

Avenues exist to help recover from addiction - THE REV. JAEGIL LEE

There are 10 recovery meetings every week at St. Paul's Methodist Faith Community in downtown Newport (in October the number will grow to 11). St. Paul's is delighted to share our sacred space with all these groups. In addition, we also have a Tuesday meditation gathering (at 5:30 p.m.), which many people in recovery find very helpful and beneficial for their spiritual growth. St. Paul's is deeply committed to supporting recovery and we've embraced this support as our local mission. I am a pastor who goes to two or three recovery meetings weekly. Am I an addict or alcoholic? Yes and no, or no and yes! No, if you think of addicts as those who have abused drugs and alcohol, but yes, because I know I am "addictive" by nature and "addicted" to my own habitual way of thinking, judging, re-acting and even feeling. I have no problem at all in relating to their stories and struggles. The more meetings I attend, the clearer it becomes that I have far more in common with them than not.

Every time I attend a meeting, their honesty and sincere spiritual longing strike me and reveal the superficiality and shallowness of my own faith and spirituality.

I cry with them when they share their sufferings and pains; I laugh when they celebrate their recovery or share the joys and blessings that recovery has brought to their lives.

It has been a true privilege and eyeopening experience to personally witness a seemingly hopeless person who has gradually overcome her/his addiction to become a new person with support of other recovering addicts.

Having regularly attended recovery meetings, I, with St. Paul's congregation, have prayerfully thought about how to support and promote recovery in the community, as we Methodists believe that a church exists not for itself, but for the local community to which it belongs. As a result, we offered "A-Day-Apart Retreat" in April, established an ongoing weekly meditation gathering and this week just started "Community DRUM Circle for Peace" as a monthly program (facilitated by Christopher Carbon). Although we do not name these programs specifically as recovery programs, all of them are enormously beneficial for recovery, and so we have intentionally invited people in recovery to these programs. Our St. Paul's Recovery Advisory Team will continue to develop and offer additional programs.

Last, but not the least, we invite you to our annual recovery festival, "Celebrating Recovery with St.

Paul's" on Sunday, Oct. 23, from 3 to 5 p.m. at St. Paul's. All are welcome, whether you are a person in recovery, a family member, or a nonaddict. Your simple presence at the event will empower people in recovery and raise recovery awareness in our local community. Of course, we will be featuring food (because we are Methodists), live music, storytelling, interactive booths, knowledgeable speakers and supportive resources.

By the way, September is National Recovery Month, and today, there is the Newport Rally-4Recovery at King Park from 1 p.m.

to 4 p.m. I will be there with St.

Paul's Recovery Advisory Team to celebrate people's recovery and promote prevention of substance abuse in this community. Hope to see you there and at St. Paul's on Oct. 23 again.

Rev. Jaegil Lee serves St. Paul's Methodist Faith Community in Newport. For more information, visit www.stpaulsumcnewport.com.

THE REV. JAEGIL LEE