

THE COMPANION

The Newsletter of Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

Fall 2019

Issue 29



El Reflejo de Justicia - The Reflex of Justice

By Fiona Shorrock 2018-2019 Volunteer
A graduate of Loyola Marymount University



Fiona Shorrock

Sam, far too small a boy to be 9 whispered to Andres the medical interpreter, “¿Y que es eso, reflejo?” Andres listened, turned back to Dr. Young and translated to her, “He wants to know what a reflex is.” She smiled her big warm smile and said to him, “Your body is full of nerves and electric currents that I’m testing. When I tap your knee here I’m watching for your body’s automatic response to changes in the electrical charge running through you, that’s a reflex.”

For the last six months, I’ve had the privilege of serving at the Bon Secours Care-A-Van. The Care-A-Van is a mobile health clinic that provides free medical care to the uninsured in Richmond, VA and its surrounding suburbs. We see roughly 1,000 patients a month, approximately 85% of whom are Spanish speaking, and many have recently arrived from the northern triangle of Central America, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Once our patients come to us, we are their medical home. Apart from provider visits, we offer many ancillary services such as nutrition consultations, counseling, and outreach workers dedicated to getting our patients connected to resources we cannot provide. The Care-A-Van offers me a unique insight to the lives of those who may otherwise be scared to tell their stories or who do not feel safe. I read stories and color with children, assist patients who speak unique dialects to fill out registration paperwork, and I hold kids’ hands while they get their *vacunas*, vaccines. Every day is different, and every day is an invitation from God to enter more deeply into the kinship and connection that is so often denied to those that we label as other, as, *illegal*, illegal.

Continued on page 5

Editor's Corner
Olivia Steback
BSVM Program Manager



There is a collective nervous system and electric current running through humanity and the living world – this shared experience is what I call God.

Fiona Shorrock, BSVM 2018-2019

The mystery of God, of love, is one that can be difficult to put into words. In this edition of *The Companion* 2018-2019 ministry volunteer, Fiona Shorrock, expresses her experience of God in a clear and relational way. She describes her image of God as a deep connection that pervades all life. This understanding of the divine echoes many spiritual paths, including the contemplative Catholic tradition. Carmelite Edith Stein wrote, “...in the diversity of His creatures, God’s infinity, unity, and oneness appear to be broken into an effulgence of manifold rays.” As the volunteers move more deeply into relationship with their community and those they serve, they sense the connectedness of creation that moves through us all. In her reflection, Jocelyn O’Kane also speaks of how the simplicity of a year of service works to strengthen these connections. Let us take time to remember the current of God that runs through our lives making us more than individuals living side by side on this earth, bonding us as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We would also like to share some exciting news. Paula Hastings, graduate of the University of Notre Dame and 2018-2019 ministry volunteer accepted the position of Volunteer Recruiter. We are so grateful that Paula decided to continue with the ministry and committed to sharing our mission and her personal story with prospective students. Below, she shares some of her experience with BSVM and her hopes for this coming year.



My name is Paula Hastings (BSVM '18-19) and I am very excited to be the new Volunteer Recruiter! I am originally from St. Louis, MO and am a 2018 graduate of the University of Notre Dame. I had always known I wanted to do a year of service, and during my senior year of college I found BSVM and knew it was the right fit for me. My ministry placement site last year was in the Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic of Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital. Through my service there and within the wider West Baltimore community I was transformed in ways I never thought possible. Baltimore lodged itself in my heart and every person I met holds a special place there. BSVM helped me grow spiritually, emotionally, and professionally, and now I am thrilled to be able to guide other potential volunteers towards this program. Thank you for the wonderful welcome!

Paula offers a smile and helping hand at a Bon Secours community health fair.

Paula with fellow 2018-2019 community members and BSVM Director, Shannon Curran.



*From the Director
Shannon Curran*



Below, BSVM Director, Shannon Curran speaks words of wisdom to the 2018-2019 BSVM volunteer community. This piece is her introduction at the 2019 Closing Liturgy.

