

Donna Shannon

-Member of UR since 2018

-Leadership roles within Unity Renaissance:

Sunday Morning Greeter		2019-2020 prior to COVID
------------------------	--	--------------------------------

-Leadership experience outside UR

Organization	Role	Dates (approx.)
Maryland Association for Multicultural Counseling & Development	Past President, Executive Board	2012-2018
Greater Baltimore National Council of Negro Women	Executive Board, Recording Secretary, Committee Chair Annual Women's Empowerment Conference	2010-2017
The Open Church of Maryland	Religious Education Chair Leadership Team – Virtual Presentations on Mindfulness Meditation and Mental Health	2014-2016 2020
Prison Ministry		2019-present
Breakfast on the Streets Chesapeake Area Shelter Team		2019 -2020 prior to COVID
Phone Bank		2020

-Unity classes, workshops, and/or conferences that I have attended.

Classes - List names	Location	Dates (approx.)
Book Study- The Sermon on the Mount	Unity Renaissance	2019
Book Study – Practical Metaphysics	Unity Renaissance	2018
Book Study & Discussion – How to Be an Antiracist	Virtual Unity in Lynnwood	2020
Book Study & Discussion - White Fragility	Virtual Unity Renaissance	2020
Workshops - List names		
Prayer Chaplain workshop	Unity Renaissance	2020
Full Prayer Chaplain training	Virtual	2021 (1 st quarter)

1. What is inspiring you to step forward and be considered for our Board at this time?

When I reflect on the core values and mission of Unity and Unity Renaissance, in light of the events over the past seven months, I ask myself, what role am I to play in the advancement of acceptance regardless of background, race, or creed and in the transformation of lives. I realize that change does not occur if organizations and individuals remain neutral or withdraw into a cloistered private life. Therefore, I am stepping forward to engage with others who have shared values and to provide a diverse perspective to leadership. It is my hope that together we can build a more socially responsive spiritual community.

2. What do you believe makes a great leader?

A great leader is vulnerable. When a leader is able to embrace her own frailties and imperfections, she becomes a source of life and healing for others. A great leader is a listener, open to learning and understanding the experience of others. Henri Nouwen, in the Wounded Healer, said that the man who has spent many hours trying to understand, feel, and clarify the alienation and confusion of one of his fellow men might well be the best equipped to speak to the needs of the many, because all men are one at the wellspring of pain and joy. I believe it is this human-to-human connection that makes a great leader.

3. Do you consider yourself a “team player”? How has that shown up in your life?

Yes. I was a special education public school teacher for 25 years. It was through the coordinated services of myself, teacher’s aides, speech and occupational therapists that the needs of the most vulnerable were met on a daily basis. Since 2006, I have been a licensed counselor. I walk beside clients as they untangle the thoughts and beliefs that cause pain and suffering. This is team work because I don’t know the answers. I can only assist in their self-discovery.

4. Authentic and open communication is an essential part of being on the Board, along with accessibility and responsiveness. What makes you a good communicator?

First, a good communicator has the ability to listen deeply. Listening is, commonly misinterpreted as passive. I’ve been told, “oh you are a good listener.” This doesn’t feel like a compliment because to me it implies that I am passive. However, effective listening is an active process. It requires attention, openness, and a willingness to set aside one’s personal point of view to receive a different perspective. Secondly, a good communicator, does not sit silently through meetings! She speaks up, perhaps by acknowledging differences, then respectfully presenting her position. I recently purchased a sweatshirt in honor of RGB. It says, “Speak even when your voice is shaking.” Although I am somewhat shy, I have learned to speak up.

5. My vision for Unity Renaissance in the next 3-5 years.

I envision more conversations and more opportunities to interact across cultures to raise social consciousness and “establish a coordinated spiritual social action program that serves our congregation, the community and our world.” (Strategic Plan, Obj. 3.2) The changes we have made out of necessity due to COVID-19, have a silver lining. We have learned that we

can remain viable and connected through technology. I envision that classes, presentations, and workshops will have the option of being in-person, hybrid, or virtual. By offering book studies or workshops online we can invite participants from different backgrounds from across the country.

6. My unique gifts or talents I bring to the spiritual leadership team:

There is a saying that when you teach you also become the learner. I have had the opportunity to teach several online pastoral counseling courses for Fordham University's Graduate School of Religion and Religious Studies. This experience has enhanced my interest and expertise in two areas, theological reflection and cross-cultural communication. I have become steeped in a methodology for reflection and interaction that involves examining the influence of faith tradition, culture, and experiences on decision making and utilizing a 3-steps method for interactions which includes attending – being present to the other, asserting - stating personal beliefs and taking action. (cont. below)

7. I would like the members of Unity Renaissance to know more about me. (e.g. prior Unity experience or other spiritual paths) Through my experiences as a minority and teaching multicultural competencies, I bring an understanding that we are each unique expressions of our cultural traditions and experiences. I believe that although, we may be interestingly different in appearance, at the core we yearn for the same things - security, meaning, connection, God's presence and love. Finally, I practice mindfulness, lead meditation groups, and promote mindfulness as a way to enhance communication. My faith journey has evolved from Episcopalian, the religion of my upbringing, to Unitarian Universalist, to New Thought Spirituality. I believe I can rest now in the principles of love and truth as taught by Unity.