

# Spiritual Connections in Social Work: Boundary Violations and Transcendence

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**ABSTRACT.** This keynote address presents insights from diverse spiritual perspectives for transcending interpersonal, cultural, and religious boundaries in the process of spiritually sensitive social work. It presents definitions of spirituality and religion, considers possible boundary violating and harmful impacts of inappropriate social work approaches to spirituality, and introduces contemporary trends in connections with spirituality in social work. Themes to inspire boundary transcendence are introduced, including transformation, liminality, harmony between opposites, and death of the self. Finally, some implications for social work arising from mental clarity are offered.

**KEYWORDS.** Spirituality, religion, social work, diversity, international, transcendence

I feel happy to see all of the wonderful energy and enthusiasm and synergies going on among my Canadian colleagues and friends and to see this conference in particular. It is very historic to connect the Canadian and U.S.-based Societies for Spirituality and Social Work. To have those efforts combined is wonderful. This is part of a trend that is happening around the world to various degrees. To me, this is one of the most exciting historic points for our profession, because we're still enough at the beginning of an

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escalating momentum that is moving around the world, in which there's a lot of opportunity for all of us to get involved and really be part of all of these developments. So I'm honored to be invited here. I very much appreciate it.

In the presentation, I will address the theme of the conference about breaking and transcending barriers. I'd like to talk about ways in which spiritual connections in social work can help us to transcend barriers but also mention a few cautions about boundary violations. However, I won't dwell on that because I don't want to get you stuck in the negative. Yet, I do think that it is important to realistically consider some possible pitfalls when addressing spirituality in social work.

So, to highlight the main topics here, I'd like to talk about some insights from diverse religious and nonreligious spiritual perspectives for social work about breaking barriers while respecting appropriate boundaries. This involves understanding the whole person in relation with all people and all beings and appreciating diversity in all of its features.

All of this should be considered in the context of our professional mission and values—for example, our overall mission of advancing the fulfillment of all people in the context of social justice, expanding this to consider the whole person in relation with all people and all beings, appreciation for diversity in all of its aspects, and the intersection of spiritual diversity with other kinds of human diversity. It's important for us to be clear and open about our value frameworks in approaching this topic. I try to balance advocacy for very clear value positions with genuine dialogue. Also, I want to be clear that my presentation is coming out of the context of a commitment to the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics, the educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work's ethics and principles.

### ***DEFINITIONS OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION***

I want to move to some definitions of spirituality and social work so you know how I use the terms (Canda & Furman, 1999). The themes in my definitions are commonly used among professional

social workers now. I wouldn't say there's unanimity, but at least these general themes are common.

I want to emphasize that my definitions, or any professional definitions, are primarily for the purpose of professional discourse. They provide a common provisional set of terms and meanings so we can interact around the topic of spirituality. But the terms and definitions always have to be flexible and adaptable to context, to situation, and to communities. In fact, we don't even need to use these words to get at the meanings behind them. These definitions are based on contributions from many social work scholars with different perspectives as well as ideas from other fields.

### ***Spirituality as an Aspect of the Person***

Let us consider spirituality as an aspect of the person. This is the most common way spirituality is defined. Since social workers are used to thinking about the person in bio-psychosocial aspects, many people now add on spirituality. This images the person as a pie, including a spiritual piece.

First of all, spirituality as an aspect refers to the human search for a sense of meaning, purpose, and morally fulfilling relations with oneself, other people, the universe, and the ground of being, however that's understood (such as theistic, non-theistic, animistic, combinations of these, and any other ways you can imagine). Of course, there is an incredible diversity of world views shaping understandings of spirituality.

Spirituality as aspect involves centrally important life-orienting beliefs, values, and practices that may be expressed in religious and/or nonreligious ways. So for me, as is becoming common in the helping professions, spirituality is a more inclusive and larger concept than religion. Spirituality and religion are not in a dichotomous relationship. Rather, spirituality is a larger concept that can be expressed in religious or nonreligious ways. Spirituality may be considered private or it may be shared with others. So, the way that I am using the term today doesn't imply that spirituality is just an individualistic thing. Spirituality can be shared and, in fact, in some ways it must be shared, because it impacts our relationships and our connectedness with others even in individualistically oriented cultures.

