

SHARED VISIONS

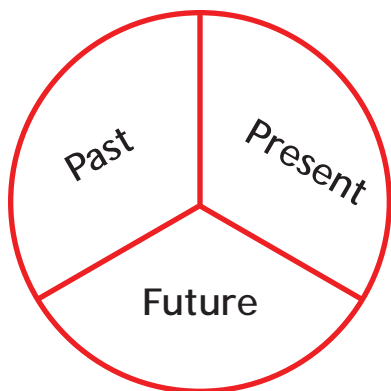
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Volume 17, Number 4

— A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers — presented by the people who bring you *Connections* —

Your Volunteer/Mission Experiences: Putting It All Together

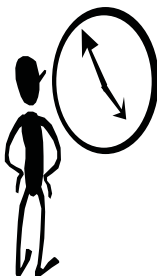
How can you, as a volunteer, be more open to your experiences, to other people, to yourself and to God? This year's four issues of *Shared Visions* have been devoted to insights and suggestions to help you to be more openminded at work and in your volunteer community. Many of our articles and activities have been drawn from social-psychological research on the dynamics of the open and closed mind, along with biblical themes about being open to God and neighbor.



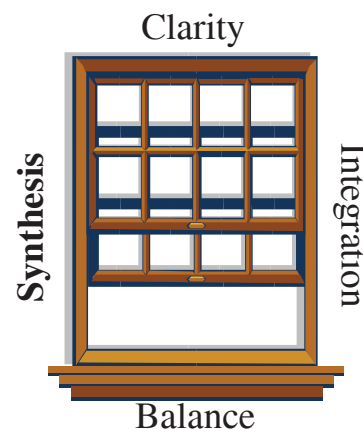
Specifically, in the first three issues, we focused on the qualities of **clarity**, **integration** and **balance**. Now, in our fourth issue, we highlight the value of **synthesis**. We feel that by examining how you

connect with time (your past, present and future), you may be more open in your mental, emotional, social, professional and spiritual life.

Simply put, "synthesis" (Greek: with - placing) means the ability to "place together" elements which previously were isolated from one another. That is part of the beauty of the open mind. It



articulates its beliefs and eliminates contradictions (clarity); distinguishes what is most important from what is secondary (integration); respects authority both outside and inside oneself (balance); and does the same for time, appreciating memories, truly living in the present, and planning for the future (synthesis).



We hope you enjoy this last issue in our series and welcome your critiques or reflections. Please tell us which articles you liked best or least, at sharedvisions@pallotticenter.org. This will help us improve future editions. We wish you all the best in your post-volunteer service life. Please check out our resources on page 5 for former volunteers.

While you may have made time to write in your journal this year, have you devoted time to reading it? In your last few months as a volunteer, be sure to reread passages as a way to reflect on all you've learned this year.

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Understanding Synthesis

Synthesis – This characteristic describes how the openminded person interacts with time: the past, present, and future. Briefly, the openminded person is in touch with and makes use of all three timeframes by drawing on the strengths of the past, making decisions in the present, and planning for the future. The closed person typically isolates time-related concerns into one of the three frameworks. By becoming aware of the differences shown in the snapshot below, we hope we can all grow by synthesizing and pulling together our beliefs, feelings, and interactions with time.

The Open Person:

Makes a broad use of time and draws strength and insight from all three time frames: past, present, and future.

Is aware of the needs of the past by drawing on memory, in addition to reconciling the past with the present and future.

Pays attention to and appreciates what is happening in the present and makes decisions based on such observations.

Attends to the needs of the future through planning and preparation.

The Closed Person:

Takes a narrow approach to time and often avoids today's anxieties by escaping into the past or future.

Either exhibits too little concern for the past by ignoring it or too much concern by getting stuck in the past.

Tends to under-appreciate the value of the present; often the person is locked into the past or the future.

Either ignores the future entirely or uses the future to escape past or present realities through daydreams or fantasies.