In our first reading today, we hear God call Jacob by name: Jacob! Jacob! And Jacob responds, “Here I am.” Jonah, Chris, Paula, Rebecca, Jocelyn, Maggie, Fiona, Christian: *Here you are.*

Today, we celebrate the service that each of you has shared with us and with your ministry placement sites and communities in Baltimore and Richmond this past year. This service began with God’s call and with your response of *here I am.*

Walking with you over the year as your time in service and in community unfolded, we saw you continue to hear God’s call in new ways and, in turn, continue to show up with a *here I am.* Even when that *here I am* meant uncovering a new way to be here, a new way to be, or a new way to more fully be you.

We thank you for your response and for your continued response.

With that response, and with what we have heard from you about the unconditional love you have felt in some way this year or a new sense of peace that you have experienced in some way this year, I think, like Jacob, you have found that God, being God, is right to say: “Do not be afraid.”

For, as Jacob hears and experiences, “Not only does God go down” the journey with us. God “also brings us back.”

These past few days together, you’ve had a chance to look back on your year - to take a new look at fears you experienced along the way and to speak about fears you now hold about moving forward.

As you look back and see how some of your fears dissipated along the way, perhaps this journey of praxis, praxis, and more praxis has helped build your trust, helped increase your faith that, yes, God is here.

Yes, God is with you. Yes, you can hear God’s call. And, yes, you can respond.

Here you are.

As God says, “Do not be afraid.”

Volunteers, with a blessing after communion, we will honor your journey of listening for and responding to God’s call to live compassionately, to receive and offer healing, and to share in liberation.

**Sr. Rose Marie Jasinski, CBS,
Leader, Sisters of Bon Secours, USA
blesses each ministry volunteer.**





A Simple Difference

By Jocelyn O’Kane, 2018-2019 Volunteer
A graduate of the College of the Holy Cross

As a graduate of a small Catholic college in Massachusetts, one thing overall was ingrained in me: an iced coffee a day keeps the doctor away, no matter the temperature outside. And as I sat at my college graduation with bleached blonde hair, a white dress, and an iced coffee I bought that morning, I couldn’t have felt less prepared for my upcoming year of service in Baltimore.

Jocelyn O’Kane

I had signed my letter of intent with Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry only three days earlier, and I had the ominous cloud of my future stipend hanging over my head. A program pillar of Simple Living: \$280 a month, what would I do with that? Over the summer, some of my friends joked about how I would need to learn to live off of a can of beans a day and my mom never let me forget that I had to enjoy my daily cup of store bought iced coffee while I could still afford it. While I was more than ready to delve into a new experience completely on my own, I was undeniably worried about the inevitable changes that would come along with this commitment.



Jocelyn spends time with a patient in the Emergency Department.

As I started my first week with BSVM, I certainly noted I missed the ease and taste I often enjoyed from my carry-out meals in college, but I also noted the camaraderie that emerged from cooking and making a home with my four community members. As we put our phones away and all cooked or cleaned together, I began to realize that I didn’t miss spending time on Instagram or Snapchat, but rather reveled in the opportunity to share so closely with four people that had such similar interests to me. I quickly grew to realize how deep I found each relationship that I was forming, and how, as compared to college, they naturally no longer revolved around social media, getting iced coffee together or superficiality. We all so closely related to each other, shared with one another, and created an undeniable bond.

As I practiced distancing myself from my phone and social media at home, I also worked on avoiding falling into the trap of the hustle, bustle, and excitement that often accompanies a day in the Emergency Department. I remember on one particularly busy afternoon, we had a ‘Code Blue’, cardiac arrest, go off in the parking garage, as a dialysis patient went into respiratory arrest in her car on her way home. A code blue is one of those situations where every doctor, nurse, and tech is all in on this one patient, all their focus is dedicated to making sure that they stay alive. During situations like these, a lot of other things can fall to the wayside: non-emergent medication dispenses, discharges, meals, etc. As I stood and observed the team working on their patient in the trauma bay, I noticed an elderly man sitting near the nurse’s station, his patient belongings bag in one hand, his cane in the other. He had been in the ED since I came in in the morning, but had spent most of his time sleeping. He had patchwork hair and mismatched clothes, and was wearing the weary, hardened look of someone that was being sent back out to homelessness. He was clearly waiting for something, and had also clearly been forgotten.

