

# Callings



in Church of the Saviour

Vol 13, Issue 3 • Fall 2024

## You Are Invited to the

### Church of the Saviour 77th Anniversary Celebration November 9, 2024

#### Who

Everyone who is currently or has been a part of the Church of the Savior community.

#### What

A gathering to celebrate our 77 years together. We'll have break out discussion groups to look at various topics (see below); we'll share a meal together; and each community will share creative gifts with one another.

#### Where

Wellspring Conference Center  
11411 Neelsville Church Rd. Germantown, MD 20876

#### When

Saturday, November 9th, 9:30 am - 4 pm

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| 9:30-10  | Arrive & Coffee/Tea                      |
| 10-11:45 | Discussion Groups & Full Group Sharing   |
| 12-1     | Potluck Lunch                            |
| 1:15-3   | Sharing of the Gifts from Each Community |
| 3-3:30   | Tea & Cookies                            |
| 3:15-4   | Closing Service                          |

#### MORE DETAILS:

There are 3 options for how you can RSVP:

- With this link: <https://forms.gle/MrtraY8rFufdQ5ss7>
- OR you can email Aiyana at [Aiyana1945@gmail.com](mailto:Aiyana1945@gmail.com)
- OR you can call Kate Lasso at 202-744-0440

RSVPs are highly encouraged, but not absolutely necessary.

Childcare will be provided. (RSVP with the number and ages of children is required—please add your info in the link above or email Aiyana at [Aiyana1945@gmail.com](mailto:Aiyana1945@gmail.com)).

Can't make it for the whole day?  
Come for a part of the time!

The 77th planning committee is gathering questions/topics for our discussion time. We'd like to know what questions each community is working through right now. If you have a question or topic you'd like to submit, please email Aiyana at [Aiyana1945@gmail.com](mailto:Aiyana1945@gmail.com).

Questions? Call Kate Lasso at 202-744-0440

#### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

Julie Byrne  
Nona Beth Cresswell  
Marcia Harrington  
Kate Lasso  
Aiyana Adams

# Editor's Corner | 77 Years of Cultivating Call



To receive CALLINGS free of charge or let us know you've moved, write us at [callingseditor@gmail.com](mailto:callingseditor@gmail.com)

If you'd like to see CALLINGS continue, please make a contribution by check to:  
**Church of the Saviour**  
(In Memo line put "Callings")  
Address:  
1640 Columbia Rd. NW  
Washington DC 20009

How many people have been shaped by Church of the Saviour in the past 77 years? What makes our history so unique? And how were we impacted by Gordon's radical call in 1976 to continue starting new missions and let the smaller churches take on the task of preparing new members? You can participate in telling that story by responding to Kate Lasso's survey (page 7).

When Gordon and Mary began their ecumenical church in 1947, they saw it as a school for lay ministers who would be sent out into the world as changed people. A good example was Verna Dozier, who became a great teacher among Episcopalians after her years as a DC public school teacher. She credits Gordon and her time at Church of the Saviour as the foundation for her books on God's calling for every person: *The Dream of God*, *The Calling of the Laity*, *The Authority of the Laity*, and *Equipping the Saints*.

When I was at Virginia Seminary in the early 80s, Verna affirmed my choice not to seek ordination, but to pursue God's call in the ordinary structures of my life. That was an advantage when I became president of Faith@Work, a non-denominational national ministry, but I did not know that as I wept my way through the agonizing decisions around seeking ordination. I returned to Verna's book, *The Dream of God*, again and again in those years.

This year, CALLINGS has featured stories of people who have been shaped by simple but demanding preparation for membership, the ongoing disciplines of mission-group membership, and the challenges of having no clergy leadership in the diaspora churches. Some, like David Hilfiker, have started model institutions like Joseph's House. Others, like Basil Buchanan, have stayed because of the early CoS commitment to dismantling racism.

