

Callings

in Church of the Saviour

Vol 12, Issue 1 • Spring 2023

The Festival Center Reopens!

Lindsay Fertig-Johnson

Ahead of schedule and under-budget, the Festival Center is reopening with an early-morning blessing on March 27. While the official ribbon-cutting will happen later this Spring, the Festival Center will be open for business much sooner than we expected thanks to the careful planning and fabulous work of the Usource construction firm, a minority and woman-owned local company.

My role at the Festival Center began in July of 2021, during the pandemic. As I first walked the halls of the Festival Center the impact of this space came alive for me. This space—which, pre-pandemic, stirred with the activity of community and church groups, activists and organizers—has impacted the community in profound ways. An anchor in the Adam's Morgan neighborhood, the Festival Center welcomed 4,000 individuals per month across multiple races, ethnicities, faith backgrounds, and socio-economic levels. We were home to organizations that provide access to affordable housing, job training, legal aid services, health services, substance abuse support, and so much more.

Dreaming Together

As the Festival Center team began having conversations with community members, we dreamt about the future of the Festival Center and how, together, we can create an even greater impact in

our city, nation, and world. Through many conversations we began to envision a reinvigorated Festival Center with expanded square footage, a training kitchen, art gallery, incubator spaces, community organizing support, spiritual renewal programs, and upgraded technology which would provide sustainability well into the future.

The renovations to the Festival Center were carefully throughout with the support of community members to strengthen the Festival Center's sustainability for the future, deepen and broaden our community, national, and global impact, launch new innovative programs, and further our call to hospitality and justice.

Long-Term Sustainability

Environmental and technological investments will expand the impact of the Festival Center beyond our four walls and create long-term sustainability for the future.

- **Environmental Sustainability**—Through a new HVAC system, insulation, LED lighting, and solar panels, we will dramatically lower energy usage and reduce our energy costs by 50%. Buildings produce the greatest amount of carbon emissions in large cities and we are doing our part to shrink our carbon footprint and provide both financial and environmental sustainability for years to come.

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Editor's Corner | Practicing Lent as Letting Go



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Whenever I speak to visiting groups about Church of the Saviour, talk always turns to "what is the secret of spawning missions as you have." And while I think of the Cosby's visionary leadership, I find myself speaking about our call to the inward/outward journey, to Christ and to one another in mission groups. I think joining others for a common purpose with an inward practice has been the key to building structures that will last beyond the initial burst of energy that got them started.

Lent reminds me of another dimension that we don't talk about much, and that is our commitment to let-it-go. From the beginning, Gordon urged each mission to be self-sustaining financially AND to incorporate as a non-profit, in order to qualify for funding from sources beyond the church. In other words, he saw the mission groups as seeds of the future and not a governing board if a ministry grew into needing a professional staff. Growing requires letting go of the way it was and welcoming what it is becoming. It's a dynamic process.

Traditionally, Lent begins with the story of Jesus in the wilderness, being tempted to solve problems with his magical powers. Instead, he resists, waiting for the Spirit to lead him out of that wilderness. He lets go of a quick-fix in favor of God's deeper call to waiting, listening, following. And Lent ends with the crucifixion, something we do not dwell on these days. (I've noticed the grocery store is already selling Easter baskets, our cultural substitute for the shadowy encounters that mark Easter morning in the biblical story.)

Letting-go takes on another dimension as we live further into the Easter story. The shift from volunteer efforts to hiring a professional staff can be painful and distressing for those who started something and gave their life energies to it. And in aging, letting-go of who we used to be can also be wrenching, but if we make the shift without anger or regret, we may discover the newness and surprise that the disciples discovered on the road to Emmaus. At the heart of our Lenten journey is the hope for discovery and newness. For us, the Easter story does not end with an egg-hunt.

If you look at the 40-some ministries listed on page 6, you will see that some of those mission seeds have died, and others have become healthy non-profits with little connection to Church of the Saviour – except that hidden in the DNA of those institutions is a real commitment to serving those at the margins. Allowing the initial call to grow beyond the capacity of a small group of volunteers has been essential for those ministries.

In each of the stories in this issue of CALLINGS, we have a story of letting-go AND new beginnings. The Festival Center has been closed for renovation during the pandemic, and is reopening with a new interior and new emphasis on social justice work. At Wellspring, we welcome Adam Greene, the new director (see his centerfold story). Jubilee Jobs has successfully transferred leadership during covid, and finally, Margalea Warner offers her story of living with mental illness. After 27 years out of a locked psychiatric ward, her "27 Keys" has become a modern dance presentation in Iowa City. All of these are stories of letting-go AND new beginnings. May that be your experience as well.

