

Reverend Stephanie Monahan O.M.C., C.H.T. is a sincere, serious interdenominational minister and grief counselor with a terrific sense of humor. When folks meet her, their usual reaction is “You don’t look like a minister,” which, of course, leads to the question what does or should a minister look like?

Monahan hasn’t always been involved with religion professionally, but her personal religious experiences started when she was very young. She nearly drowned at the age of 5 and says that what she saw and felt before being resuscitated leads her to know that “what’s on the other side is infinitely better than what we have here. Don’t be afraid.” More than her share of hard knocks and bruising experiences caused her to pursue meaning of life questions via travel, education and lots of reading — just note the bookshelves in her office. Her mother once asked her, “What makes you so deep?”

Whatever the causes, all of her questing culminated in her ordination at the age of 50, on her birthday, after studying at the Pathways of Light Divinity School. “I made the decision early on to heal myself and reclaim my life.” She speaks for herself and for others when she continues, “My life made sense after I unearthed a lot of things. I needed to face the fear because it’s all worth it. The only way out of problems is through them.” Still calling herself a “work in progress” she believes she is effective in her counseling career because she’s worked through so many difficulties herself and “never asks clients to try anything I haven’t done.”

Monahan likes to summarize her life as being made up of the “three F’s: fine arts, firearms and faith.” That’s not a misprint! For years, she worked in galleries traveling frequently to Europe and Mexico to purchase art and bring it back to sell in Milwaukee. Her condominium in Pewaukee is vibrant with collectibles. Don’t expect copies of Raphael’s “Madonna and Child” hanging from her walls. Instead you’ll find Latin American paintings by artists like surrealist Saul Kaminer, a statue of a reclining Buddha under her coffee table and a kitschy black and white photo of Michelangelo’s David in the stairwell. Dominating the lavender wall of the living room is

an enormous painting of Monahan in a formal gown.

Fine arts gave way to firearms when her terminally ill father needed round the clock care and someone to take over his retail gun store. “Knowing nothing, I had to take over the business two weeks before deer season in Wisconsin — that’s the busiest time of year in a gun store.” Within five months she had erased the store’s debt, then continued to run the business for three years. “No, I’m not a pistol packing pastor,” she responds to the obvious query.

Always learning from her experiences, Monahan says that running the business she learned to ask for help. “Asking for help is not a reflection on the person asking. If one person does know everything, that creates an imbalance of power. Becoming vulnerable is our greatest strength.”

These days Monahan is doing her life’s work. The one thing she won’t do is “guilt and shame. I don’t believe in that; I never say to people you ‘should’ have done or said this or that. Instead, I validate people. Because of some of my experiences, I can believe the unbelievable things clients tell me.” By word of mouth and her Web site (www.invokethelight.com), people learn about her religious ceremonies like marriages and memorial services. Raised a Catholic and graduated from Marquette University, she incorporates many non-traditional methods to help clients. She employs psychic readings, soul readings, hands on healing and hypnotherapy among other techniques.

Monahan shares some thoughts. “People get depressed because they think they should be in control and happy at all times. I do not believe that people need to suffer to be close to God; however, when they are in deep grief I recognize it is their unique grief and cannot be compared to anyone else’s or diminished in any way. I think it is important people speak their truth in the moment. Aggression and passive aggression create win-lose situations; assertion, on

the other hand, is the middle row of speaking up for yourself in a respectful way.”

Because she’s “dedicated to her own personal growth,” Monahan says that helps her do “respectful distancing” and not become personally burdened by her clients. She maintains her sound mind in a sound body by doing Pilates. **M**

The three F’s



Stephanie Monahan has gone through a variety of careers including religion, guns and art.