

Jerry Marick, Cecelia Morris, and Lisa Schuette Reflect on Their Lay Leadership Experience



Each April, Pax Christi invites lay leadership candidates to participate in a process of discernment. Five years ago, as Jerry Marick went through the discernment process, his main concern was how he'd fit in. As someone fairly new to the parish he wondered whether he would feel part of the team. After finishing the discernment process and joining the Finance Council, Jerry's concerns were quickly erased.

Jerry was welcomed into an environment where he says each person brings something unique. With many years of experience in banking and financial advising, the Financial Council was a natural fit and a meaningful way for Jerry to use his talents. Jerry finds the council environment unique because it involves a process of consensus. He says success comes with being a team player, asking enough questions, and listening.

Being a lay leader has increased Jerry's awareness of parish events and promoted a greater sense of openness to spiritual opportunities such as the liturgical retreat and the Vatican II study group. His involvement also provides a greater appreciation for how the gospel message can be put into action. When hearing the scripture Jerry says, "I'm a little more tuned in to what's really being said." In addition to being able to contribute to the community, Jerry has been rewarded with a greater sense of connection: "It means so much to walk into the assembly and see these individuals I've worked with, people that I now consider friends."

Cecelia Morris, a member of the Worship Council, believes serving on the council offers a sense of belonging and has made a significant difference in her life: "I've met and worked with a wide variety of people on different councils, committees, as well as the staff ... many have become friends who have mentored me and helped me develop my leadership skills." Cecelia says council members work collaboratively. The Worship Council advanced several initiatives

as the pandemic hit and Pax Christi shifted to become a virtual community. Cecelia said everyone used their individual gifts to work together to creatively optimize ways for the community to remain connected.

Cecelia acknowledges that some people may have uncertainty if they are capable of being a lay leader: "It's natural to wonder if we have what it takes to be a respected leader in the community," but adds, "what I have found is that people tend to rise to the occasion."

Lisa Schuette, who was nominated to the Care and Support Council, was one of those who considered lay leadership to be something outside of her comfort zone. She wondered if she had the skills and was apprehensive about the three-year term. But by going through the discernment process Lisa determined that lay leadership was a way for her to give back. Not long ago she had been on the receiving end of the Care and Support ministry. She had immense gratitude for the level of support she received as she dealt with the loss of both parents within a five-month period.

Lisa's experience as a lay leader has been affirming. She describes the other lay leaders as welcoming and inclusive with a lot of collective wisdom. As a healthcare provider, Lisa says that the council allows her to use her gifts of compassion and encouragement. Her experience has also brought a spiritual change: "I've been thinking a lot about being a disciple of Christ and how I can live that out every day." Now, after nearly a year of being a lay leader, Lisa can't believe how quickly the time has passed. She says, "If I can do it, anyone can. You'll get the support you need because the other lay leaders want you to be successful."

*Written by Karin Poellinger
Staff Writer and Technical Editor*