With care,

Marjory

Marjory Bankson
Chair, Church of the Saviour Council
callingseditor@gmail.com

The Church of the Saviour is an ecumenical Christian community, made up of eight small churches, rooted in the radically inclusive life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We believe that in our diversity, each of us is an image-bearer of God, equally valued and loved. We welcome all individuals to join in the life of worship, fellowship and ministry in any of our small faith communities. All of us have an essential role in bringing God's love, justice and mercy to our world.

Festival Center, continued from page 1

- **Technological Sustainability**—In light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has changed the way we meet one another, upgraded technology will allow us to continue welcoming people from all over the country to the Festival Center for workshops and advocacy gatherings. With this upgraded technology, community groups will be able to host their own zoom events, create podcasts, and build communities for justice all across the country.

Community Impact

A new commercial training kitchen and art gallery space will further the impact of the Festival Center in the Adams Morgan and wider Washington DC community.

- **Commercial Training Kitchen**—A new, 500 square-foot state-of-the-art commercial training kitchen will create opportunities for partnering organizations and small businesses to utilize the space as a food incubator, teach culinary arts classes, and enable food entrepreneurs to refine their craft.
- **Community Gallery for Local Artists**—This is perhaps one of the most important spaces in our building because this is where all who enter meet the Festival Center for the first time. This space holds an art gallery which will provide needed entrepreneurial support for marginalized artists and will bring critically relevant artwork to our community.



Innovative Programs

New innovative programs will further the mission of the Festival Center by building opportunities for collective formation, collaboration, and mutual solidarity.

- **Center for Spiritual Formation**—Dedicated to our value of collective formation and the inward journey, we will have a dedicated space for spiritual direction and formation. This space will be available free-of-cost for persons from all religious beliefs so that individuals and groups can deepen their connection and relationship with the Divine and Sacred.
- **Social Justice Incubator**—In keeping with our founder Gordon Cosby's dream of the second floor being an "incubator space" for new ministries and new works to be birthed, we are creating a co-working space specifically for faith communities and start-up justice organizations that cannot afford expensive office space in Washington, DC. Not only will they have a space to work and meet, we will partner with them and support their work of building movements for justice in practical and needed ways.
- **Center for Liberation**—The Festival Center has long been a leader in training and mobilizing faith and community leaders in DC and across the country. Since 2020, our influence and impact has grown considerably as hundreds of people attend our classes and teach-ins each year. This will be



Lindsay Fertig-Johnson

strengthened through our incubator space on the second floor where we will partner with grassroots organizations and think tanks so that scholarly research and grassroots organizations can mutually inform each other. The result will be stronger and more effective movements for justice.

Generous Hospitality

Expanded rentable square-footage and below-market-rate pricing will create opportunities for community groups and nonprofits to meet and collaborate safely.

- **Cosby Hall**—The heart of the Festival Center is our first-floor large conference room where so many of the worship services, meetings, celebrations, weddings, memorial services, conferences and so much more takes place. Likewise, the heart of our mission lies in the original vision of Gordon Cosby and the small group of people he worked with to make the vision of the Festival Center a reality. We want to keep Gordon and Mary Cosby's vision and name alive for decades to come.
- **A Safe Space for Justice**—An essential part of providing hospitality to all who enter the Festival Center is ensuring their safety while they are here. Through the creation of a vestibule to our front entrance and a new security system we will ensure a safe space for all people who meet and work here.
- **Upgraded Meeting Rooms**—Small to medium-sized meeting rooms for both virtual and online meetings will expand our rentable square-footage and provide opportunities for groups of all sizes to collaborate.

Overall, the renovations will create 27 rentable office spaces (shared and suite style), 16 workspace desks, a 1,540 square foot Community Room, a 500 square foot conference room, a 180 square foot conference room, an 800 square foot co-working space, and 30 parking spaces.

A formal ribbon cutting will be held later in the Spring, so please stay tuned for more information about our opening celebration.

Lindsay Fertig-Johnson is the Festival Center Director of Development and Public Relations.

New Life at Wellspring

By Adam Greene

Loving care and attention. So many hopes and dreams are woven into this place.

Wellspring: a welling-up, from depths unknown into the open air. The Dayspring Creek trickles down bedrock steps, its song listened to by silent retreatants, by foxes, owls, and others. I listen too, as I listen to the sound of my own soul.

Both Job and Call

I listened to the sound when I saw the job description for Administrator/Host of Wellspring. Somebody with business acumen—yes. Experience hosting retreats—yes. Experience maintaining facilities—yes. Experience with (or at least interest in) community of a spiritual nature—yes. “It’s strange,” I thought, “I seem to be perfectly suited to this position.” Healing, Arts, Nature—yes. I need a job—yes!