**All of us are invited to participate in a 77th birthday celebration at Wellspring on November 9. Please RSVP to help the event planners and come for all or part of the day.**

With care,

**Marjory**

Marjory Bankson  
Chair, Church of the Saviour Council  
[callingseditor@gmail.com](mailto:callingseditor@gmail.com)

Next CALLINGS deadling: November 1

*The Church of the Saviour is an ecumenical Christian community, made up of seven 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.*

# Interview with David Hilfiker



By Jennie Gosché

David Hilfiker is a retired physician, author, and a careful listener to many in the Church of the Saviour community.

Born February 12, 1945, in Eden, New York, David is the oldest of four children born to Warren Hilfiker, a UCC minister, and his wife, Carol.

During David's senior year at the Town of Tonawanda High School, his future wife, Marja, came from Finland as a foreign exchange student. After attending a dance together, David recognized his feelings

for her. Marja returned to Finland and David accepted a full scholarship to Yale University where he planned to follow his father into the ministry. David spent the summer of 1963 in Finland with Marja and her family. When he returned home, David broke up with Marja.

In April, 1964, David's life was deeply impacted when his mother Carol committed suicide. Carol had been hospitalized for depression, but treatment was unsuccessful. David said he struggles with depression as well. He has been open about it, pushing back against the stigma which often accompanies mental health problems. After his mother's suicide, David left Yale. He spent a summer in San Francisco training to lead encounter groups, hitch-hiked around Europe, and returned to Yale in 1965. A surprising fact about David is that, after taking two philosophy courses at Yale, he realized "I wasn't a Christian."

## Prophetic Ministry

David and Marja reconnected during a summer spent in Alabama teaching enrichment classes to Black high school students. They were married in 1969 by David's father. David graduated from Yale and took science prerequisites so he could enter the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1971. Graduating in 1974, David completed an Internship at Duluth Community Hospital. He and Marja lived in hospital housing and David worked 16-hour shifts throughout the hospital.

David shared "my mood improved in Finland" so the family moved there for a year while David wrote his first book, "Healing the Wounds," published in 1985. His second book "Not All of Us Are Saints," was published in 1994. Both books highlight the interweaving of David's own story with anecdotes about his patients. David discovered what he calls "a prophetic ministry" when he began giving talks to medical students across the country about his experiences as a primary care doctor. David disclosed his struggle with depression while honestly describing the risks, rewards, and

stress of being a physician.

After reading two of Elizabeth O'Connor's books, David and his family moved to Washington, D.C. in 1983. David joined Janelle Goetcheus and Don Martin in their medical practice. From 1986 – 1989, David, Marja, and their three children, Laurel, Karin, and Kai, lived at Christ House where David provided medical care to the residents.

Early in the AIDS crisis, nursing facilities in Washington, D.C. would not accept AIDS patients. In 1989, David and his family moved around the corner to Joseph's House, which may have been the first AIDS hospice facility in the United States. Janelle Goetcheus shared the mailing list from Christ House and David contacted Sojourners who shared their mailing list. They raised enough money to open the program in 1990.

In June, of 1992, David left Joseph's House and he and Marja enjoyed a "lovely year" in Finland. When they returned to Washington, David attended Potter's House church. Later, David became a member of 8th Day Faith Community where he recognized the support for and discussion of "prophetic ministry". David gave up his medical license and wrote his third book "Urban Injustice," published in 1999.

Early in the AIDS crisis, nursing facilities in Washington, D.C. would not accept AIDS patients. In 1989, David and his family moved around the corner to Joseph's House, which may have been the first AIDS hospice facility in the United States. Janelle Goetcheus shared the mailing list from Christ House and David contacted Sojourners who shared their mailing list. They raised enough money to open the program in 1990.

## Listening as Ministry

Today, David is in a mission group focused on electoral change in the U.S. He also fulfills several roles at 8th Day. But David's most significant role is as a listener and supporter of everyone and anyone who asks for his guidance. He says this is a "small call" but that belies the truth of his contributions to the CofS diaspora.

Through connection and community, David has succeeded despite continuing to battle depression and the struggles that come with the physical diminishment of aging. At 79, David is a wise elder of 8th Day and the CofS community and we all benefit from his presence.

