



# ASSOCIATION FOR SPIRITUAL, ETHICAL, AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN COUNSELING

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## **President's Address** **Elizabeth R. O'Brien**

Happy Fall *Interaction* readers! We are beginning my favorite season for reflecting on the year and anticipating good things to come. As I write this, I am returning from the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) meeting, where I was able to visit with ASERVIC members and meet with ASERVIC board members and committee chairs to discuss initiatives and upcoming events. In the coming months, we will be sharing more information about events at ACA in Montreal and announcing the site of our 2017 ASERVIC conference.



**President**  
Elizabeth R. O'Brien  
Elizabeth-O'Brien@utc.edu

I am thrilled that we have launched ASERVIC Connect on ACA's communication platform. This forum will enable us to have ongoing communication with our most current members and serve as an idea exchange for those who have questions or are sharing information about incorporating spirituality, religion, and best ethical practices in their counseling, teaching, and service. For those interested in further education in these areas, please also visit the ASERVIC website where we will be posting information about webinars that we will be offering to members in the coming months.

**Past-President**  
W. Bryce Hagedorn  
Bryce.Hagedorn@ucf.edu

**President-Elect**  
Stephanie Dailey  
stdailey@argosy.edu

I am also excited to receive the submissions for the ASERVIC logo contest. Our members are very creative and have attempted to capture the mission of the organization in unique ways. If you haven't done so, please consider a submission either individually or with a group; more information on guidelines can be found at [www.ASERVIC.org](http://www.ASERVIC.org) or you can email us directly with questions at [ASERVIC.info@gmail.com](mailto:ASERVIC.info@gmail.com)

**Treasurer**  
Amanda Giordino  
amanda.giordino@unt.edu

As you reflect on those who have made an impact on your growth and development, consider nominating them for an ASERVIC award. The Awards Committee is currently accepting nominations for the ASERVIC Research Awards, Meritorious Service Award, and the Lifetime Service Award. We will also be unveiling some new award categories in January 2016, so please visit the website then for more information at: <http://www.aservic.org/aservic-awards/>

**Secretary**  
Rick Gressard  
crgres@wm.edu

In closing, I hope that as you move into this new season that your mind, body, and spirit are renewed and that you take time to connect with yourself and the people and values that you hold sacred. In reconnecting with ASERVIC friends this past week, I was reminded by someone on our board, "We [at ASERVIC] have a good time and learn so much from each other, but I think the best part is that we get along and genuinely respect each other." For me, truer words could not be spoken.

Take care and be well,  
Elizabeth

# Spirituality in the Field



## Tiffany Nielson, Ph.D., LPC



As a counselor and counselor educator, I find that spiritual and religious values are a steady part of my work. I am currently an assistant professor at the University of Illinois at Springfield within the marital, couple, and family specialty. In my clinical work, I worked with children, adolescents, couples, and families with varying mental health concerns, in addition to

previous work with survivors of child sexual abuse at a child advocacy center. I have found my own religious beliefs to be grounding and influential as I work beside my clients as they encounter their demons. My faith gives me hope and trust that change and healing are possible. I additionally cling to principles of love, forgiveness, and the belief that we are all children of God.

When I was a counselor-in-training, I distinctly remember my first client at a child advocacy center. A young, spunky four year old girl had been sexually abused by a stranger and came to our agency to work through the trauma. She and her family were resilient as they worked through the child sexual abuse that she had encountered. The day of termination had come in which this client would share her trauma narrative and we would celebrate her growth and development. I shared this case and previous videos with a supervisor, one hour prior to the family arriving. As my supervisor challenged me to be authentic I allowed the sadness that I had buried rise to the surface. I felt the sorrow of what this child had experienced, in addition to the power of healing that I had witnessed. The opportunity for me to grieve in supervision was therapeutic as my supervisor allowed me to share my faith as I made meaning of this experience. In my work with child survivors of sexual abuse my faith became consistently vital to maintain hope and trust in change.

As I reflect on this and other experiences I will share the importance of the second competency:

2. The professional counselor recognizes that the client's beliefs (or absence of beliefs) about spirituality and/or religion are central to his or her worldview and can influence psychosocial functioning.





A second client from my work at the child advocacy center will be described to articulate the importance in acknowledging the clients belief system in their treatment. This client was eighteen when he began treatment and I worked with him for just under two years. When Andrew came in for treatment he described common PTSD symptoms from being sexually abused as a young child. He expressed disgust, guilt, and shame associated with his experience of sexual abuse by an older male. He would frequently have flashbacks, which interrupted his sleep patterns and interpersonal relationships. Andrew requested a counselor that shared a similar religious affiliation, which led to me being given the opportunity to work with him. Sharing similar religious backgrounds became a benefit in understanding the cultural context and spiritual dilemma that he described. And while we shared this identity, I was keenly aware throughout our work not to impose my beliefs or assumptions by working from a curious, client-as-expert stance.