Activity: Community Affirmation Night

You will need:

- **Time before the gathering to think about your favorite community memories**
- **One candle for each member of the community**

Community night is often a time of bonding and a chance to get to know one another a little better. After a year (or more) of community nights, you have collected many memories that you will want to take with you. An idea for one of your remaining community nights is to share one of your favorite memories about each of your community members. **Sit in a circle and start by having everyone share their memories for a particular person before moving onto the next community member and so on until everyone has had an opportunity. Be sure to write each of these memories down so that each person can keep them as mementos of the memories shared.**

Another variation or addition could be to go around the circle and share what you would like to take with you that you learned from each community member.

Afterwards, invite one another to share one hope

that you have for each of the other community members while lighting a candle, which you will get to keep. The idea is simple, yet it can be an effective way to affirm each other and let them know the importance of the memories that you share.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- How have your relationships with one another changed over the course of this past year?**
- Were there any memories that were selected as the favorites by more than one person?**
- Did any of the memories shared surprise you?**
- What are some other ways that you can take your memories from this year with you?**
- In what ways have your community members had an impact on you?**

What was your favorite community pastime? Was it a trip to your favorite ice cream café, a special board game you played, or movie you watched? Whatever it is, make time for this activity at least once more before you leave.

Activity: Synthesis and the Open Mind

With the summer quickly approaching, many of you will be transitioning to a new place, a new job, and a new community. Time is moving forward...how will you move forward along with it?

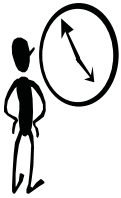
With your community, or on your own, take some time to reflect on the four themes of this year's *Shared Visions*. If you are with a group, we encourage you to discuss your answers.

Clarity. In your time as a volunteer, how have you clarified your goals, beliefs, and principles? What has become clearer to you about yourself, others, the world, or God?



Integration. What are some ways that you have deepened your beliefs, and recognized your disbeliefs? What inconsistencies, if any, have you found between the two?

Balance. How do your relationships with others help you to find balance? In what areas have you improved your self-esteem, or learned to recognize your own authority?



Synthesis. How do you balance your past, present, and future? What have you learned from past mistakes? How are your present actions working toward your future goals and dreams?

Your beliefs, experiences, relationships, thoughts, and emotions are important aspects of your identity. **Clarity, integration, balance, and synthesis** represent ways to organize these aspects and to bring them together in a consistent whole. As you reconcile and unite these different parts of yourself, you become open to growing in your spiritual, personal, and professional life.

Volunteering Promotes Your

When you think of the path that brought you to a year or more of volunteer service, what comes to mind? What motivated you, in the words of Robert Frost, to take "the road less traveled"? What prompted the decision to leave your comfort zone or to challenge the status quo?

Perhaps you recognized that volunteering could lead you to form new ideas, perspectives and even a new, changed identity in light of your experiences. Many volunteer programs describe this process as *formation*. However, it is not that different from the theme of this issue, *synthesis*.

Full-time volunteering is a challenging experience not only due to the nature of the work, but also because it is not easily understood by the "outside world." Thus, as a volunteer, you have to develop

skills that help you to synthesize your experience in order to share it with others.

Consider the following examples of how you may have developed your synthesizing skills this past year(s). Are these statements true of your experience? If yes, how so?

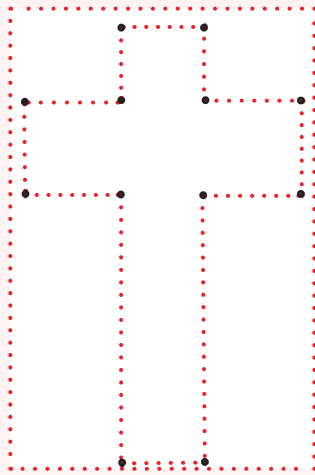
a) Volunteers bridge the gaps between groups of people with different ethnicities, races and/or economic backgrounds.

b) Volunteers struggle to understand how government policies affect the poor and the rich, either reinforcing or changing the status quo.

c) Volunteers attempt to live a simple lifestyle

Biblical Reflection: Drawing Together the Good News

Do you remember as a child drawing connect-the-dots puzzles and discovering the hidden picture? Certain biblical themes help us connect the spiritual dots by showing a symmetry across time, from the past to the present and future. They help us link our faith experiences with those of other peoples.