*--Jennie Gosché is the Pastoral Care coordinator on the 8th Day Leadership Council. She is a polar bear photographer, writer, and community educator.*



# Basil Buchanan, Attracted by the Interracial Welcome

## Q: What prompted you to explore Church of the Saviour?

I grew up in Jamaica, which was then part of the British Commonwealth. At private school in Port Antonio, I was shaped by the anti-slavery attitudes and abolitionist theology of the 19th century English Baptists such as Wilberforce, Knibb, and Burchell. The English Baptists were at the forefront of excellent education in Jamaica.

When W.R. Greigg, a white southern Baptist preacher, came to Jamaica for a revival, I was attracted to a whole new way of being Christian together as an inter-racial society just as I graduated from high-school.

In 1958, I was working as a lab tech and training as a sprinter for the 1960 Olympics. My mother died that year of diabetes, and when my dad remarried shortly after, I felt lost and wanted a new start. My mother's doctor had a degree from Howard University and he helped me apply there even though I could not see how to pay for it. Then, at a prayer meeting, I got this clear message: "I'll be with you wherever you go." It gave me courage to take the next step.

During my first semester at Howard, I dreamed of a terrible consuming fire, but when I awoke I just knew that "as long as I keep going, I will not be consumed." That dream prompted me to actively look for a church. The Howard Chapel was full of civil rights activists in those days, and National Memorial Baptist was all White. I knew I wanted an inter-racial church like the one I had experienced during the Greigg revival in Port Antonio and the fellowship at Bethel Baptist Church in Kingston, Jamaica, so I kept looking.

W.R. Greigg's friend, Martin England at the Riverside Church Center in New York, also a friend of Gordon Cosby, suggested that there was a new house church at 2025 Massachusetts Avenue, so in August of 1961, I called Church of the Saviour (CoS) and Louella Stanton answered the phone. She was the wife of Dr. G. Frederick Stanton, the Secretary of Howard University, and was volunteering in the office that day. She invited me to come on Sunday, but didn't

mention the time. When I arrived at 10, the early service had started, so I sat in the dining room, listening with others as Gordon preached a message I will never forget: The church as we know it is not renewable. We are people on the move, living in tents, on a journey together.

When the service ended, the chapel doors opened and two well-dressed women, Jessie Ashton, a Black woman and her white friend, Janet Shaw, emerged, talking animatedly about the sermon. Verna Dozier, Lou Longfellow, Rose Williams, Alice Payne, Earle Ashton and Esther Dorsey made me feel like I had come to the right place, especially when I learned that the church had been integrated since the beginning in 1947. After that, I attended whenever I could and noticed other Howard students there too.

## Q: Were you drawn toward a mission?

Lydia Berry and Peter Moses later invited me into my first CoS mission, an after-school program in Adams Morgan called the Alley Library, but I was not able to join the mission group because it was too time-consuming. At that time, I was studying hard and working to supplement my scholarship, but I tasted the sense of call and commitment that was so alive then.

On the night of my graduation from Howard in 1964, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, I felt triumphant – and terrified. I had no idea what lay ahead. Washington DC was still a segregated city and I felt lost, so I headed for The Potter's House. When I opened the door, hardly hoping to see someone I knew, Sarah Dunlap Jackson, another Black friend from CoS, greeted me warmly – and I knew I could be at home there.

Soon I was taking a class on Christian Growth – from which I have never recovered. I learned that conversion is just the beginning. We had small breakout groups that met in homes, and for some I was the first Black person ever invited there. In 1965, I went on my first retreat at Dayspring and began taking the basic classes on Old and New Testament, Doctrine, Ethics and Community, and I became an intern member of the Saturday

## 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 • Good Shepherd Ministries • 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

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Mary and Basil at the wedding of Swing Strickland and David Harre in the mid-60s.

evening Potters House Mission group

After the riots in 1968, The Potter's House made a critical decision to stay open and Church of the Saviour renewed its commitment to the inner city. Esther Dorsey left her job at the Bureau of Engraving to become the Potter's House First Director, bringing her talents and experience as a stately Black woman to that role. Don McClanen, my first sponsor for membership, got Washington LIFT started and FLOC formed to close Junior Village. The church was alive with zeal for righting

the wrongs of segregation in those days.