In the beginning of our counseling work, Andrew was angry toward God. He felt unworthy to pray to God due to the child sexual abuse and more recent sexual encounters. Understanding what Andrew was taught regarding sexual relationships within his religious beliefs, the shame and guilt he described became further contextualized. Andrew expressed a deep desire to feel clean and to feel God's love for him. In the counseling work, as he came to accept that he was not to blame for the sexual abuse, he became more open to the idea of praying and building a relationship with God. In session we would process what he would tell God, how he honestly felt about his faith, and the anger and hurt that he had experienced. Andrew shared that he felt like an imposter, and wanted to know that he was forgiven of his sins. We would process these emotions and concepts in counseling and I additionally encouraged Andrew to reach out to the local clergy regarding the concerns he had with repentance. Andrew had a positive experience working with his church leader and described a renewed determination in his faith. Andrew soon came to a place where he would pray for strength and support. His faith had changed from something that promoted shame and guilt to something that alleviated his shame and guilt. Andrew's overall treatment was infused within his spiritual and religious beliefs to promote meaning making of his trauma and healing from the abuse. Andrews's spiritual development and faith beliefs assisted me understanding the conflict and turmoil that he experienced. From my own experiences as a counselor, the work of counseling is spiritual in nature as I witness the miracle of change. Spiritual and religious values can be integrated in counseling to provide a holistic treatment to promote healing and lasting growth.



# NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

*JULIE  
KOSTREY*



I hold a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from the Adler School of Professional Psychology, Chicago. Prior to that, I completed Year I training in psychoanalysis at the Institute for Expressive Analysis, NYC. I also hold a Master's degree in Russian & East European Studies from the University of Kansas, which has helped me in my work with immigrant populations and with multicultural counseling competency. I currently have PPC status in Wyoming and LPC status in Illinois. I am into my second year as a Counselor/Therapist at Mind Spa, PC, and am an Adjunct Clinical Faculty at the University of Wyoming Family Medicine Residency Program in Cheyenne.

My faith journey has led me to be confirmed into the Episcopal Church. A major focus of Christian practice is service to others through direct action and advocacy, which is perfectly exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. Part of my commitment as a Christian and Episcopalian is to love others as myself, strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being ("I will, with God's help"). I am a member of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Cheyenne. I have also greatly benefited from diverse Christian traditions such as Eastern Orthodoxy and denominations such as the Collegiate Churches of New York and Presbyterian Church USA (in which I was baptized). Other faiths have enhanced my journey, including Zen Buddhism (Chogyesa Zen Temple of New York) and Judaism (Romemu), as well as organizations such as Faith House.

I was drawn to membership in ASERVIC based on its belief that spiritual, ethical, and religious values are essential to counseling and client development. I sought ASERVIC membership specifically to gain more knowledge on how to approach client spirituality/religion, which I have observed to be a source of comfort, strength, and existential meaning making for clients who are facing crises, but also a source of joy and celebration in their lives. Additionally, I sought membership to obtain tools for clients with traumatic/negative life experiences of spirituality/religion, which require greater sensitivity, with potential for a more authentic, reliable, and holistic understanding of background, context, and identity.

I would like to contribute to ASERVIC through continued conference attendance, and based on level of interest/opportunity, conference presentations. In the future, I envision assisting with the publication of the Counseling and Values Journal in some manner, as well as supporting the herculean effort it takes to put on a national conference. As a starting point, I look forward to getting to know ASERVIC colleagues/members and their work. Thank you again for the wonderful ASERVIC welcome and a terrific July conference!



**Taqueena Quintana, MEd, LPC**

## **How can professional school counselors address spiritual and religious concerns of students?**

Professional school counselors frequently encounter various situations involving students with spiritual and religious concerns. An example of this may be that an elementary school student is unable to participate in his or her school's holiday festivities due to religious reasons and feels isolated from their peers. Another example may involve a gay student who is having issues with a classmate that insists on telling him or her that they are a sinner and will be damned to hell if they don't repent. A student may disclose that she is pregnant and afraid to inform her father because he holds a position of leadership within their place of worship and she believes she will be disowned. Another student who is fasting for religious purposes may become increasingly ill and his or her teacher may want to call child protective services to report the child's parents for neglect. Within these situations, as well as others concerning students' religious and spiritual needs, it is the responsibility of the school counselor to address these concerns. Unfortunately, some school counselors may not know how.

