

SOCIAL WORK AT MESSIAH: A CLOSER LOOK

Messiah University, 2021

FEATURED:

- Introducing New Faculty!
- Sophomore Placement
- Senior Placement
- Ethical, Professional, & Competent Social Workers

My name is Charlene Lane and I am proud of my rich Caribbean/American heritage. Having lived in both Trinidad and New York City, I am acutely aware of the importance of valuing differences and interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds. As an immigrant, I am passionate about issues surrounding all individuals who come to this country, regardless of circumstances, in search of opportunity, and freedom. My husband and I have instilled in our children (ages twenty-one and thirteen) to respect and love God and God's people.

As we begin a new academic year, I am honored to serve as the Interim Chair and Program Director. I would like to take this opportunity to WELCOME both returning and especially new students to the major. As a department, we are striving to lift each other up and work together in harmony. I am grateful for the members of our team, Amy Sagen, David Zilka, Debbie Chopka, and Michelle George who share this vision. Please do not hesitate to reach out and get to know us as we continue to build lasting relationships with each of you.

The main theme for Messiah University this year is Reconciliation, Seeing Anew. How appropriate for individuals in the helping profession, who are charged to see and serve all

of God's creations just by the nature of our chosen profession. We must be reminded of one of the core beliefs of Social Work which clearly states, we must value the dignity and worth of all individuals. Let us strive toward racial and social justice reconciliation. According to James 1:22 (NIV), "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourself. Do what it says."

It is my charge to all in our Department to begin to See Anew. Let us all examine the deep recesses of our being and honestly address implicit biases which can sometimes translate to explicit biases. We are commanded by God to pattern our lives to His by serving all individuals who cross our paths regardless of their race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or other factors.

-Dr. Charlene Lane, Interim Department Chair



DR. CHARLENE LANE



INTRODUCING DEBBIE CHOPKA

*Administrative Assistant, Departments of Human Development & Family Science (HDFS) & Social Work
(School of Arts, Culture, & Society)*

I am excited to be part of the Social Work Department as the new administrative assistant this Fall. I'm looking forward to learning more about the program, the clubs, and especially getting to know the students and faculty on a deeper level.

I grew up in the Midwest with my parents and one older brother, living in four states before graduating from high school in Ankeny, Iowa. My father was a minister and I valued my youthful years having a strong Christian family influence. As an adult, I lived in three more states. I met my husband, John, at Malone University in Canton, Ohio. We married in 1989 and lived in Ohio for 18 years before moving to Dillsburg, Pennsylvania. We have two adult children, Rachel, age 26 and James, age 23. Both graduated from Messiah. Rachel lives in Jupiter, Florida working in a children's clinic as an occupational therapy assistant. James landed a marketing job with Ollie's in Harrisburg and he now lives in the city. Yes, we are officially empty nesters! I started working at Messiah in 2008 and I now work part-time for Human Development and Family Science (HDFS) Department and the Social Work Department. I love the job variety, meeting students and working with faculty.

John and I attend Daybreak Church and help with the Marriage Matters team. I also serve in the nursery and on the decorating team. In my free time, I enjoy scrapbooking, walking, listening to podcasts, and traveling and visiting family and friends.

Now, I'll leave you with some words of encouragement: "Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." -Philippians 1:6

-Debbie Chopka

SOPHOMORE PLACEMENT:

"My Sophomore field placement was with Capital Area Pregnancy Center, otherwise known as Life Choices Clinic. This faith-based agency strives to provide women and their families with all the knowledge and resources necessary to make the best decisions about their pregnancies. I had the opportunity to shadow counseling sessions, appointments to receive material goods, and even ultrasounds. It is incredibly rewarding to be able to witness a client see their baby for the first time and decide to carry it. The clinic serves many populations in this area, and working with clients from so many different ethnic backgrounds has been a great educational opportunity for me. My field placement contributed to the foundation I am building in the field of social work and has provided me with great learning opportunities!"

