan Keith-Lucas, David Sherwood, and others, and how encouraging it was to listen to and learn from others who were so passionate about both their faith and their social work, and who deeply believed that

the two had so much to offer each other. The impact of those connections on me was immeasurable, perhaps more significant than any other during my early formative years as social worker.

Once during the early 1990s when my friend Terry Wolfer was rotating off NACSW's Board of Directors, he said he felt good about the future of the Board because – and I guess this was somewhat uncommon in those days – there were a number of younger NACSW members who had recently joined the Board, which ensured that there would be a younger perspective playing a role in the leadership of the association. I have thought more about what Terry meant by this in recent years, and I think he was really on to something. NACSW – and not just NACSW, but all organizations, whether they be churches or agencies or membership associations – need diversity of all kinds to be strong, healthy, resilient and sustainable. The kinds of diversity they need include gender diversity, ethnic diversity, diversity in members' expertise and experience – and, of course, age diversity. I think this is part of what Paul was getting at when he wrote in the letter to the Corinthians about Christ's body being made up of many different members which

all have their distinctive and crucial roles to play in the overall health of the Church:

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. . . . If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body (1 Corinthians 12: 12; 17-19).

In a similar way, NACSW needs the perspective and energetic participation of younger, emerging leaders to be whole, to strengthen NACSW so that we can better serve and nurture Christians in social work young and old alike. I am grateful for the way NACSW supported me when I was just starting my career 30 years ago. My hope and prayer is that NACSW grows exponentially in its ability to support and nurture social work leaders of the future.

So I look forward to seeing where NACSW's newly established young, emerging leaders initiative leads us in the months and years ahead. I believe it has great promise to make NACSW stronger both now and in the years to come!

Partnering on the Spring Issue of SWC:

Becoming a More Vital Christian Presence in Social Work

NACSW invites you to take a moment to pause and celebrate what the Spring, 2015 special issue of *Social Work and Christianity (SWC)* – “Religion and Spirituality in Competency-Based Social Work Practice” - represents to NACSW and to our profession. This special issue is a tangible example of NACSW being a vital Christian presence in social work. It also signals two professional social work associations working together to help equip social workers to understand the role of religion and spirituality in competency-based practice with clients and communities.

Developed and co-edited by Michael Sherr and Altaf Hussain, this special issue

was supported by a unique partnership between NACSW and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The editorial team of *Social Work & Christianity* provided logistical and editorial support to the co-editors, and CSWE provided administrative staff time to assist with this collaboration as well. Importantly, NACSW has agreed to share an electronic version of this special issue so that CSWE can post it on their website so that their members can also access this valuable material.

The collaboration on this special issue represents the second time NACSW and CSWE have partnered together in recent years. In February of 2012, several

members of NACSW joined a diverse group of social work scholars to form the CSWE Religion and Spirituality Workgroup and Clearinghouse. This workshop, which Michael Sherr co-chairs with Ed Canda, exists to enable CSWE to provide resources for social work educators to help faculty and students address religion and spirituality issues more sensitively in competency-based practice. Of equal importance, the workgroup formed under CSWE serves as an example of what is possible when social work educators work together to support the engagement of diversity in practice, while appreciating and respecting

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