The ways in which religious and spiritual concerns with students are addressed in public schools may demonstrate somewhat of a hands-off approach. This may be a display of the impact that the separation of church and state has had on the public school system. It could also be a display of religious/spiritual desensitization due to value conflicts. What is important for educators, especially school counselors, to understand is that yes, it is unethical to impose your values and beliefs on students however, there is no law that prohibits the discussion of religion and spirituality in school, especially if there is a concern. It is the school counselor's ethical responsibility to meet the religious and spiritual needs of their students in school. Being "religion-blind" or "spiritually-blind" and avoiding these concerns can cause harm and negatively impact students' academic, social and emotional development.

The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2010) discuss the responsibilities in which school counselors have to students, which include promoting their welfare and advocating for/affirming students from diverse populations. The ASCA Ethical Standards also explore ways in which school counselors should become culturally competent to address their students' differing needs (training, education, experience, etc.). Although these standards directly mention how school counselors should ethically proceed in becoming culturally competent, the standards do not provide specific recommendations for working with diverse groups. The information within the ASCA Ethical Code serves as a guide. The multicultural section provides general standards in working with diverse populations. It does not provide specific guidelines for working with a precise group such as those with spiritual or religious identities.

The American Counseling Association (ACA), the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) and the Association for Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) all offer standards in working with diverse groups within their competencies and ethical code. The issue, however, is that because the information isn't specifically tailored to school settings, it may be difficult to apply to situations involving students, especially for novice school counselors. For example, a novice school counselor has built a therapeutic relationship with a student and several months later, the student begins to deal with a religious or spiritual issue in which the counselor is not competent. How can the counselor refer the student to another school counselor if he or she is the only school counselor within the school? Should the school counselor continue to work with the student although he or she is not competent? There are several ways to approach this issue.

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There are numerous recommendations for school counselors who work with students who have spiritual and religious concerns. Kimbell and Schellenberg (2013) proposed and developed the Spiritual and Religious Competencies for School Counselors. These competencies, which are based on ASERVIC's Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling (2009), are specifically adapted to guide school counselors in meeting the needs of students with spiritual and religious concerns. The Spiritual and Religious Competencies for School Counselors consists of five domains, four of which are modified and aligned with the Culture and Worldview, Counselor Self-Awareness, Human and Spiritual Development, and Assessment domains of the Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling (ASERVIC, 2009) and the fifth being based on the delivery domain of ASCA National Model (2012). The authors concluded that the competencies are not to encourage school counselors to place their values or beliefs on students, but to encourage school counselors to meet the spiritual and religious needs of their students through education and exploration.

Moore-Thomas and Day-Vines (2010) examined spiritual and religious issues within African-American adolescents. The authors discussed how spirituality and religion, in conjunction with racial and ethnic identity, bring about a sense of community and belonging for many African-Americans. The authors also discussed the strong impact that religion and spirituality has on the many different elements of the lives of African-Americans, including social and emotional areas. The article suggested that when working with African-American adolescents with religious and spiritual concerns, school counselors should be in tune with their own spiritual and religious ideologies and work towards understanding how race and ethnicity in connection with religion and spirituality affect African-American adolescent students.

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Other suggestions for school counselors who work with students that face spiritual and religious issues include counselor supervision, familiarizing oneself with literature concerning students with these particular needs and becoming educated on the specific spiritual and religious views of one's student population. Lambie, Davis and Miller (2008) recommend that school counselors should modify their interventions to fit with the individual student's beliefs. In doing this however, school counselors may want to consult with school leadership to ensure the appropriateness of the interventions. Counselors should also adhere to their state laws, ethical code and school policies.

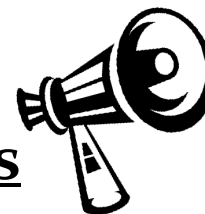
There are many other suggestions that school counselors can utilize to meet their students' religious and spiritual needs. All in all, it is essential to understand that religion and spirituality are important parts of cultural identity and ignoring these elements takes away from the holistic view of students. Avoiding students' spiritual and religious concerns can also be detrimental to their academic performance as well as social and emotional development. In addressing students' religious and spiritual concerns, school counselors can become more informed of students issues and better equipped to identify appropriate interventions to meet their students' needs.

#### References

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# Call for Award Nominations



[Each year ASERVIC members nominate qualified individuals for three prestigious awards which will be presented to recipients during the ASERVIC luncheon at the annual 2015 ACA convention in Montreal, Canada.](#)

Please see below for a listing of these awards and nomination information. ASERVIC strongly encourages anyone to apply who meets the award criteria. **Please note the nomination deadline is 2/12/2015.**

## **ASERVIC Research Award**

This award recognizes the outstanding activities of an individual who has helped advance the mission of ASERVIC through research. This \$500 award is intended for current ASERVIC members of any membership category. Students are strongly encouraged to apply! Nominees for the research award must submit a brief description of their research (supporting documentation is acceptable) with a description of how this research contributes to ASERVIC's mission.

