

I continue to feel like this fall has been one of the most meaningful and fulfilling ones of my time in this role. Reaching the milestone 5th anniversary of our first event on campus was a recent joy, and celebrating with a cake at our recent potluck meal was really special.

It is clear to me and many of my colleagues and students that 3rd Way Collective is meeting a need that prior to our existence was not being met. We are standing at the intersection of peace, justice, and faith, in creative and unique ways that have never been done in our community in a formal campus ministry way. Just this semester alone I have had coffee or a meal with many students who have felt deep gratitude for this organization's presence in their lives, and the ability to connect with a campus pastor who is working to create spaces of belonging on our campus. In a recent blog post I reflected on some of the unique space that we are creating, and the challenge of interacting with a world that often understands Christianity to be something else entirely than the values we hold to be true. You can read my reflection here — <https://sixoh6.com/2019/10/28/losing-my-religion/>

I continue to be deeply appreciative of my colleagues from the Lutheran, Presbyterian, and United Methodist traditions. They have given me a sense of collaboration and peer support that has been such a valuable part of my own sustainability. This fall we have partnered to bring three separate guest speaker events to our community, and have a few more planned for the spring. We are also actively preparing for our spring break trip to rural Alabama to visit civil rights sites and help with tornado clean up from hurricane damage.

The vibrancy and joy of this fall of work is in tension with the ongoing struggle to figure out a financial path forward. I feel both affirmed in this role, and also insecure about its footing moving forward.

We know that fundraising is crucial if we are to continue to have a full-time person in this role with 3rd Way Collective, however having enough volunteers and hours to put in the necessary time is a big challenge.

Our two Sunday conversations about 3rd Way Collective led to some questions in need of specific answers.

Here they are, as well as my written response:

How does UMC prioritize local vs. denominational giving? For example, we are giving \$30,000 to Allegheny Mennonite Conference and \$45,000 to 3WC each year. It helps to put the 3WC giving into perspective when we consider how much we are giving to the conference.

This may be more appropriately answered by our financial committee. Part of this discernment is through your congregational voice, as well as occasional surveys of the congregation's mission and vision.

Do we need more churches to join us?

Yes! Our initial hope was that these other congregations would be primarily from Anabaptist spaces, but those have not materialized through our efforts. Many are interested in hearing

about our work, but lament that their giving/missional funds are shrinking. Others have expressed that they like the campus ministry idea, but would prefer to start something in their local context. We continue to be in conversation with other local congregations, however shrinking church budgets seem to be a reality across town.

How many people does 3WC serve? Are there ways to give us more data?

Great question, with multiple answers. Typically our solo-events that are not co-sponsored by other organizations have 3-12 students in attendance. When we co-sponsor events such as trips, speakers, service projects, etc. we draw in more. I've met one-on-one with dozens of students and community members during the past year who see me as either their campus pastor or a spiritual mentor, or just a resource in their life. Currently there are 194 active student subscribers on our weekly email, and 178 on our adult/supporter email list. Our social media spaces connect us with hundreds of students, of which about 100 are actively engaging that space. We have 300-600 page views on our website each month. Our largest annual event is the Palm Sunday Peace Walk which has drawn in more than 100 people each year.

Is 3WC recognized by Mennonite Mission Network as a partner organization so that the wider church can donate to 3WC?

No, unfortunately MMN does not see us as a partner organization. I had hoped that their "Network" name would make us an ideal fit, but we don't fit under their traditional core established mission programs, and they are not currently looking to add something like 3rd Way Collective to their network.

Could 3WC join our local United Way?

No, unfortunately we are not able because we are a mission of UMC and not our own not-for-profit organization.

Could we find resource people to help with fundraising and/or grant writing?

We continue to look for them! Fundraising especially. Grant applications have been proven to be challenging because we are not a 501c3. Fundraising is a massive part of what the Advisory Team has been putting their time toward of late, and is crucial for any sustainability moving forward.

How much of a shortfall are we facing?

If we raise the approximate amount that we have raised during the past two years (around \$35,000 annually), we will have a shortfall of around \$10-15,000 for this fiscal year.

What if the 3WC position were a half time position? That model might be more sustainable.

I think this is absolutely the most sustainable path forward if we want to continue to keep this as "our" congregational campus ministry. If we want to see this continue to be a full-time position, we need to consider making 3rd Way Collective more eccumenical and broadly supported by a fundraising and directing board.

What percent of Ben's time is spent on fundraising? Are there plans to change that?

During my sabbatical time the Advisory Team came up with the following plan:

Over the next semester (Aug. - Dec. 2019) 10% of Ben's time will be spent on specific fundraising opportunities:

- *Expanding donor list by increasing e-mail list, general contact list, and soliciting names at churches he visits*
- *Identifying and meeting with potential donors*
- *Making sure thank you notes happen in a timely fashion or delegating committee members for the thank you notes*
- *Participating with the advisory committee for the fundraising appeals-Participating with the committee in a signature event each year*

These things have all been able to take place this fall, though it feels increasingly like 10% is not enough time to devote to these measures, especially if UMC's annual contribution needs to be reduced, and the Advisory Team continues to function as a church committee rather than a more focused fundraising team. Something missing from this list is specific asks in a face-to-face setting. This seems like a crucial element to our financial sustainability moving forward, and may require us to shift the Advisory Team to something more like a Fundraising Board.

Could we do some other kinds of fundraising? Like a monthly hymn sing, or silent auction?

Sure! In fact, we have already been participating in close-to monthly giving projects during the past few years. These include things like the annual Friends Meeting Chili Dinner, Penn State's #GivingTuesday fundraising campaign, Tom's summer barbecue event, seasonal letter writing, speaking at local and Mennonite congregations, the ongoing sale of t-shirts and other items, and event fundraising requests through Penn State's UPAC office.

Ben and Mike Bratt are considering a music concert fundraising effort. The Advisory Team is working on a spring fundraising community event. Our team also just sent out close to 200 letters to past financial supporters, supporters who have never given before, and recent graduates of Penn State who had been connected to Penn State.

If you have ideas and are willing to help coordinating fundraising efforts, please contact myself or the advisory team! But more and more we are hearing that sustainable giving comes through face-to-face relationships with key donors. This must be our focus moving forward, especially if 3rd Way Collective is unable to be supported at the 50% level by our congregation.