

3rd Way Collective Congregational Meeting Report – Nov 2017

Thank you for your ongoing support for 3rd Way Collective! At the beginning of the month we celebrated three years since our first event. In that time we created or collaborated on more than 300 campus and community events and activities. It has been a very full and robust three years.

Our challenge continues to be centered around being more than just a network of connected students, but a place of community connections where students can go deeper with each other. Our “Collective” has done an amazing job of connecting a broad cross-section of students and community members, but we still struggle to feel like we have our own core group of more than a small handful of students. The flip side of that is that our current group of student officers seem more committed and connected than ever before in our history. They have chosen to gather each Friday morning for breakfast, to reflect on what we've been doing, and to dream about what else we could be up to in our community.

For me (Ben), I've been spending some of my own reflecting time working through where we find ourselves after three years. 3rd Way Collective has been able to react and respond to the needs of our campus by showing up to be present in many different spaces and situations. We are known broadly as a student organization that is willing to collaborate, and we are frequently asked to partner to make events more broadly supported. We are seen as a unique campus ministry in that we offer an alternative to what has traditionally existed in the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center. In the past few months I have been sought out by people who are considering their own campus ministry endeavor, and the Pasquerilla staff have pointed those folks in my direction as someone who has successfully started something meaningful at Penn State. I frequently am asked to add my voice to committees, seminars, and events that are in need of a faith leader concerned with peace and justice.

I've also been reflecting on our sense of place. Aside from a small shared office on campus and in our church building, 3rd Way Collective doesn't really have a space to invite students in for connection and a sense of belonging. I'm dreaming about what a space like that would look like in our community, and what the resources would be in order to make those dreams more of a reality. I would love to hear input from the congregation if there are ideas that could be implemented to meet that need.

The past few months have included wonderful guest speaker events including Rachel Held Evans and Pete Enns and Jared Byas from The Bible for Normal People. We appreciate having other student organizations willing to collaborate to make these happen, and a community that appreciates and shows up for events like these. In the case of Jared and Pete, it was great to have University Mennonite also benefit from their time in our community.

Thanks for continuing to offer your support as we move forward and consider the future. We can't wait for the return of the Palm Sunday Peace Walk, as well as our collaborative spring break service trip to Washington DC in March.