Here we cite three grand biblical themes which often help people gain a sense of having a whole portrait, a synthesis: the new Adam, the fall, and the coming kingdom. You'll notice they do this by helping us clarify, balance and integrate our past, present and future.

- ❑ "Jesus, the New Adam" points us to a new future – St. Paul drew this parallel between the first Adam and Jesus, the second Adam. The first Adam's life resulted in a fall from paradise (Genesis 3:6). Jesus led us back to paradise (1 Cor. 15: 22, 45-58) and gave us a new vision of what it means to be human (Romans 5:12).
- ❑ "Adam's Fall" helps "explain" an age-old question people have raised: how has human life become so

troubled? For the ancient Israelites, Jerusalem was like paradise and they were God's chosen people. When the city fell to Babylon in 586 BC, they became slaves and could not connect these dots. So the story of Adam's fall provided an answer: original sin; namely, it was our own fault. The hope of one day returning to Jerusalem was seen as similar to a return to the Garden of Eden, to paradise, linking the past with the future.

- ❑ "Get Ready for the Coming Kingdom of God" is the central theme of Jesus' message (Mark 1:15; Luke 7:18-28; Matt 4:17). Jesus spoke of the coming reign of God which points to humanity's purpose on earth, to establish God's reign of justice by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, proclaiming the gospel, etc. (Matt. 25: 32). "Get ready" is the biblical call to conversion, to live with a spirit of renewal as a way to embody God's Kingdom in your own life. The disciples did this and learned to adapt and change. They initially expected this Kingdom to arrive during their lifetime (Luke 9:27, 21:32; Matt. 24:34; Mark 10:37). Decades later, after many disciples died, the first generation Christians revised their thinking, stopped preaching an imminent second coming of Jesus, and instead taught that God's reign had indeed already begun with Christ's spiritual presence in the Church (Ephesians 1: 17-23).

Ability to Synthesize

while immersed in a materialistic culture.

d) Volunteers bring a sense of hope to those who feel weighed down by their past or afraid of their future.

This past year, you have given yourself some time to look at life from a broader socio-economic and cross-cultural perspective. A role for many volunteers has been to observe life in its extremes and to walk with those who live those extremes everyday.

Now, at this point in the year, you are challenged to apply your newly formed perspectives and skills in the future. How will your volunteer experience affect the questions of where to work, what career path to choose, where to live, and what to study in

graduate school?
How will you bridge this experience to your next steps?
You may not yet have the answers to these questions, but you have the right ingredients to bring it all together.



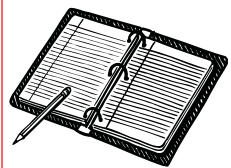
Create a checklist that includes all the skills you have developed as a volunteer. This list will be helpful when it comes time to write or update your resume. Remember to include not only skills learned on the job, but also skills learned while living in community such as flexibility and the ability to work in groups and to be a team player.

Pallotti Center Re-Entry Resources...for You!

Throughout life, having a support network and access to available resources often make the difference between an enriching experience and a disheartening one. The Pallotti Center provides a number of free services to former volunteers, available through our website at www.pallotticenter.org/Former/index.htm. If you cannot access this information on the web, please feel free to call us at 1-877-VOL-LINK.



Looking to connect to other alumni of volunteer programs? Look no further than the **Network of Former Volunteers**. The Network operates as a listserv of formers all over the country and world. Former volunteers can use the listserv to find others who have volunteered in their area, program or field of interest; to find and share advice or leads about housing, jobs, or graduate study; to promote social justice interests; and to schedule a gathering of formers in your area. (Don't be shy!) The listserv is not used for fundraising or spam e-mail.



Not sure what to do next? The **"What's Next?" Notebook**, available from your volunteer program or on our website, helps guide your transition out of volunteer service. It asks

questions to help you reflect on your volunteer experience, as well as your future hopes, dreams, and goals. It also gives some practical suggestions for next steps to take, e.g., re-entry self-evaluation, résumé and interview tips, reflections, and exercises on career direction, and ideas for how to remain active in your faith, social justice, and your community.

