

Three who are living their vocations

Diane Thrush, Hospital Chaplain and member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Antonio

It's two days before Christmas at the Methodist Children's Hospital in San Antonio, the last place parents of a two-month old want to find themselves. Yet, here they are, their infant son hooked up to monitors and gadgets that constantly blink the status of his life. And here, also, is Chaplain Diane Thrush, tending to the parents as they tend to their child. "The baby is so much better than he was three days ago," reports Thrush. This is a good day in the chaplain's office.

Though not ordained, Thrush, a member of St. Luke's, San Antonio, has felt called to do ministry for years. In the early 80's she enrolled in Oblate School of Theology, obtaining her master's in theology. She also did a stint in clinical pastoral education at the Texas state hospital in San Antonio.

"My plan was that after I finished rearing my children, I would enter full time ministry," she says. During those years, she taught school, but several years ago left teaching to answer her call. A friend suggested she contact the Rev. Dr. Michael Curd, vice president of pastoral services for the Methodist Healthcare System. "That proved to be the beginning of my journey with the hospital," she says.

She started her chaplaincy in the sexual assault program at Methodist and still fills in there occasionally. Her next step was as a chaplain in the main hospital. Finally she wound up in the children's unit. "It is a wonderful blending of everything that I have studied – my background as a teacher and my love for ministry. I love every part of my work, except when a child dies. That will always be hard."

Thrush agrees that a characteristic of vocation is waking up each day eager to go to work. "I thank God every day when I drive into the parking garage," she says. And it's confirmed by a sign in the chaplain's office that reads: To love what you do and feel that it matters – how could anything be more fun?

Rob Kelly, Lawyer/ Mediator

Rob Kelly, lawyer, reads his Bible. His favorite passage is Matthew 18:15-17: "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If that member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed . . . If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church."

Lawyer Kelly is a problem solver. "Lawyers are supposed to be attorneys and counselors," he says. "The profession has lost the wisdom of counseling; it focuses too much on the fight, not the solution."

Kelly, in private practice in Kerrville, focuses on finding solutions without taking it to the courts. "I mediate in disputes," he explains. "I don't make decisions or rulings, I help the

parties involved work toward a settlement" – whether it's a land dispute, a business deal gone bad, or who gets the goods when grandma dies.

It wasn't always his calling. As a young lawyer, Kelly worked for a big San Antonio law firm. "I was much thinner and better looking and pretty full of myself," he admits. Eventually that firm went through a nasty split, and Kelly recognized the materialism that it represented. In a hotel room in El Paso one night, he had what he calls a "spiritual awakening." And he considered going into the ordained ministry. "But God told me he had plenty of Godly preachers," says Kelly. "What he needed were Godly lawyers."

An active United Methodist, Kelly admires the Episcopal Church for its canon law and use of chancellors.

As a member of the American Arbitration Association, Kelly also functions as an arbitrator, when he does make rulings. He relies on his Bible to do that; "Read Proverbs," he advises. And he teaches conflict resolution to adults and children as young as fifth grade.

The legal system is simply not designed to handle all disputes, says Kelly. And that's where he comes in; his great joy is helping the persons he works with to discover that God is there in every solution.

Gene Dowdy, Musician

Gene Dowdy has been immersed in music from the time he was a little boy. His parents, Hazel and Warren Dowdy, raised the Dowdy flock in a household environment rich with music. There were symphony concerts, scores of music lessons, and much encouragement.

As a teenager, Dowdy learned how to use his talent for God. "In the mid 70's, I was blessed to be the rector for a Happening gathering. Preparing for that weekend taught me lifelong lessons."

Dowdy went on to be the first ever on-staff music director for summer sessions at Camp Capers. He and his music helped bring college Happening (Vocare) to this diocese. He now attends St. Thomas', San Antonio.

As chair of the Music Department at the University of Texas at San Antonio, Dowdy sees his work as his vocation, rather than "just a job."

"My good friends will give me a hard time about this," he says, "but here's a haiku that better explains my feelings about why music is more than a job to me:

Tones and rhythms shared
From my heart join with others
In search of our Lord."

He has understood his musical work to be his vocation since he started teaching. "After all, most musicians are not 'in it' for the money anyway; we do music because we want to, we have to," he explains.

Some of the "have to" parts of Dowdy's weekly schedule are much like any other management or leadership job: supervising 65 faculty and staff, managing operations and budget, and supporting departmental events as a visible and enthusiastic representative for the department.

"As associate professor of music and conductor of the UTSA Orchestra, I select the music, help recruit and audition talented students, plan rehearsals, develop concert calendars and tours, teach the selections in an inspiring fashion and, finally, actually conduct the performances."

But the teaching is what makes his heart sing. "Right now, to be honest, as a new department chair, I don't feel as fulfilled in my daily work as I used to when I was teaching most of the time. I believe more fulfillment will come as I see some long term goals bloom at UTSA."

So, what is it about Dowdy's job that makes it his vocation? "Well, the philosophical answer would be that I find fulfillment through the rapture of a beautiful performance. More importantly, we need good musicians on this planet to be more human, more Godly. The Psalmist tells us to play and sing 'with all your skill' in praise to God. Making a joyful noise is all the more profound when we do it at the best of our abilities. We need music teachers to do that. I teach music."