

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective Congregational Meeting Report – Sept 2018

Thank you for your ongoing support for 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective! In some ways it is hard to believe we are beginning our fifth year on campus at Penn State. So far this year we've already had seven student events and activities (including guest speaker Nadia Bolz-Weber), as well as participating in Penn State's Involvement Fair, the annual LION Bash, and the LGBTQA+ Welcome Back Reception. There is a renewed interest in the students we interact with to engage the world in creative ways around the issues we are facing, and it is encouraging to find new students each fall who see 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective as the campus ministry alternative they have been in need of.

We are striving this year to be a ministry known primarily for its community presence rather than its events and activities. This means focusing more on showing up in places that campus ministries do not often go, and allowing Campus Pastor Ben to devote more of his time on meeting with students individually or in small groups. 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective has a reputation as a collaborating organization, and we hope to continue to provide the community with that resource. Rather than collaborative events creating an even busier 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective student schedule, we've tried to use these collaborative opportunities in place of some of the things we have done on our own in the past. Examples of this would be replacing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Way Collective movie night with a collaborative movie night at the Houseasaurus Living Coop, replacing some of our weekly dinners with a collaborative community events, and accepting invitations from folks at Foxdale Retirement Community to create broader table spaces together. Our hope is that this will free up Ben's time to be more present as needs arrive in the lives of students, and that fewer weekly events will mean better and more meaningful connecting points.

Our current group of student officers are all returning to roles that they have held in the past. They represent a broad cross-section of our community in terms of background and academic interest. They are also incredibly active, making it challenging to get the group together in the same place for officer meetings. One small shift seems to be that as our organization is more well-known, we have attracted more broadly and actively involved students. This is a shift away from our first few years in which we were primarily drawing students without much sense of connectivity. One goal is to continue to provide a place of belonging for those students who do not feel connected, even as our visibility and reputation expands and increases.

For me (Ben), I've been grateful that we continue to be invited into spaces that we did not expect. This fall the LGBTQ Student Center will hold its first Clergy hours for affirming campus ministers. I am on the schedule as one of those invited clergy. I have also been invited to speak to some Physical Plant staff on my work in connecting with under-represented students on our campus. It is a joy to receive these kinds of invitations, and it feels affirming of the work we have undertaken in our first four years.

Thanks for continuing to offer your support as we move forward and consider the future. We are excited for our upcoming fall service and learning trip to Washington DC, a robust guest speaker

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