Just as *Shared Visions* assists in the formation of current volunteers, **Staying Connected** helps in the continued formation of former volunteers. This newsletter is also free, and each issue focuses on an aspect of volunteering (simple living, social justice, spirituality, relationships,

etc.) and how this can apply to life after service.

Need a job? Sign up for our **Job Bank**, which aids former volunteers from full-time, faith-based volunteer programs in the search for meaningful and fulfilling work. The **Job Bank** website also features articles, links, and strategies for career discernment and job searching.



Moving? We have **two** great resources that are more localized. First, the **Resources in Your Area** section of our website features recommendations from former volunteers about places to see and things to do all over the U.S., organized by state. Second, we have **five local listservs** for former volunteers to share information about housing, jobs, and upcoming events of interest, as well as to facilitate gatherings of formers in those areas. So if you



are moving (or thinking of moving) to California, or the Washington, DC/Baltimore, MD; Chicago, IL; New York, NY; or Philadelphia, PA areas, make sure you sign up

for the local listserv for that region. You can sign up via the Network of Former Volunteers web page.

And, finally, the Pallotti Center is happy to provide **one-on-one support**. The transition following a term of service can be a trying time. In addition to the various resources and services offered, former volunteers may benefit from talking with someone who understands the challenges involved and can offer some feedback regarding personal career decisions, life path choices, and the like. Call or stop in to any of the Pallotti Centers – contact information can be found on the back of this newsletter or on our website: www.pallotticenter.org.

Want further tips and ideas about transitioning from your volunteer experience to what's next? Check out the Pallotti Center's Activity of the Week archives at http://www.pallotticenter.org/Current/ActivityOfTheWeek/activity_of_the_week_archives.htm under "closure issues."

“Synthesize” Your Leftovers: Make a Casserole!

As you near the end of your volunteer year(s), you may notice that you have lots of random foods in your cabinet or freezer. What to do with them? Easy! Make a casserole. Here’s a “generic” casserole recipe.

1. Choose a meat (or meat substitute). Use about a pound or so for one pan.
2. Choose a sauce. Creamy soups work wonders! You can add a little milk, but not too much; you don’t want a really watery sauce.
3. Choose a vegetable (or two or three). Make sure it’s something that you like cooked; frozen or canned vegetables are good for casseroles.

4. Choose a starch. Ex.: bread mix, breadcrumbs, pasta, potatoes, rice, or stuffing.
5. Prepare the meat. If it’s ground, brown it; if it’s a whole piece of meat, cook it according to your preference, then slice it into thin pieces.
6. Use a big bowl to mix the meat, sauce, and vegetable(s). Use enough sauce to coat the meat and veggies.
7. Prepare the starch. Pasta, potatoes, rice, and stuffing need to be prepared now. Breadcrumbs are ready to go as is. Bread mixes should be mixed, but not baked yet.
8. Make the casserole. Use a large casserole dish (2 quart casserole dish or

- 9x12 or 11x13 baking pan). If you used rice or pasta, put that in first, then pour the meat/sauce mixture on top. If you picked a different starch, put the meat/sauce mixture in first, then put the starch on top.
9. Bake the casserole for at least one hour at 350 degrees Fahrenheit. The casserole is done when the center is bubbling.
 10. Eat and enjoy your “leftover” casserole!

This guide adapted from: “The Generic Casserole Recipe,” which features suggestions for different types of casseroles, and is located at: <http://www.kuro5hin.org/story/2007/1/19/15212/2222>.

Shared Visions

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presented by the St. Vincent Pallotti Centers*

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The Mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

Our goal is to promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church, and to support lay volunteers before, during and after their term of service. The Centers take their inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850) who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to be missionary.

Regional Pallotti Centers are located in Boston, St. Louis, and Oakland, CA. The National Office is in Washington, DC.

Shared Visions’ goal is to explore five building blocks of spiritual development: Intellectual Growth, Emotional and Physical Health, Leadership and Prayer.



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