I was completing my Masters degree in Depth Psychology with a specialization in Community, Liberation, Indigenous and Eco-Psychologies at Pacifica Graduate Institute. Three years earlier, I had left a spiritual community where I had lived for 25 years in upstate New York, and where I had served as CEO of the community’s Information Technology company, maintained facilities, farmed and led retreats. I had served on the guidance committee of the larger international spiritual organization, *Cafh*, of which the community formed a part. And I had a hunger for transformational structural societal change: Transformation that happens when inward contemplation is united to outward action. Could I actually get a job where these experiences, skills and aspirations could all be made use of and which came with the possibility of living in community not only with human beings, but with all of the living and apparently non-living beings of this place of woods, meadows, lakes and trails?

I had my misgivings: This is Piscataway land, unceded. I don’t identify as Christian. I am critical of the values upon which Eurowestern civilization is based, sometimes questioning whether “civilization” is a good word for it and wondering what that word implies when used to create a contrast with non-Eurowestern lifeways. Would a small ecumenical church be open to concepts like decolonization, critical race theory, food sovereignty and somatic abolitionism? “Are they going to be open to critical thinking?” I asked one of the people who had shared the job description with me. “Have you read Elizabeth O’Connor?” she replied. “If not, you should. That kind of thinking is what this church was built on.”

Waiting for You

Five months later and six weeks into the job, here I am writing an article for *Callings*. A number of folks have told me matter-of-factly: “Yep, you were called to this. You are here in the right place, at the right time. We were waiting for you.”



Adam Greene, Director at the Wellspring Conference Center

Even the human-constructed structures seem to be speaking to me. Every time I walk into Siloam (one of the cabins), I feel enveloped by the most caring energy—it is as if there were a presence which I can only describe as Mary there—what in other traditions might be called the sacred feminine or an in-dwelling spirit.

At first I felt very concerned about the buildings: “You are quite old. There is talk of razing you,” I told them. After walking through their rooms, inspecting their crawlspaces and just breathing with them, they chased after me, calling: “We still have life. We have something we want to give!” A couple of days later, a Hindu woman I was giving a tour of the retreat facilities told me: “I have been on so many retreats over the years at so many places, I can’t even count them. This place is *special*. You have something really, really good here.”

Emergent Life

Yes, Wellspring has life. Once a vehicle for conversation, study and sharing about a new way to do church, always a place of hospitality, something delicate but powerful is arising here today: Something emergent, something from the land, something that whispers: *I want to live*. So many of the structures upon which our society is built are showing themselves to be inadequate, built perhaps on fear, on concepts of scarcity and competition. What no longer serves is breaking down, and not without a large measure of pain and grief.

What role might Wellspring play in ushering in new life, a kind of living-in-relationship that goes beyond hatred and differences?



What role might Wellspring play in ushering in new life, a kind of living-in-relationship that goes beyond hatred and differences? What kind of nurturance might Wellspring provide to those who are thirsty for deep, soul-quenching reconciliation? How might we, as human beings, support what goes beyond us and which supports us—the vast interconnected network of life and transformation in which we participate?

Invitation

The Wellspring mission group—Ann Moczydlowski, Trish Stefanik, Christy Gordon (on sabbatical), and I—invite you to explore these questions with us. There is much to be done here: Buildings to care for, land to tend, creatures to love. We want Wellspring to continue as a place of hospitality, where difficult, deep conversations can be held and where soul-sustaining community can be experienced. Where sacred arts can be practiced and celebration can

be made, among all peoples, and in the company of all our relations. We welcome most of all you, the community which has loved this place since it came into the care of The Church of the Saviour: Share this journey with us.

Adam Greene is the new Director at the Wellspring Conference Center. Please send your responses to this article to wellspringconferencecenter@gmail.com or call us at 301-515-9120. We welcome your inspiration!

Easter Sunrise Service
Wellspring Conference Center
6 am on Sunday, April 9

Jubilee Jobs Provides Ongoing Support

Jubilee Jobs by the Numbers in 2022

332 Individuals completed the job preparation process

250 Individuals placed in a job, including:

- 30 homeless
- 58 returning citizens
- 102 receiving public assistance
- 75 parents of 141 minor children

Anthony R.

When Anthony received a referral to Jubilee Jobs from his caseworker at Blair Shelter in DC, he could not have imagined the opportunity and transformation that lay ahead. Anthony was raised in Southeast Washington, DC. He graduated from Ballou Senior High School and attended the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont. After earning his diploma Anthony pursued a number of opportunities, but the lack of finances, family support and guidance proved to be too much for a young person to launch and sustain a new career.

