

Faith can help in trauma's aftermath

Some may wonder why another article related to the Sept. 11 bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon may be in order. But the effects of this trauma will linger.

We all have the memory of this event burned into our memories. We will not be able to forget it, how we came to know it, and what we saw of it. Many will go on with life with few if any changes in their thoughts, beliefs, feelings or behaviors. But the crisis which we have all come through has left us to varying degrees with what might be called a stress disorder.

Disorder. Traumatic stress is most often applied to people who survived the Holocaust, the Vietnam conflict, or sexual or physical abuse. But many of us have been through times in our lives which impacted us in some significant psychological, emotional and spiritual way.

For some people several successive losses — a loved one, a relationship, of a job, or similar event — will have a profound impact that in some way traumatizes a person.

It is important to know that weeks after an event like the bombings is one point in time where mental health professionals expect that the initial reaction begins to loosen up. Numbness or emotional paralysis

turns into crying, fear of going to sleep, or anger experienced in greater frequency or intensity. This is one time to be alert to changes in your behavior and mood or those around you.

Pay attention

Talk to someone, go on with life normally, practice familiar rituals. It may be for many of us that it is only this far out from the event that we notice something to pay attention to.

At the three-month mark, many people who find that their psychological, emotional, or spiritual foundation was not as firm as they would otherwise have thought, will want to be aware of changes in themselves.

The three-month point is for

other people a time when inner resources might become depleted and need a refill, if not more so overall. Here again, staying in community, talking to people, prying down how much you follow the news and other games or programs about violence, find constructive ways to channel your anger and other emotions are all important things to do. For many years to come, the ministries of our houses of worship are vital.

All of us in some way will ask the questions: Is there a God who cares? Where can I get support for my family?

The outreach of religious fellowships will provide support, reassurance, and the reliability

that faith is there for them for the long haul. Reminding ourselves of the history of our faith and the long-standing presence of God in the midst of trials and tribulations becomes an important word of hope. Stay connected, continue to practice faith, use prayer, scripture, liturgy as resources, and do not deny yourself the gift of speaking to your religious leader if you are not able to cope.

As one pastor said in a sermon recently, a little boy was scared when he went to bed. The little boy went to see his parents who told him that he should not be scared because God was always with him. Yes, said the little boy, I know that but right now I need someone with skin. We all

YOUR FAITH



Rev. Paul Melrose

may need someone with skin. Rev. Paul Melrose is clinical director of Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeast Michigan. He can be reached at (248) 474-4701.

Birmingham Temple ordination Oct. 19

Miriam Jerris will be ordained as a secular humanist rabbi on Friday, Oct. 19, by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism at the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills.

Jerris will receive her PhD. in Jewish studies from the Union Institute, Cincinnati, where she offered the benediction at graduation Oct. 7.

Jerris is the first humanist minister who will also be ordained a rabbi. She was ordained by the Humanist Society of Friends, affiliated with the American Humanist Association in 1986 and has served the needs of both secular humanists and secular humanistic Jews. Jerris serves as a senior leader, ordained clergy, for the Secular Humanistic Jewish movement.

Jerris is an expert in Jew-

ish-Christian intermarriage, trained to meet the needs of modern Jews. Both her master's thesis and doctoral dissertation explored issues relating to Jewish Christian intermarriage. She also holds master's degrees in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan and Humanistic and clinical psychology from the Center for Humanistic Studies in Detroit.

Jerris serves as co-owner and director of the Wedding Connection with her husband, Stephen Stawicki. Miriam Jerris is director of the Intermarriage Department of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism and the Rabbinic Associate for Community Development for the Society for Humanistic Judaism, both headquartered in Farmington Hills.

Delving into the roots of Islam

By MARY RODRIQUE STAFF WRITER

On the campus of a small Christian liberal arts college in Farmington Hills, Dr. Judith Mendelsohn Rood teaches a lively class on Islam.

An associate professor of history and Middle Eastern studies, Rood is well versed in her subject matter.

"Mohammed never claimed to be any more than a prophet of God," she told the class of about 16 students. "He was a man with great humility. But don't confuse perfection with sinlessness."

Rood's class is using the text *A History of Islamic Societies* by Ira Lapidus as well as various other sources. One day last week, the class watched a portion of a PBS video *Empire of Faith* and poured over a handout taken from *Islam From the Prophet Mohammed to the Capture of Constantinople* edited by Bernard Lewis.

Later that evening, she presided over an open forum on Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden the college hosted for the community.

"Everything went perfectly fine," she said later. "We had about 75 people there, even more because they continued to come

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—Judith Mendelsohn Rood, Ph.D.
—Professor of History and Middle Eastern Studies

during the program. The place was packed. They came from as far as Ypsilanti and Windsor. There were a lot of seniors but also younger professional types, and one Muslim woman. It was a real mixed group."

Some asked questions. "Some of them were 'What do you think is going to happen?' There was a request for more detail on Osama bin Laden. Also, for explaining differences between Islam, Judaism and Christianity."

Rood was joined by Dr. Marie-Claude Ford, a geographer and historian, and one of her senior students.

"One student from my Third World Nations class gave the specifics of his paper on Afghanistan. Then I talked about the Iranian revolution and what's happened since then. How that led to where we are now. I just basically interpreted what's going on. I do this a lot."

Back in the classroom, Rood finds the use of visual aids most important and she often dips into her own collection, which includes movies and educational videos.

"It's very important for students to connect. They're very visual. It really works well," she said.

The History of Islam is a 300 level class, open to sophomores, juniors and seniors. It incorporates a lot of geography.

"The geography lessons are very intense," she said. "U.S. students are not taught a lot of geography. This class incorporates geography, history and religion."

"When I teach these students, I'm teaching Islam on its own terms. We have to try to understand from within a believer's perspective. It's not a critique from a Christian perspective, but think how Muslims think of it. You don't need to be Muslim to

have a great insight. When I taught at Wayne State University, I had a lot of Muslim students from different traditions.

"At first they questioned me, but by the end, they gave me great feedback. I'm really balanced and fair. To the extent possible, it's almost a believer's perspective."

"Our college's motto: 'The mission of William Tyndale College is to provide a Christ centered education. Love for God and fellow human beings.'"

"That's based on a Hebrew prayer: love God and love neighbor. It's the greatest commandment. We are called upon to love our neighbor. And not just the person we know or who agrees with us. How do we love someone who hates us? The Apostle Paul to the Greeks in Athens admonished Christians to witness to their faith with respect and gentleness and also to show kindness. A lot of Christians over the centuries have forgotten those things."

"We have Jewish students and one Muslim. And a lot who don't have any faith. We just want to make sure the public understands we are very open (college), not indoctrinating."

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