*-Rebecca Clemes,
Class of 2022*

SENIOR PLACEMENT:

"In January I began my senior field placement, working under MSW field instructors in the Pennsylvania Governor's Office and Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. The placement primarily falls under the category of macro social work. I have been able to work on research projects and assist policymakers in their efforts to create change. I even write briefs for the Governor to read. My main project is collaborating with the Department of Human Services to make recommendations to increase access to behavioral health services amongst youth with complex needs. The complex case project has allowed me to dive deep into the presented issue and intertwine my love for policy with direct practice. I meet with stakeholders and agencies, collect and summarize data, and write reports. Through completing these tasks, I have seen the importance of clear and concise writing. I have used the skills I learned in Practice with Individuals as I interact with policymakers and stakeholders. I have had to understand cultural competence and the importance of the dignity and worth of each individual. I have recognized the necessity of self-care. And, most importantly, I know that I am an ethical, professional, and competent social work student who is prepared to go into the profession of social work."

*-Leah Olson,
Class of 2021*

ETHICAL, PROFESSIONAL, & COMPETENT SOCIAL WORKERS

Written by: Mary Dougherty, Class of 2021

"The first ethical principle outlined in NASW's Code of Ethics (2021) is the value of service to elevate others above self-interest. In order to effectively serve the populations social work students and professionals encounter, the demonstration of ethical standards, professionalism, and competent practice must be evident. Messiah's Social Work Program is comprised of rigorous coursework and field experiences that engrain these essential characteristics within each social work student. I am personally so grateful for the importance the program places on developing students as professionals who are competent in ethical decision making to provide exceptional and empowering services to vulnerable populations.

Almost every social work course has provided me with opportunities in the field to interact with diverse populations. Doing so allowed me to learn principles of social work practice that cannot be taught in the classroom, such as establishing rapport with individuals through the helping process. I worked alongside accomplished, qualified social work professionals that enhanced my education and development into an ethical, professional, and competent social worker. My field instructors challenged me to take a step beyond my textbooks and encounter the systematic challenges and injustices that so many individuals face. Through each field experience, I was never left without the support of faculty, supervisors, and peers that encouraged me to reflect on how each experience was shaping me into a social worker that exercises competent, ethical, and professional practice.

Undergraduate social work students at Messiah University are held to the professional, ethical, and competent standards set by the NASW Code of Ethics. As a result, the only thing that changes when we graduate is the addition of BSW next to our names. We graduate with the competence to practice as professionals while adhering to ethical guidelines to protect the well-being of our clients. Messiah's Social Work Department is dedicated to equipping students with the skills and experience to practice as ethical, professional, and competent social workers."





Hello, I am Dr. Sagen, a new adjunct with Messiah University's Social Work Department. My journey to coming to adjunct at Messiah has been a long and winding road. Educationally, my undergraduate degree from The Pennsylvania State University's Education department with a minor in gerontology, led me to The University of Southern California's Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. My passion for older adults and the aging population were not realized until I was in college, however my passion for this population has never waned. USC provided me with a solid foundation for aging and social work, through two Master's degrees. My journey of exploring who I am as a profession led me to work at the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Los Angeles, a hospice agency in Philadelphia, directing dementia units in Harrisburg, and currently as the Chief Operating Officer of NASW-PA.

I have had the privilege of connecting with many colleges and universities, including Messiah, as a field supervisor, an adjunct professor, and a guest speaker to student organizations and classes. These interactions sparked a new passion to teach and mentor social work students and new-to-the-profession professionals.

Therefore, I chose a Doctorate in Social Work program focused on teaching within higher education and organizational leadership. Reconciliation is a wonderful theme, especially for social workers. This term embodies our profession as we work towards reframing issues to help people / groups "agree to amicable truces" and use the strengths perspective to aid a client through a difficult situation as being "resigned to something not desirable." Lastly, what I resonate most with is definition of reconciliation that deals with "the process of making consistent or compatible." Consistency is the key in social work, consistency to who you are as a person; your beliefs, your morals, your values, and your belief in your self-worth. The reconciliation of all of these factors (and more) makes you a unique individual.

My prayer for you is to take a risk, especially during your educational journey. This does not mean to conveniently forget to complete assignments rather research a paper on a topic that interests you, talk more in class, try out a club for a semester, or find an internship that may be "outside your comfort zone." I have watched amazing transformations in students as they overcame fears and prejudices of working with a different issues/population or taking a macro level internship. These growth points are invaluable to your development of your professional self. Think of one thing you can do this semester that challenges you and take a risk – go for it. My motto is "there are no mistakes . . . only lessons." So, let's learn together.