***Religion as an Expression of Spirituality***

I refer to religion as an institutionalized pattern of centrally important values, beliefs, and practices that relate to spirituality. Of course, religion encompasses many other things as well. For example, religious communities can provide material supports, counseling, advice, social activist organizing, and all sorts of things that interweave with their interest in spirituality. So, not everything in a religion is explicitly or only about spirituality.

Religion is shared by a community. By definition, there is no religion with only one member. A religion might start with one person's insights. However, a religion does not form unless an innovator convinces others to join in agreement and community connection. Religions are developed and transmitted over time. I don't mean to imply that a religion has to be bureaucratic. Religions can be small scale, relatively informal, and very flexible as well.

Many people, especially in Western religions, use the term faith to emphasize two related meanings involved with religion and spirituality. First, faith involves assent to religious precepts or teachings. Second, it refers to the experience of relationship with a personal God or other sacred beings.

***Spirituality in a Holistic View***

If we put the idea of spirituality as an aspect into a larger holistic context, it's helpful to go beyond thinking about a person like four pieces of a pie. Of course, people are not pies; we're not really divided up into nice slices. If we thought about human complexity in more detail, we could come up with hundreds or thousands of slices. Social workers tend to simplify this and say "bio-psychosocial" and now sometimes add "spiritual" to comprise the four pieces.

Yet, one of the key qualities of spirituality as an aspect is the theme of seeking integration, integrity, and connectedness. As we work through the search for a sense of meaning and purpose, we're looking at all aspects of our lives at some point over the life course, including the biological. For example, one of the most intensely biological events, death, evokes a great deal of spiritual scrutiny. Reflection upon the nature of death, such as what happens, if anything, after death, dealing with other people's deaths, etc., evokes many deep questions of meaning, soul searching, and working through. All of

the aspects of a person actually are being interwoven through spirituality.

We can also think of spirituality as the center of the person. Think about the expression in English, “to be centered.” When you feel centered, you literally have a sense of integrity. There is a central connection among aspects of who you are. You’re feeling in that moment that all your aspects are oriented and connected around that center. You might pay attention to your center literally through meditation, prayer, or breathing practice, where you feel the breath moving through the central channel of the body. Some types of meditation, of course, focus on energy points that run through the central channel. In Zen meditation, there’s a point below the navel that is a central focus point. Reflecting on that point through meditation helps center and clarify the mind.

Even people without those formal practices know intuitively what it is to feel centered. When you’re not centered, it’s very hard to be clear about yourself at that moment. Listening well to clients and relating well with students become very hard as well. So paradoxically, when we get in touch with our true inner center, we become more connected and more open to empathize and relate with others. Centering is not an isolating experience. It’s not a narcissistic process. In fact, many spiritual traditions have said that, when we go into our true center, we connect with the true center of everyone or everything.

Another way of thinking about spirituality is as a wholeness that embraces, includes, and transcends all of our aspects. Carl Jung, the Swiss depth psychologist, emphasized that view of spirituality. He described the life course as a path toward wholeness in which our different aspects become complementary, converged, and embraced. I think that it’s helpful to use all three different metaphors for understanding spirituality (i.e., aspect, center, wholeness) to get a more complete view of it. Practically speaking, most researchers and many other social workers are using the aspect definition because you can operationalize it more easily.

### ***ARE SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION ALL GOOD?***

This brings us to an important question. Are spirituality and religion all good? Partly, that depends on how you define them. Some

people don't like religions, so they define religion in terms of "badness." Well, if you define religion as badness, it's bad. Or, some people want to think that spirituality is always good, so they define it to mean "if you're spiritual, you're good, and everything about it is good." Those dichotomies are not implied by my definitions.

Of course, our biological aspect can go awry, or we can abuse our physical selves. This can also happen with spirituality. While a major theme of spirituality is to connect and to transcend limitations, people can express spirituality in very damaging ways, violating individual and collective boundaries.

One of the most horrible examples on a large scale was the Holocaust. Although Nazism was not a religion per se, it took religious symbols from various traditions and misused them and distorted them to support a massively destructive ideology and militaristic force. Unfortunately, any religious or nonreligious ideology can be twisted that way. Powerful ideologies tap spiritual themes about the meaning of life, human destiny, moral certitude, and utopian hopes. Ideologies can be used for the purpose of committing or rationalizing violence, war, genocide, or just simply being judgmental in a condescending, harsh, demeaning, and moralistic way. Therefore, it is not surprising that powerful ideologies are often derived from or are imbedded in religions.