Continued on page 6

An hour before our discussion on reflexes, Sam's mother, Juana, a kind 31-year-old from Guatemala told me the story of their passage to the US. She told me in her young life she has been everything from married, to divorced, to widowed, but for now, *soltera*, single, as our registration paper identifies. She recounted for me walking/running through the desert in Mexico for hours in the middle of the night, her four-year-old boy strapped to her back and one hand clutching her nine-year-old boy and the other, her ten-year-old girl. She held on to them for dear life, terrified that they'd be separated in the utter darkness and vastness of the desert. And when the small group she was traveling with lost GPS signal in the desert, she prayed and prayed they'd find their way to safety. They spent three days in immigration in Texas where an ICE official strapped an ankle bracelet to her and told her it was, *un regalo*, a gift – a gift to be monitored, tracked, and become a part of the some 80,000 other “catch and release” tactic migrants. She became nothing more than a signal on a map to them, someone to be apprehended, no room to be cherished and loved. She told me of the hot sun they traveled under, the intense thirst of the desert. “*Estábamos sufriendo*,” we were suffering. She assured me theirs was nothing compared to the suffering she'd seen along the way. They spent two months living in Alabama where her children started in school. There they had no support system and made it all on their own. The kids enthusiastically counted to 10 in English and told me all the colors they knew. I watched the collective energy of siblings and love of childhood run through them. They arrived in Richmond eight days before speaking with me. Here, they have family, a support system, and a connection to that great network of love associated with a feeling of belonging. My automatic reflex was to comfort her, to apologize for the way she had to arrive on our country's doorstep, to welcome her to safety, and to love her and her three children.



**Fiona and Sandy Arroz, her Site Supervisor,
read with a young client.**

There is a collective nervous system and electric current running through humanity and the living world – this shared experience is what I call God. When we tap into our neural network of good, there are no limits to what we can do for each other. But, when we cut off, abandon, and paralyze this connection, we suffer. We are all equipped with reflexes to visualize the internal happenings of our electric currents, so, we as a society are equipped with reflexes to examine our relationships and power dynamics with each other. When we are in right relationship, and living justly, we recognize and appreciate the value of each branch of the system – naming the dignity of every person. This, to me, is practicing God's justice.

We have a responsibility to reflexively care for those on the margins of society, those who suffer; it is what we are built for as shared humanity. But to take the temperature of our country right now is to understand that we do not treat our immigrant populations with the love and respect they deserve. When we use stigmatizing and hurtful language we further isolate and disconnect our immigrant brothers and sisters from this shared God connection. We are acting unjustly. Every day I walk into the Care-A-Van my reflex is to care for each person who walks through our door. When I started, I was terrified - terrified my Spanish was rusty and incomprehensible, terrified I would have no way of connecting with patients, terrified I was out of my element and could never be the kind of compassionate presence I so craved to be. I saw these big problems within our healthcare and immigration systems that needed immediate attention and wanted to focus on those - as opposed to slowing down and simply being present to those in front of me. I wanted to use my skills and education to tackle these big social justice issues of immigration, lack of or inability to pay for medical care, and to consider the challenges of food insecurity and inadequate nutrition in vulnerable populations. Instead I realized this: God's justice is done one person, one relationship, at a time. This network of electrical connection allows us all to relate to each other, even if our language skills feel inadequate. When we tap into this connection it is the dignity and light in me recognizing the dignity and light in you. It is an invitation to kinship, *para ser amable*.