Along Columbia Road, Potter's House opened a gift shop across the street from the Safeway where Mary Cosby often welcomed visitors. Upstairs, the PH Workshop offered all kinds of art classes. Kay Pitchford, who was on the art faculty at Howard, created the bas relief mural that still welcomes people to the Dayspring Lodge. Students of hers at the PH Workshop also made all the copper plates on the doors at Retreat. At the Potter's House, I developed a warm relationship with Mary Cosby and Jimilu Mason, the sculptor made famous by her bust of President Johnson.

During that time, I was in graduate school at American University, and passed my comps in international relations in 1969. Those threads seemed to coalesce in the formation of the Dag Hammarskjöld College (DHC), an alternative school for nontraditional students. I became a full member of CoS in 1971 and DHC tapped me to guide a group of students on a study tour to the UN Headquarters in New York city, followed by visits to the specialized agencies in Paris, Geneva, Vienna and Rome, with the opportunity to gather data for my doctoral dissertation. By 1973, it seemed like the stars were aligning for me to find work in that field.

Soon after that, we began to hear the first hints of Gordon's call to what became the New Lands diaspora. Then there was a disastrous fire in my apartment and I lost ALL of my dissertation notes. I would have to begin again! And when the Dag Hammarskjöld College folded in 1975, my dreams for the future were shattered!

With sheer determination, I did get my doctorate in International Relations from American University in 1976, and spent my working years in international education and USAID-related development projects. Later I worked for the DC government in environmental health. At CoS, I was a founding member of the Potter's House Church when it formed in 1976 and later joined the Festival Church, where I am now supporting the Parr Lecture Series as our primary mission.

#### Q: What spiritual practices have sustained you?

- Practicing the presence of God, as described by Brother Lawrence and Thomas Kelly;
- Deepening my inner journey of centering prayer, silence and meditation;
- Regular disciplines (coursework, journaling, accountability);
- Trusting the Spirit to open the Way;
- Accountability to a community.

#### Q: Any closing thoughts?

Yes, when I've thought about writing a more detailed account of my spiritual journey, it would be organized in five segments. The first is **remembering**, with as much detail as possible, because I now have a different perspective on earlier events.

The second step is **reflecting** on the meaning – which has sometimes changed radically as my faith perspective deepened and external events unfolded. Delving into the meaning has allowed me to **reframe** events that initially felt like failures or loss, discovering that they were a stepping-stone to something more.

Then comes the hardest step: **releasing** anger or grief that, left untended, can affect our physical health and spiritual well-being. My part has been to lay those things on the altar, trusting that God will indeed release me. And when that happens, **rejoicing** is the final stage, which I am feeling more and more as I look back at my life and treasure the grace that will bring me home.



# Mixing of the Waters: Where Ancient Wisdom Meets Urgent Challenges

By Adam Greene

In the DC area, we live on land which was occupied for thousands of years by people who knew how to care for it. When the colonial settlers arrived, the Piscataway offered them a place to stay, taught them how to live well, and gave them food and shelter when there was a risk that they would not survive. In exchange, the colonists displaced them and unwittingly brought diseases that led to mass deaths.

I believe we have now reached a point in our collective experience where the domination and extraction approaches to Mother Earth brought by the colonial settler to this continent are threatening the survival of the human species as a whole. If we wait any longer to acknowledge Indigenous genocide and the ways we have severed our bonds of kinship more generally with all of Earth's beings, most likely we will perish. It is not necessary to wait any longer. It is time, I think, to say thank you to our hosts, recognize that the spirit of Christianity existed here before the first followers of Christ disembarked upon this soil, and welcome the opportunity to learn from all our relations to whom we owe our lives.

In the spirit of truly receiving the welcome that our Indigenous relatives are still offering, Wellspring will be hosting an intertribal gathering on Nov 15-17, 2024 focused upon Indigenous resurgence and relationship building. Elders and knowledge keepers from across our continent are being invited with a special emphasis on those from the Eastern Woodlands. Indigenous folks will have the opportunity to council together while also offering their experience and wisdom. Our *Òspèkwe Wiàmkiçèn* (Lenape for "mixing of the waters") event, which he is organizing with me, will be a moment "where ancient wisdom meets urgent challenges."