For the next several years, Anthony bounced around from job to job. As he describes, "I was hard headed and wanted to do things my own way." The years passed and eventually Anthony found himself homeless, unemployed, and most critically, without confidence or a clear plan on how to move forward.

In his first week, with his Job Counselor at Jubilee Jobs, Anthony completed an individual job counseling session that included an employment action-plan, created a new resume and refreshed his interview skills. In his second week Anthony applied, interviewed and received a job offer at Stoddard Baptist Global Care (formerly the Washington Center for the Aging) as a dietary assistant.

Anthony's late mother worked at this same facility as a nursing

assistant for twenty-five years. "It's magical, I feel her spirit every day", says Anthony. "This is deeper than just a job." Since securing this position, Anthony has moved from the shelter and is renting an apartment for the first time. The best part – it's a five-minute walk to work!

Walter M.

Walter wrote to Jubilee Jobs from prison in July 2022, hoping we could help him with a job once released and back in Washington, DC. We have often been in touch with persons in prison about their need for employment when they return home. Sometimes it takes a long time for the prison system to go through all the processing, so we did not expect to see Walter any time soon.

He was able to make a few phone calls to us in the next months because the pandemic allowed all prisoners to use phones for free. Imagine our surprise when he called just before Thanksgiving. He was here in DC!

He came for his job counselor appointment in December and brought an impressive file of certifications, awards, and educational accomplishments earned during his 27 years in prison. He was thrilled to be released, placed in an apartment by the Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs, and eager to get to work. Walter said he knew he would be starting at an entry-level job and that was fine.

One of his certifications indicated substantial experience in large volume cooking. Christ House, a medical recovery center for homeless persons and one of our partners and neighbors, urgently needed a cook. We sent his resume. He was given a practical interview working in the kitchen and then told to check back after the holidays. In January, he received word Christ House wanted to hire him full time with benefits.

Congratulations Walter! You bring energy, hope and courage to everyone with your hard work and positive spirit. Walter is committed to encouraging and sharing his experience with his prison friends too. We are eagerly waiting for them at Jubilee Jobs!

For more information visit: www.jubileejobs.org

Related Ministries

The following ministries have grown from churches and mission groups of The Church of the Saviour. Each is independently organized.

Academy of Hope • Becoming Church • Bethany, Inc. • Bokamoso Foundation • Caroll Café • Christ House • Columbia Road Health Service • Cornelius Corps • Cornerstone • Dayspring Earth Ministry • Dayspring Retreat Center • Dunamis Peace Institute • Earthen Hands at Dayspring • Faith & Money Network • Family Place • Festival Center • For Love of Children • Hope and a Home • Institute of Radical Reconciliation • Inward/outward • Joseph's House • Jubilee Housing • Jubilee Jobs • Jubilee JumpStart • Kairos House • L'Arche • Liberation School • Life Asset Credit Union • Life Pathways • Manna, Inc. • New Community ArtSpace • New Community for Children • O.N.E.DC • Overlook Retreat House • Potter's House • Recovery Café DC • Samaritan Inns • Sarah's Circle • Sign of Jonah • Sitar Arts Center • Wellspring Conference Center

27 Keys to Freedom: Living with Mental Illness

By Margalea Warner

There's nothing more chilling than the sound of a heavy locked door clicking behind you. In my case, it was the door to the psych floor. There is no shame in being hospitalized when you are in a mental health crisis, but staying out of the hospital is something to celebrate.

In June, 1995, I was discharged from University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics for the last time. One by one, the years of freedom added up. In 2012, I had an idea: what if I collected some keys, one for every year out of the hospital? Friends were generous with their keys. I decided to label each key for a principle that opened the door to freedom and wellness.

Key 1: right meds. And **key 2: talking therapy.** It took over a decade to find a correct diagnosis and an effective treatment that included medication and therapy. Now that I've found it, I stick to it. My heart goes out to my peers who try so hard to find the right treatment for their individual needs. Don't give up!

Key 3 is family. My nuclear family, including my mother, father and brother, have passed away, but their love lives inside me. What remains are the family that I choose: dear friends near and far.

Key 4 is related: it stands for Compeer, and all true friends. Compeer means equal friend and the Compeer program matches trained volunteers with persons in mental health recovery to help end isolation and stigma. **Key 5 is let tears come.** I choose to feel my feelings rather than be numb. To not allow tears is to block the joy that follows. If Jesus wept, so can I. I especially grieve lives lost to suicide even as I understand how suicide happens when suffering is greater than support.

