



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Relationships More Important than Ever

by Alan C. Miller, Conference Minister

Margaret Wheatley is an internationally acclaimed writer, speaker and researcher. Today she is known as one of the leading organizational consultants in the world.

“Since 1973, Meg has worked with an unusually broad variety of organizations on all continents. Her clients and audiences range from the head of the U.S. Army to twelve year old Girl Scouts, from CEOs to small town ministers. This diversity includes large corporations, government agencies, healthcare institutions, foundations, public schools, colleges, major church denominations, the armed forces, professional associations, and monasteries. All of these organizations are wrestling with a common dilemma—how to maintain their integrity and effectiveness as they cope with the relentless upheavals and rapid shifts of these chaotic times. But there is also another similarity: A common human desire to live together more harmoniously, more humanely.” (<http://www.margaretwheatley.com/popup.bioformal.html>)

In the 1990s Margaret Wheatley was teaching that long-range planning is no longer relevant because the world is changing too quickly. We all know the experience of buying a brand new laptop computer today, only to discover that six months from now it is outdated. With the loss of long-range planning, many organizations switched to strategic planning. Strategic planning is “what if” planning. An organization attempts to prepare itself for the future by asking “What if this happens or what if that happens, what would we do?” However after 9/11, Margaret Wheatley taught that strategic planning is no longer relevant

because the “what ifs” are beyond our imagination. Who could have guessed that two airliners would be flown into the World Trade Center?

In 2002, Margaret Wheatley wrote that in today’s climate it is impossible to prepare for the future through long-range or strategic planning. However, *It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another!* (Italicized words are Margaret Wheatley’s words.)

Someone once said that the entire Bible is summarized in these simple two statements: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-39)

We should be grateful to Margaret Wheatley for reminding us what we as Christians should have known for a very, very long time. The way you prepare for an unknown future is to attend to the quality of your relationships with God, with self, and with neighbor.

In this time of economic crisis, war, and acts of unexplainable violence, we need each other. I pray that in the midst of all of this uncertainty that your church is asking relationship questions: How can we help feed the hungry, the unemployed, and the under-employed? How can we support emotionally and spiritually those depressed and worried by fruitless job searches, loved ones sent to war, and a society in which acts of random violence seem to be more commonplace each and every week? These questions are questions that lead us to discovering renewed strength and hope through our relationships with God and with each other!

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