One of the things that amazes me about religious imperialism and colonialism in the West and elsewhere is that military powers commonly go out on their campaigns of conquest together with economic or resource control powers and religious control powers. All three of them work together to undermine the fundamentals of the culture that they want to colonize. The colonizers condemn the religion, appropriate the resources, and use military force. This is a very sad thing about human history across the world.

Another problematic thing that I see frequently is people applying their secular or religious ideologies in an absolute way, such as, "I am absolutely right," or "Anybody or any culture or behavior that is different is wrong." This can be especially intense when people claim to have divine authority for the absolute belief and for their efforts to control or oppress. To me, that's another very sad use of spirituality.

## ***SOCIAL WORK EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUALLY RELATED BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS***

So, let's look at this more practically in terms of what some social workers might do. Some social workers think that they are reality experts. I'm joking here and being facetious: some people seem to think that an MSW degree means "Metaphysical Social Worker." They are convinced that they understand the nature of reality; that they know for sure when somebody is hallucinating or whether they are having a religious vision; that they know for sure what is moral, right, and proper for clients; and they are expert authorities on how everyone should live. I am not so confident that I or anybody else really has, or should have, that kind of unquestionable knowledge of what is true. In any case, it is not the purview of social workers to impose their personal versions of reality on others.

I think that one way this comes up often is in misuse of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). This manual has many implicit reality assumptions in it. However, the authors have become more careful over the numerous editions to say that you have to take into account cultural and religious context when making a diagnosis.

The idea of applying the manual to classifying hallucinations and delusions is really interesting to me. Sometimes one person's hallucination is another person's profound vision. Likewise, dissociative experiences can be spiritually significant and culturally normative altered states of consciousness, such as shamanic possession trance, defensive splits, or obscurations of identity, as in certain extreme reactions to trauma. You really have to sort that out; it's not always obvious. We are not the absolute authority on what is real or unreal. We should be careful because over-reliance on tools like the DSM or symptom checklists can make us fall into a lazy and superficial way of trying to adjudicate what's real and what's not.

In even more extreme cases, social workers are sometimes agents of spiritual assimilation and oppression. A prominent case of that in the United States and in Canada was the period in which social workers, along with others, were complicit in the removal of huge numbers of indigenous children from their families. Many First Nations' children were forced into boarding schools or foster care as part of an assimilation program. In the United States, the Indian Child Welfare

Act had to be passed by Congress to stop social workers, religious missions, and others from doing that. Now American social workers must connect with appropriate governing bodies of First Nations if they're going to be making child welfare decisions. Fortunately, we have an act of Congress to stop the ideologically and religiously driven removal of indigenous children from their homes. However, it is sad and tragic that such injustices occurred at all.

On a macro or even international social level, sometimes social development efforts of social workers come along with inappropriate worldview assumptions and religious injunctions about how you should think, believe, and act. When this happens, social development and social and relief services can become tied to pressure to convert to a particular religion or spiritual perspective.

These are just a few cautions to be aware of. By the way, when I say "be aware," I am including myself in this reminder. I constantly have to reflect on where I may intentionally or unintentionally be a direct or indirect party to these kinds of harmful practices. Self-reflection and dialogue with people, especially those who have a clear commitment to spiritual growth, are powerful ways to expand our growth. So that brings me to the good news.

### ***GOOD NEWS ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL WORK CONNECTIONS***

There are wonderfully exciting trends to transcend boundaries through addressing spirituality in social work. Since the 1990s, there has been a great growth of momentum and work on this in the United States, Canada, and other countries (Canda, 2005).

There has been a rapid increase of research and teaching on spiritual diversity. There have always been faith-based initiatives in social work, but in terms of policy changes, with Charitable Choice during the Clinton administration and the faith-based initiative of the Bush administration, this connection has been picking up more energy. There is also the growth of transpersonal and eco-philosophical views in social work publications. Within social work literature and practice, the range of diversity of religious and nonreligious perspectives expressed has grown considerably. Both the National Association of Social Workers and the Council on



Social Work Education in various ways formally recognize the importance of religion and spirituality. And international networking started to grow in the 1990s.