- Dr. Amy Sagen, Adjunct Professor of Social Work

INTRODUCING TWO NEW FACULTY:

Hello Messiah, Social Work students!

My name is David Zilka, and I am honored to be returning as an adjunct here this fall. I began teaching adjunct at Messiah in 2013 after moving to Central Pennsylvania in 2011 from my hometown of Pittsburgh, PA. My career began during my undergraduate degree at Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri (now part of Evangel University), where I aspired to be a full-time pastor. During my time there I began to sense a different call to attend to the marginalized in society, those with issues related to mental health, poverty, and substance abuse. I was drawn to the field of social work as it appealed to me as one that addressed the needs of the marginalized and is based out of Christian traditions. I completed my MSW at the University of Pittsburgh and have spent my career in Social Work, working in mental health, public education, higher education, medical, and child welfare settings. Currently, I am the Director of Operations at Paxton Ministries in Harrisburg. I believe by meeting practical needs we can effectively address a societal problem, all while sharing Christ's love. In Isaiah 58:10, we read "if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness, and your gloom be as the noonday." This verse, found in a chapter that defines true fasting, has always stood out to me as critical for Christian Social Workers to understand: our faith combined with our practice can truly change the world.



As for me personally, I am a Christian, a husband, a father, and a social worker, in that order. I place my professional life last, as any of the other items ahead of it that does not receive appropriate attention adversely impacts my ability to be effective as a social worker. My wife, Amy, and I have two children, Levi (11) and Naomi (8). We live close to Messiah, so please say hello if you see us out in the community or floating down the Yellow Breeches in our kayaks.

In the coming academic year, my prayer is that each of you would come to more fully know Christ and grow in your confidence as professional social workers. While my time on campus is limited, I am willing to offer support to students in any way I can. I look forward to getting to know many of you and am praying for a safe and healthy campus this year!

- Professor David Zilka, Adjunct Professor of Social Work

I've always loved history. When I was a little girl, I dreamed that I would grow up to become a famous archaeologist. I wanted to find an important artifact from some ancient culture or solve the mystery of a lost civilization. When I was 13 years old, I had the amazing opportunity to develop a mentoring relationship with a professional archaeologist. As a result, I was able to participate in the excavation and research of an extremely old Native American settlement near the area where I grew up. I remember the experience of holding a tiny amulet from an ancient necklace that had been discovered in the dig. My fingers actually tingled as I touched it. My thoughts immediately were drawn to wondering about the person who had worn the piece of jewelry. What had her life been like? What were his hopes and dreams? What had happened to this person? Well, I didn't grow up to become a famous archaeologist, but I have never lost my fascination with history. It's not the study of important events, battles, or inventions that intrigue me; it's the stories of the people who lived out the history.



Long ago I read a quote from an unknown source, “a story is the closest thing between a person and the truth”. The statement has resonated with me throughout my social work career. Jesus cared about people’s history and their stories as well. The Bible reveals how he questioned those he encountered; asking them what they wanted or needed. He asked them to reveal their stories even though he already knew each person heart, soul, body, and mind. Jesus desired to hear people in their own voices and to affirm their worth with his attention. Through our own individual experiences, stories and history we perceive the world, each other, and even God. Some stories are joyful and celebratory. Some histories tell stories of pain, trauma, and legacies of loss. How we choose to listen and respond to stories is part of our sacred calling as followers of Christ. Jesus came to befriend, heal, save, and reconcile all to himself. Jesus has called his followers to join him in continuing this reconciliation story; being reconciled first to God and then to each other. (2 Corinthians 5:11-21) Christian social workers are ideally positioned to fulfill the calling of reconciler. May we embrace our own celebrations and brokenness by speaking our history and truly listening to the stories of others. It is then, being reconciled to God through Jesus, that we can fulfill the mission by being ambassadors of reconciliation to this world.

- Professor Michelle George, Associate Professor of Social Work, Field Coordinator



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