

## **3rd Way Collective Campus Ministry Report May 15, 2016**

This has been a meaningful school year at Penn State. I felt much more prepared as the fall began, this being my second chance to experience many of the seasons and rhythms at Penn State. 3rd Way Collective had a much larger student network, and a much bigger group of supporters and allies in the local community. Our student officers were more active and engaged, and our presence on campus was enhanced by the vision and dreams of students who connected in some way. Students have begun to recognize 3rd Way Collective as a safe space of support and connection. It has been touching to have students reach out to me for pastoral care, prayer, or just simply for conversation.

This year 3rd Way Collective created or partnered to create 138 events on campus focused on peace, justice, and faith. These involved more than 1600 participants including students, staff, and community members. These numbers almost doubled our first year programmatic impact - last year we were involved in 68 events with just over 800 participants. Despite these numbers, many of our most meaningful connecting points remain as small gatherings of 5 students or less. As our new team of officers and advisory team plan for the fall, we are considering again the balance between programmatic and relational ministry, and whether one requires the other.

Our most meaningful experiences are when we have partnered with others - whether that be other campus ministry organizations for our service and learning trips, or community advocacy groups, our work is enhanced and multiplied when we collaborate rather than trying to always create something brand new.

At this point in the 3rd Way Collective story, we must acknowledge that Mennonite students at Penn State are not where we find our critical mass. We are drawing in students who are interested in faith-based peace and justice, rather than because of our Mennonite identity. These students are connecting with 3WC regardless of their religious tradition. The few Mennonite students who engage 3rd Way Collective find us through their connection with UMC and participate out of a desire to remain connected to the Mennonite world while at Penn State.

Our new 3rd Way Collective house will provide a physical center for our community building endeavors, and will offer a space to create new visions for connections with students. The students who have committed to this house, and the students who will make up our new officer team, seem excited for the fall to arrive!

I continue to feel blessed and supported by our incredible Advisory Committee. It isn't easy creating something from scratch - especially when we do not have a blueprint or an Anabaptist example to build from.

A note from the advisory team:

*The advisory committee continues to focus on fundraising efforts so that the ministry will be sustainable into the future and is linked with financial resources outside of UMC. We are excited to launch the new 3rd Way House this fall. Two of our four 3rd Way student officers will be living in the house so we hope it will act as a home base for the ministry. It will also provide a space where students can connect with interested people from UMC for potluck meals, service projects, and mentoring. We feel that Ben has done an outstanding job launching and promoting 3rd Way Collective and his role as a campus pastor during the past year and a half. We ask for*

*your continued prayers and support as we work to reach out to more students, and find a good balance of being a Christian ministry with a focus on peace and justice.*

Monthly reflections on this ministry have been posted at the 3rd Way Collective web site and you can read it them by going to <http://www.3rdwaycollective.org/category/blog/>. I have also recently been tapped as a regular blogger for The Mennonite Magazine. These reflections are posted with other bloggers right here - <https://themennonite.org/the-latest/blog/>. We encourage you to visit the site regularly to stay informed about the ministry.

We are grateful for your prayers and support.

Campus Pastor Ben Wideman and the Student Ministry Advisory Committee