In this new century, all of those trends have been escalating, including interdisciplinary research, because of similar movements in nursing, psychiatry, medicine, and many other fields. Now there are cross connections and cross fertilizations. There is the development of global and not just nation-centered perspectives on spirituality and social work. I've been involved in activities on spirituality and social work with colleagues in 10 to 15 countries where there is some momentum developing around this. Also, at least in the social work literature, there has been increasing attention to human/nature connectedness, not just human nature. The Canadian-U.S. collaborations are great examples of these trends.

In order to bring these trends to fulfillment, we need to honor our localities and also connect across our differences. We need both to honor specifics, the particulars within boundaries and also that which transcends boundaries. A really amazing fact is that it's now possible to access resources from most spiritual traditions all over the world. That leads to much creativity and sometimes conflict. This is the first time in human history that spiritual traditions are globally connected on this scale; it's just incredible.

Although most North Americans affiliate with Christian denominations, there are of course hundreds of different religions and worldviews present within North America, including many people with no religious affiliation. So, social workers need to be able to respond within North America and across the globe to this tremendous range of diversity in a respectful, knowledgeable, and skillful way.

This leads to some amazing opportunities for exploration, such as alternative and complementary therapies. Religious and spiritual traditions are not simply abstractions. They're tremendous resources of wisdom and skill for helping and healing on micro and macro levels. All spiritual traditions have been developing means of helping as long as they've existed, often for centuries and even thousands of years. Becoming more aware of what these are and how to connect them into dialogue and collaboration for spiritual growth—this I find very exciting and also challenging. For example, I've led some inter-religious dialogue groups. They can tremendously flop, but if people

are willing to find harmony between respecting their own commitments and also respecting others' commitments, and then engage in dialogue, such groups can be really wonderful. Although social workers sometimes engage in inter-religious collaborations, I don't think we have tapped deep into systematic inter-religious dialogue nearly as much as possible.

Also, we need to further explore secular/religious partnerships in service. For example, refugee resettlement engages many different national, international, and local organizations. Refugee service organizations are both religious and secular, and all must connect and coordinate for resettlement to work well. Very often spiritual diversity is a key issue, because people of different world views and religions have to interact and cooperate.

Another opportunity is to further explore human/nature connectedness. Now in social work, understandably, we focus on human societies and on helping humans. Of course, humans don't exist in a vacuum. That's obvious. It seems absurd to me that social work education, practice, supervision, and program design seldom address anything beyond the human in a very narrow scope.

Sometimes when I introduce this idea to students, they say, "Well, what do you mean? What's nature got to do with it? You know, I'm an autonomous person, I'm a human being. Are we really all that interrelated?"

So I say, "Well, try this experiment. Take a paper bag, put it over your head, close it down for a while, and find out how long you can remain autonomous." I say to them, "Don't really try that at home." They quickly realize the limit of their imaginary autonomy.

## ***THEMES TO GUIDE SPIRITUAL CONNECTIONS IN SOCIAL WORK***

### ***Transformation***

One of the themes underlying all of this is transformation: literally transcending form, moving, getting unstuck from one form and moving beyond that form. Where does this come from? Many transpersonal theorists, like Maslow and Wilber, feel that there is an inherent capacity in human beings to experience transformation

(Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2006). We already have the seed of this potential of consciousness within, but actual development unfolds through our experiences, through our choices of actions, and through the nurturance that we receive from the environment.

There are also ideals or spiritual forces that act as the light that draws the plant upward. So what is that light? Of course, different traditions have different answers about what that is, such as God or ultimate reality.

### ***Liminal Social Workers Needed***

If we're going to be able to address spiritual diversity knowledgeably and respectfully, then we must skillfully include the many different contexts of clients' lives and also transcend boundaries between them. That calls for some very special qualities in a social worker. The challenge is like that of multicultural social work. It is important for social workers who cross cultural boundaries to be competent and comfortable, not only in their primary original cultural context, but also in multiple contexts. That means being able to shift between contexts.

Now, that's by no means easy. When you start shifting out of the cultural context that you grew up in, sometimes other folks in your circle start saying, "What is going on with you? Why are you starting to act so weird? Why are you with those folks? Why are you doing this?"

When we break these boundaries, we break norms. It doesn't mean that we have to be disrespectful. However, when we break away from the taken-for-granted assumptions in which we were programmed, people who are still attached to those assumptions are likely to become nervous. On the other hand, when you're moving into the other context, folks over there may say, "I'm not too sure we want you over here" or "I won't treat you well or respectfully."