The Reflex of Justice

Continued from page 5



After spending the morning with this little family, I said goodbye to them post *vacunas*. With tears still streaming down their faces all three kids gave me *un fuerte abrazo*, a big hug. Juana turned back to me and sincerely said, “*gracias, muy amable*,” which means, thank you, very friendly/kind. *Para ser amable* is what it means to practice God’s justice, to reflexively recognize the shared goodness within each of us and delight in it. *Amor sin fronteras*, love without borders.

A Simple Difference

Continued from page 4

I knelt down and learned that he was waiting on someone to find the water bottle he had come in with, which had somehow been misplaced when transferring his belongings into the patient belongings bag when he first came in. After asking around, I was finally able to locate his water bottle. It wasn’t even a reusable one. He thanked me and asked if I could help him walk out. His gait was not totally steady, especially as people ran by him in the small hallways of our ED. I stood him up and put out my arm, letting him lean on me as we walked passed the intubation and resuscitation attempts flowing out of the trauma bay and out toward the door. Every doctor, nurse, and tech at that moment had one job, and I had finally realized mine: using the time and simplicity I was privileged enough to enjoy this year, and using it for those patients who may have been forgotten in the rush of an ED, using it to help this man walk back into his life outside.

I often think about him, about the simplicity involved in my gesture, yet how profoundly it touched me. How long would he have waited there for his water bottle? How would he have gotten outside safely? The limit to my scope of abilities during my year of service has reminded me how holistic healthcare is. Treating a patient does not only involve giving them medications, splinting their broken leg, or admitting them to the hospital. Treating a patient often, and sometimes only, involves being there for someone, and listening to them.

The past seven months of living simply in community has taught me that simplicity doesn’t mean the things that I’m missing out on, but rather the things that I’ve gained: deeper relationships, a ministry of presence, a supportive community, and the opportunity to have time to process and talk through my experiences. Sure, sometimes I run by Panera on my running route and think of their distinctively delicious mac & cheese, but I also think about the stark difference between my life now, and my life back when Panera was a regularity. I think about my relationships and my priorities, and I recognize the shifts in these priorities in my desire to spend time cultivating relationships and being present to others, as opposed to wanting to eat out, observe the more exciting cases in the ED, or spend money on an iced coffee.

My year living in simplicity does not mean that I will completely understand the plight of many in my neighborhood, but it has allowed me to release a lot of what was keeping me from deeper relationships and a deeper understanding of the world around me. This year of simplicity and service has been overwhelmingly more eye opening than any Social Welfare or Public Health class I took in college, albeit a lot less expensively caffeinated, and I could not feel more blessed.



Christian and Jocelyn serve meals at My Brother’s Keeper, a meal program in West Baltimore.

Alumni Profile

Gerard Ondrey, BSVM 2015-2016

Gerard currently resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota as he attends medical school at the University of Minnesota.

How did your experience with BSVM shape the years following your year of service?

As I began my year of service with Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry, I was considering a career in healthcare but had limited first-hand experience working with patients. Therefore, I was excited to take on my role as a patient liaison on the St. Martin's inpatient unit at Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital. During this experience, I developed meaningful relationships with patients and staff because my role was flexible and I had the opportunity to structure my day around the needs of the floor. I was allowed time for in-depth discussions with patients on their lives, ranging from the illnesses they were experiencing to their perspective on the care they were receiving. As most of the patients lived in West Baltimore, a community that faces multiple obstacles in accessing basic rights such as housing, food, education, and primary healthcare, these significantly impacted my decision to pursue medicine and health equity as career paths.



Gerard Ondrey with BSVM community members.

What advice do you have to offer former volunteers as they continue to process their BSVM experience?

Continue to immerse yourself in experiences that remind you of what made your year so meaningful. If you aren't intentional about putting yourself back in the environments that inspired you once you return to the familiar routine of school or work, it can be easy to lose sight of why you're doing what you're doing. For example, when I moved to Boston, I began volunteering with an organization I first interacted with while in Baltimore: Healthcare for the Homeless. While I was only there a few hours a week, this experience helped me to continue thinking about the things I had learned while in BSVM and reminded me of why I was studying to be a doctor.