**Requirements:** The recipient of this award shall be a person within the ASERVIC organization who: evidences engagement in current research activities consistent with the mission of ASERVIC that will help to promote the ideals, values, and programs which ASERVIC sponsors for the counseling profession; contributes to the body of knowledge that identifies and supports the importance of spiritual, ethical, and religious values in counseling; and represents the primary author for the research endeavor.

## **ASERVIC Meritorious Service Award**

This award is for an ASERVIC member (of at least 3 years) who has demonstrated significant service to the field of counseling and values in areas related to concerns of a spiritual and/or humanitarian nature, as well as someone who promotes the ideals, values, and programs of ASERVIC.

**Requirements:** The recipient of this award shall be a person within the ASERVIC national organization who meets the following criteria:

- A. Membership in ASERVIC for at least 3 years;
- B. significant service to the field of counseling and values in areas related to concerns of a spiritual and/or humanitarian nature;
- C. significant service which has helped to promote the ideals, values, and programs which ASERVIC sponsors for the counseling profession; and contributions to the development and sponsorship of new and creative programming in spiritual and value interest in counseling.

## **ASERVIC Lifetime Service Award**

Lifetime Service Award was incorporated in to the bylaws in 2008 and was founded in the name of Dr. Judy Miranti. Recipients must demonstrate significant contributions to and leadership in ASERVIC.

**Requirements:** The recipient of this award shall be a person within the ASERVIC national organization who meets the following criteria:

- A. Membership in ASERVIC for at least 8 years;
- B. demonstrated leadership in ASERVIC (please submit specific committee involvement/offices held/general contributions);
- C. Significant service which has helped to promote the ideals, values, and programs which ASERVIC sponsors for the counseling profession; and
- D. Contributions to the development and sponsorship of ASERVIC initiatives such as *Counseling and Values*, conference programs, scholarly works, spiritual competencies.

Please email nominee's information, name of award, a brief statement of contributions applicable to the award and any supporting materials to Dr. Sean Ridge ([sridge@johnsonu.edu](mailto:sridge@johnsonu.edu)) and Dr. Joffrey S. Suprina ([jsuprina@argosy.edu](mailto:jsuprina@argosy.edu)) ASERVIC Awards Co-Chairs. Questions regarding the nominations are welcome. Individuals are not required to be at the ASERVIC luncheon to receive the award. The deadline is Friday, February 12, 2015.

**Thank you very much for your service to ASERVIC and the counseling profession.**



# *Spirituality in the Field*

## SUBMISSION REQUEST

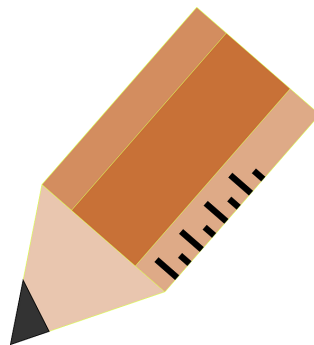
DO YOU HAVE IDEAS OR A STORY TO SHARE REGARDING YOUR PRACTICE OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD? IF SO, PLEASE SUBMIT TO THE NEXT EDITION OF INTERACTION. THE INNOVATION COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO FORMALLY INVITE CURRENT ASERVIC MEMBERS TO CONSIDER SHARING THEIR “SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD” EXPERIENCES FOR PUBLICATION IN AN UPCOMING ASERVIC NEWSLETTER.

INQUIRIES AND SUBMISSIONS FOR THIS SPECIAL SECTION OF THE NEWSLETTER CAN BE SENT TO LYNN BOHECKER ([LBOHECKER@MESSIAH.EDU](mailto:LBOHECKER@MESSIAH.EDU))

- ◇ FOLLOW THE ASERVIC NEWSLETTER “GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION” AS PUBLISHED IN THE MOST RECENT NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION (SEE ASERVIC WEBPAGE [WWW.ASERVIC.ORG](http://WWW.ASERVIC.ORG))
- ◇ ARTICLES INCLUDE AN OPENING PARAGRAPH INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR TO THE READERS.
- ◇ ARTICLES INCLUDE A SECOND PARAGRAPH DESCRIBING HOW THE AUTHOR INCORPORATES ONE OR MULTIPLE SPIRITUAL COMPETENCIES IN PRACTICE.
- ◇ ARTICLES INCLUDE A CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH OR LIST OF RESOURCES

Interested in submitting an article for the WINTER issue of the  
*Interaction?*

The deadline is **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5<sup>th</sup>**



Please refer to [ASERVIC.org](http://ASERVIC.org) for guidelines for publication or contact the editor at [lakepoo@mail.regent.edu](mailto:lakepoo@mail.regent.edu) for more information.