For people who are doing cross-cultural work, this is a constant challenge. When you connect social work to the context of spiritual diversity and start shifting between these boundaries, you might magnify the challenge because you may be rubbing against people's deeply invested and intense spiritual positions. Some people might have an intense reaction. That's the risk I think we need to take. I'm not saying everybody needs to do social work this way, but those who want to engage in boundary crossing and mediating behavior in order

to promote well-being and justice have to risk this. Even diplomats are doing that if they're compassionate diplomats.

I suggest that the quality of liminality would be valuable for social workers dealing with spiritual diversity. The word "limen" is from Latin, and it means passageway or doorway. An anthropologist some decades ago named Victor Turner drew on this term to talk about the quality of in-betweenness (Canda, 1988; Turner, 1969).

A liminal or in-between quality is like being in a doorway, such as the gateway entrance to a memorial shrine honoring a Confucian scholar in South Korea. If you stand right in the middle of the passageway, you are neither inside nor outside. This position is neither here nor there; it's ambiguous, uncertain, and in-between. This position gives the option of moving between places. Unless we cross that threshold, we can't enter that sacred space on the other side. Actually, that's why, in the Confucian tradition, these gates are very important. They don't provide so much a functional barrier, because if somebody wished he or she could ram through there easily, even if the gate was closed. When you cross that threshold boundary, you should be mindful of your sincerity, your intention, and you should become aware of moving into that sacred space. Similarly, in many Buddhist temple areas, when you move toward the main temple area, you may go through gates. Sometimes, like in South Korea, the gates will have guardian figures for the four directions. One of the meanings of those guardians is to remind you to leave behind all of your mental distractions, preoccupations, confusions, and delusions as you pass into this realm of nirvana in the moment. Passing into that space is very important, because it should mark a transition into a clear quality of mind.

So, a liminal person is betwixt and between. She or he is comfortable and confident when shifting and transcending contexts. Some of the most inspiring people that I've met as mentors in my personal life are liminal people. For example, my main mentor throughout graduate studies in social work, from 1980–1986 at The Ohio State University, was Dr. Daniel B. Lee, who is currently a professor at the Loyola University of Chicago. He's a Korean-American who is very clear about his commitment to and devout practice in Christianity, in particular the United Methodist tradition. He has been very active as a lay deacon and leader in the Korean Methodist community. He is also committed to connecting people

across cultural and religious and national boundaries. His energy seems continuous. He's still working at such a fast pace in many countries, it's amazing. Because he is genuinely kind and caring, true to himself, willing to connect with others, and has a sincere commitment to continue doing this work connecting people, while honoring their own position, he can promote mutual understanding and cooperation.

### *Symbolism of the Great Ultimate*

I am borrowing the yin/yang symbol to explore the concept of liminality further. This symbol consists of a circle, divided in half by an s-shaped curve, with a dot on each side of the curve. It has a number of meanings. One is that the yin and yang qualities are both necessary and complementary aspects of vital energy. You might say that yin is the receptive and birthing quality, and yang is the assertive and generating quality. The original meanings can be described in terms of shade and light. If you look at a tree on a sunny day, one side is bright and the other is in shade; as the sun moves through the day, the shade and the light are shifting. That's the original meaning of yin and yang. They're not static ideas. They're mutually inclusive energy qualities; they're transformative to each other; they alternate in predominance.

Also, this symbol includes the circle that embraces both. This is the ultimate nondual reality. The total meaning of the symbol has two names: one is the great ultimate and the other is the great non-ultimate. Any time we try to name the reality symbolized by the circle, i.e., to lock it down to a category or in a box in a concrete idea, we're missing what it is. That which embraces all beyond boundaries can't be bounded.

I'm not asking you to accept this worldview. Rather, I hope the symbol and insights will be helpful to stretch our thinking and way of relating to the world in terms of inclusivity, complementarity, and transcending boundaries. This liminality of consciousness doesn't mean absolutism and it doesn't mean simply relativism. It means transcending either of those rigidities.

Another meaning associated with this symbol is "the source of all that is" via the activation of vital energy in the interaction of yin and yang. Vital energy transforms everything. Even if we don't name it anything or if it is not a formal part of our belief system, we all can relate to life energy in some way.

### *Death of the Self*

Another theme that is important is the death of the self as an opening to spiritual rebirth. This metaphor is especially significant in mystical traditions, such as contemplative Christianity and Zen Buddhism, which encourage people to obtain direct experiential familiarity with divinity, cosmic consciousness, or ultimate reality (Johnston, 1995). This involves dying to a selfish way of life and consciousness limited to the illusion of being a separate and finite body/ego. It allows being born anew into an expansive, inclusive, compassionate, and unitive consciousness and way of life.