What reading have you found to be informative, helpful and/or inspirational for volunteers in the BSVM formation or for those wishing to continue to explore the pillars of BSVM?



Gerard with a patient at Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital.

Recently, I read a book called *Complications* by Atul Gawande. The book is written by a practicing surgeon and revolves around real-life stories that show what happens when doctors encounter problems that cannot be solved with scientific knowledge alone. While reading this book, I found myself thinking of difficult moments I had while serving at Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital. There were times when I would find myself wanting nothing more than to fix a patient's problems but was unable to do so due to either the limitations of my role or a patient's specific circumstances. In these moments, I reminded myself that even though I couldn't physically heal them, I could still offer something valuable with my presence and my listening ear. Many of the stories in *Complications* illustrate how crucial the relationships between doctors and their patients are when physical healing is difficult, or not possible, but it is still necessary to care for the patient.

Continued on page 9

Farewell for Patrick O'Neil, BSVM 2013-2014

A quick scan of the living room of the volunteer house in Baltimore on a sunny day in late April showed crowds of people from different facets of the BSVM community smiling, talking, and enjoying each others' company. Everyone was there to support Patrick O'Neil, a 2013-2014 alum, and his wife Sydney, as they planned to move from Baltimore to Massachusetts for his medical residency at a four-year Family Medicine residency program, the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center in Lawrence, MA. Among the group were Sisters, fellow alums, current volunteers, BSVM staff, Patrick's former-patients-turned-friends, Brendan Walsh and Willa Bickham (neighbors from Catholic Worker community next door), Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital co-workers, Fr. Sam Lupico, and other friends of BSVM. It was a joyful celebration that illustrated what a strong community Patrick and Sydney have built in Baltimore since his time as a volunteer.



Patrick laughs with Fr. Sam Lupico.

Patrick served as a Bon Secours Ministry Volunteer in the Emergency Department of the Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital and went on to work at Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital after his volunteer year as a Neighborhood Health Advocate. Before the move to Massachusetts, he and Sydney lived in the Seton Hill neighborhood of Baltimore, not far from the volunteer house. It was clear from the happy responses to invitations and the overflowing living room that friends were thrilled to have the opportunity to wish Patrick and Sydney farewell. At one point, a former patient and friend of Patrick, stood up and tearfully shared her gratitude for the impact that Patrick's friendship has had on her. She remarked on how Patrick helped her to be more patient and gentle and how deeply she has treasured his company. Fr. Sam even came back from his vacation a day early to wish Patrick well! The current volunteers also put together a delicious and lovely spread. In the responses given by the community gathered there, there were clear ripples of the BSVM pillar "develop community." It was a joy to gather and recognize this continued commitment to living out the BSVM mission. We wish the O'Neil's all the best as they settle into their new community in Massachusetts and feel confident that they will carry on the BSVM mission in beautiful and vibrant ways there, as well.



Samuel Ross, M.D., Chief Community Health Officer, Bon Secours Mercy Health and Sr. Rose Marie Jasinski, CBS, Leader, Sisters of Bon Secours, USA enjoy the party.



BSVM staff, volunteers, neighbors, friends, and past patients join in saying good-bye.

Sisters' Corner

Each year ministry volunteers are invited into a spiritual family, a tapestry of love and service that has been woven together over the years by the lives of the Sisters of Bon Secours and those who serve with them. One of the ways this fabric of belonging and care is strengthened is through the prayers of all those involved. As the volunteers and sisters are in many different locations, often prayers are offered from a distance, but sometimes we are fortunate enough to come together and to be able to share those prayers in person. This occurred during the sisters' assembly in Marriottsville in May.



Maggie joins Srs. Alice Talone and Anne Lutz.

The volunteers from Baltimore and Richmond joined with many of the sisters for evening prayer. Their prayer was from the book *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, which is the regular text the volunteers use for community prayer. The volunteers led the group through the Psalms, readings, and a song. Then, the sisters and volunteers formed small groups to reflect upon the readings, and these questions: “What has a moment of healing been for you? How do you provide and receive healing through your ministry? In your faith journey, when/how has God made himself known to you as Healer?” After a few moments of silence, the room was filled with the soft murmur of conversation, punctuated now and then by gentle laughter, as the volunteers and sisters shared moments from their experiences of ministry and how they have come to know healing.

