



Six years ago Atonement, Wyomissing asked a question, "What can we learn from our neighbors in the 12-step communities that meet next door in our Community Center?" So we began conversations with some of our neighbors, and through it our communities grew closer as we explored the common ground between us.

Together we decided to launch a Speaker Series, "The Healing Power of Twelve Step Spirituality." Expecting an attendance of 50 to 60 people, we were overwhelmed when several hundred showed up for the first event.

We never imagined that initial conversation would give birth to a whole new ministry. Common Ground Recovery Ministry is now in its sixth year. We began a recovery worship service on the first Wednesday of every month. A few years later we held services on the first and third Wednesdays, and a year later we began weekly worship.

In our service we try to blend the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps with the rich heritage of our Lutheran tradition. We combine readings from Twelve-Step literature and scripture. Every week individuals have the opportunity respond to the readings they heard, or share about a joy or struggle in their lives. Pastor Tom Scornavacchi says, "In their stories they share a profound wisdom and understanding of what it means to be broken and in need of God's grace - just to get through another day. Those are, by far, the best homilies. What comes from the heart touches the heart."

Here's what our attendees say about Common Ground:

"My Common Ground experience has been life altering. It is a weekly retreat from the pressures of daily life....a place where I can go to pray, to share, and to be in the presence of God and an amazingly supportive group of people who understand and accept me for who I am."

"I attend Common Ground because I am fed spiritually by it. Combining the spirituality of the 12 Step programs with a Lutheran Eucharist service provides a unique worship experience that I love."

"In my past religious experience I felt shamed and guilted into action - at Common Ground we are all forgiven!"

Pastor Tom says, "Our community is growing in numbers but more importantly we are growing in faith. To regularly see 70 people on a Wednesday evening is incredible. But to hear them share, 'There is nothing you can do to make God love you more, and nothing you can do to make God love you less'...well that makes me cry. It's amazing what the spirit can do with a simple conversation!"