However, this can be easily misunderstood. For example, I had a series of college classes in which we read great mind-expanding books. I had a wonderful professor who was very challenging. I learned a tremendous amount through her teaching. However, mystical metaphors and language upset her. For a major paper in my class, I reviewed the literature of Christian mysticism, especially on the theme of death of the self in relation to the death and resurrection of Christ. I wrote an elaborate paper on death of the self and spiritual rebirth. After reading the paper, my professor gave me the paper back with a generous grade. Yet, she said to me privately, “You’re not thinking of suicide, are you?”

A related image is found within a Korean word, *haetal*, which means enlightenment. This is described to be like when a butterfly emerges. When a butterfly is still in the cocoon, it’s confined. When it finally cracks the cocoon and breaks that boundary, then it can fly free. So, this transformation appears to be a kind of death, but it’s actually a kind of greater life.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR BOUNDARY-BREAKING SOCIAL WORK**

So, in spiritually sensitive social work, we need a mind that is open to many different possibilities, but also we should not be mindless. I mean that in two ways: being mindful, being clearly present, but also not being so open minded that our brains fall out. We also need to engage in critical thinking and to explore evidence-based research about the effectiveness of spiritually based helping approaches.

I would like to see more evidence-based research about how spirituality connects to social work, including rigorous standards for inquiry design. However, we need a very expansive understanding of the concept of evidence and paradigms and methods for inquiry. Indeed, all spiritual traditions have established means of engaging in a systematic inquiry into their practices. For example, in the Christian context, the tradition of discernment of spirits could provide helpful implications around mental health issues.

As spiritually sensitive social workers, we need to be very flexible in our behavior, but not just mixed up or lost. That's a danger. Sometimes on this path, when we act as a bridge or a mediator crossing boundaries, we can become very mixed up and lost. Also, we need to be non-judgmental, not imposing in a harsh way, with controlling criticisms. I don't mean that we should be amoral or unethical. For example, if somebody says, "Ah, this spirit being just came and told me to go and shoot the next ten people I see after this session," and you say, "Ah, transpersonal experience, how wonderful!" We should explore a little further and maintain the protection of that person and others. That's an extreme case, but it's not an unrealistic case either, unfortunately.

Overall, we need to have clear minds in order to help clearly. Our minds should be clear like beautiful turquoise water. We can all relate with the inherent beauty of clear water. Now, mentally picture a bomb-blasted building as an opposite possibility: war destruction. These images are both actually in the same spot at Lokrum Island in Croatia. I took photos of the clear water and bombed building not long after the war in former Yugoslavia. That clear water is just nearby that bomb-blasted building. When I was there, I reflected on the contrast. At any moment, I have a choice to move in a direction of clear water or in a direction of destruction. All of us have to watch every moment and decide which way to go. I don't mean to make that sound really heavy though. If you pay attention to your inner mind workings, even on a very small scale, you can notice there will be decision points. If you keep going this way, and this way, and this way, even on little things, you can end up going very far off.

On the basis of a clear mind, we can employ a wide range of inner and outer spiritual supports in social work practice. For example, these could include holistic bio-psychosocial-spiritual assessment; religious community mutual supports; prayer; meditation; dream

reflection; spiritual journaling; subtle energy work; rituals; utilizing spiritually based helpers and healers such as clergy, monks, and shamans through referral and collaboration; and other complementary and alternative therapies.

It is also important to examine the organizational culture of our human service organizations. Is the organizational culture itself spiritually sensitive? Is it conducive to the spiritual growth and well-being of the workers, of the clients? Is the decision-making process spiritually attuned? Is the organization attuned to its impact on the surrounding natural environment? And is it set up to facilitate spiritually sensitive practice?

Other macro-related practices include spiritually based, peaceful social change movements such as those promoted by Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.; religiously based non-governmental organizations, such as many refugee and disaster relief service providers; and transcultural collaborations for planetary well-being such as the deep ecological movement or the United Nations' initiatives on global warming. These are especially exciting to me, because they can promote the cross connections starting to happen across many countries on spirituality and social work. They open possibilities for genuine spiritually sensitive social work for planetary wide well-being.

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