The prayer leaders called the community back to the larger circle, and the prayer drew to close. They led the closing blessing, a blessing with which they close each community night. It is a blessing that extends out from their homes to their ministry placement sites and their neighborhoods, just as the prayers of the sisters also reach out and bless the volunteers. It is a reminder of the blessing and belonging that will follow the volunteers long after they leave the ministry.

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you : wherever he may send you;
may he guide you through the wilderness : protect you through the storm;
may he bring you home rejoicing : at the wonders he has shown you;
may he bring you home rejoicing : once again into our doors.**

~ From *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*

Alumni Profile

Continued from page 7

What were some of the gifts you received during your time of service?

I received many gifts during my year of service but one of the greatest gifts was the love and support of my community. I never anticipated how important my volunteer community would be to me by the end of my time with BSVM. The opportunity to share time, reflection, and even money with four other people that shared my values was an incredibly unique growing experience. Even if we weren't completely alike in all ways, knowing we had the same basic goals for our year and for our lives was incredible and challenged us to trust each other and to push each other to move out of our comfort zones. I don't think I would've grown nearly as much if I had gone through the BSVM experience alone. Through BSVM, I made four special friendships that remain extremely important to me to this day.

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry Makes Memories in 2019



Srs. Rosie and Mary Shimo crack crabs with the volunteers.

BSVM staff and volunteers share a joyful last day together.



Chris and Rebecca catch some air in the bounce house during Bon Secours Family Day.

The volunteers listen intently to Fr. Sam Lupico during the Closing Liturgy.



Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry Welcomes Our 2019-2020 Ministry Volunteers



Gianna Baker
John Carroll University



Elizabeth Chen
The University of
Notre Dame



Mark Conforti
Villanova
University



Abigail McDonough
Kalamazoo College



Nancy Figuero
College of the
Holy Cross



Josh Gillen
The University of
Notre Dame



Madison Neumaier
Loyola Marymount
University



Olivia Nguyen
St Joseph's
University



Delany Weiland
The University of
Notre Dame



Jenna Vrable
Crieghton University





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Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry
1525 Marriottsville Road
Marriottsville, MD 21104

Cover Photo

Left to Right:

2018-2019 ministry volunteer, Fiona Shorrock, laughs with a young client at her ministry placement site, the Bon Secours Care-A-Van.

Photographer: Kyle Benham, Bon Secours Associate

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Amy Nee

Catholic Worker

Patrick Range

Inpatient Social Worker
Medical ICU
University of Maryland Medical Center

Ted Walker

Catholic Worker

Our Mission

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry, sponsored by the Sisters of Bon Secours, provides the opportunity for women and men to participate in the Sisters' commitment to justice in radical solidarity with the poor, the suffering, and those most in need. By sharing the Bon Secours charism of compassion, healing, and liberation, the ministry nurtures and sustains full-time volunteers in their personal and communal journeys towards transformation through service with others.

Support Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

Share your time and enthusiasm. Your personal presence is one of the best ways to support the program. Please consider sending a letter of support and interest, an invitation for site-seeing in Baltimore or Richmond, or an invitation to dinner with your family.

Support the program financially. It costs about \$16,000 to support one volunteer for the year, including rent, health insurance, stipend and funds for community support. In addition, we are trying to make some improvements to the volunteer residence. Monetary donations or gently used furnishings for the volunteer house are greatly appreciated.

Donations are tax-deductible and can be sent directly to:

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry
1525 Marriottsville Road, Marriottsville, MD 21104

BSVM Staff: Shannon Curran, Director; Olivia Steback, Program Manager; Emily Thrush, Site Leader; Paula Hastings, Volunteer Recruiter; Liesel Rupperecht, Program Coordinator