Key 6 is dignity of work. Everyone has a job to do, whether it is paid or volunteer or just doing the dishes. I celebrate that I was able to work full-time as a secretary at the University of Iowa Hospitals for almost 36 years before I retired in 2020. My work in retirement includes creative writing and getting published, volunteering at Crowded Closet, and taking care of the kitty (who has no plan for me to retire from her staff). **Keys 7 and 8** are related: say no to negative voices and challenge distorted thinking. Listen instead for the still, small voice of God. **Keys 9 and 10** flow out of my spirituality: prayer and choose life.

Key 11 is think outside the box. Fittingly, the label is attached to a finger nail clipper that could pick a lock in a pinch. **Keys 12 and 13** are attached to Weight Watcher charms: walking and healthy eating. I'm a lifetime member at goal for 24 years. **Kitties and Critters** are **key 14.** Pets are a comfort and a reason for living because they need you and you promise them a forever home. **Key 15** is for *tai chi* and the 70% principle. In the Wu style of tai chi, we are instructed to never force a movement beyond 70% of what is comfortable. With patience, over time, our 70% will grow larger. Emotionally, 70% wisdom means being gentle with ourselves and gracious to others, respecting their 70% as well. In times of crisis, sometimes 40% is a needed boundary. **Keys 16, 17** and **18** are *faith, laughter, and hugs.*

Key 19 is the key to the old University of Iowa Psychopathic Hospital quiet room. This fortress-like building opened in 1919. It is a huge, heavy key, fitting for how grim it was for me to be secluded there in the 1990s. I got the key from a psych nurse who captured it when the old hospital closed and merged with University Hospitals. He gave it to me as a gift after I spoke to his class of nursing students.

Key 20 is This is My Brave, after the dramatic presentations where persons whose lives had been touched by mental illness told their stories. It does take courage to live with mental illness! **Key 21** stands for massage. I began a wellness plan that made massage affordable in 2008, after my father died. That first massage I wept quietly the whole time. In later appointments, I was able to feel joy again. **Key 22** is *Paris*, not as a travel destination but a self-correction of not saying "I wish I were dead" but instead "I wish I was in Paris." Paris shines as a place of adventure, beauty and love. **Key 23** is *music.* All kinds have power to lift me up. I'm a faithful listener to classical public radio. The key itself is a key that opens the cover to a piano keyboard.

Key 24 is ask for what you need. I used this key in March, 2019, when I was stuck overnight in the Denver airport. I got up the courage to approach a fierce looking security guard at the information desk and tell her I was weak and faith and in need of a safe place to rest and take my bedtime psych meds. Her stern face softened and she got me the help I needed including a pillow and blanket to sleep in the airport chapel.

Key 25 is gratitude. During the pandemic, it wasn't easy to find the light in dark times, but the more I flexed my gratitude muscle, the strong it grew. I was even able to have an essay about gratitude in the Christmas issue of Mennonite World. **Key 26: persistence.** Like the Mars rover, she is helping me explore a whole new planet of possibility. Her song is this: Never give up. Never give up. Never, never give up.

Key 27 is Unfinished, an interpretive dance production at the University of Iowa in November 2022, based on these 27 keys. It was the highlight of my year!

Margalea Warner, daughter of Philip and Eleanor Warner, was baptized by Gordon Cosby the year after Potter's House opened. She grew up surrounded by people who took God seriously and themselves lightly. In 1984, her spiritual director at Seekers, Christine Weaver, encouraged her to move to Iowa City, Iowa, where she was embraced by First Mennonite Church. Now retired, she is working on a memoir titled Dancer of Life.



Callings

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Special Events

Also see Pottershousedc.org and
FestivalCenter.org

Wed, March 8 | Self-guided Retreat Day. Up to six individuals can use the Lodge in silence between 9-5. Pre-register with Nat Reid at office@dayspringretreat.org.

Wed, March 22 | Quiet Day, 10-2pm. \$25. Pre-register: office@dayspringretreat.org.

Mar 24-26 | "Christ in You, the Hope of Glory" a Lenten Retreat. Weekend retreat, \$250. Register: office@dayspringretreat.org.

Mon. Mar 27 | Festival Center Blessing at 8am.
All are welcome.

April 7 | Good Friday Quiet Day, 10am-4pm. \$25. A leader will begin with a brief reflection leading into silence. Pre-register: office@dayspringretreat.org.

April 9 | Easter Sunrise Service, Wellspring Conference Center, 6am

May 12 | Earthen Hands, Second Sunday Gathering, 3-5pm, meet at DaySpring Farmhouse.

Tues, May 16 | Jubilee Jobs Benefit Dinner. Info on www.jubileejobs.org.