**If you are interested in attending this event, please reach out to me, Adam Greene, Director of Wellspring, at [wellspringconferencecenter@gmail.com](mailto:wellspringconferencecenter@gmail.com), or 301-515-9120.** Our intention is to provide all Indigenous council-members travel compensation and a donation in appreciation of their



*Mark Tayac, 29th Hereditary Chief of the Piscataway Indian Nation*

willingness to share themselves with us. We will only cover costs such as food, laundry and cleaning, and will donate any excess proceeds to Piscataway Indian Nation, led by the 29th Hereditary Chief Mark Tayac, toward the (re-)acquisition of land and their construction of a cultural center in Southern MD.

Ultimately, as Piscataway Indian Nation Emissary Araf Al Ndee Al Apache has pointed out, "we are all Indigenous to somewhere on Earth." Let's reform the circle of our relationships and learn how to walk together toward a future in which right relationship with all beings governs every step we take and breath we respire. The depths of our spiritual belonging are shared; let us celebrate it, together.

*Adam Greene is the Director of Wellspring Conference Center. He has the privilege of living and working at Dayspring, where an enchanted creek bestows its blessings.*

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# The Call to Deep Connection

By Kate Lasso

In listening to Church of the Saviour folks, my gratitude for the wisdom of our early leaders has grown, along with my understanding of how our structures foster an ever-deepening expression of loving, intimate relationship with God, with ourselves, with others. We know this way of living through the phrase Inward/Outward Together.

In the brochure "the radical vision of the Church of the Saviour" Gordon Cosby states:

*If men and women today began by the thousands experiencing the depths of Jesus Christ in a transforming way, there would simply be no place for their expression of experience to fit into the present-day straitjackets of Christianity.*

*Our expression of Christianity prioritizes listening to God's call, most often in the context of mission groups, where, within the safety of committed relationship, we get to know each other, encourage the release of false notions of self, and offer compassionate support and accountability. Mission groups were purposely designed to foster deepening connection with God and our authentic selves alongside disconnection from culturally-encouraged addictions to power, social status and personal comfort. At the same time, we learn together to follow God's call wherever it leads us, as expressions of hope, peace, justice, and service, especially to the poor and marginalized. Gordon has described this deepening of connection as a growing awareness of the interconnectedness of all life, of "oneness".*

We see this kind of Christian lifestyle expressed in many ways in our scattered churches, such as New Community's focus on recovery from addiction; Bread of Life's commitment to radical hospitality; Seekers, Jubilee and 8th Day's work at the crossroads of inclusion and commitment; Festival Church's devotion to reconciliation across differences and Dayspring's witness to the importance of contemplative practices and care for the earth.

In Paul Wilkes' book, Best Practices from American's Best Churches, Marjory Zoet Bankson has a chapter ti-



led "The Power of Commitment: It Can Happen Anywhere." In it, she writes; *"Many of us have been asked, how can a tiny church accomplish so much? The simplicity of our approach to church understates its transformative power:*

*We assume that Jesus has a call for every person, not just for clergy, not just for seminarians, but also for everyone. We believe that when people begin to look at their own lives and ask where God*

*is calling them to ministry, enormous change can happen, both for themselves and their communities. Every person who comes to the church is soon invited to think about what his or her call is and how [we] can support that.*

We all have experienced God's call in one form or other. In my conversations, I ask folks what they sense as God's call upon the Church of the Saviour today. As you might expect, answers are as diverse as those providing the answer. Our approach to following Christ expects us to be in responsive mode, listening to the calling forth of our gifts as an expression of both God's dream for this world and our discipleship to Christ.

Church of the Saviour is celebrating its 77th year now. Elsewhere in this edition of Callings is information about a gathering being organized at Wellspring on November 9th to both honor the values and practices we hold dear and to discern together where God's call might be leading us now, individually and communally. World conditions are certainly different than in 1947, yet God's purpose and vision remain the same. How can we grow as devoted followers of Christ by saying "yes" to God today? How can we continue to transform lives and change the world by bringing the good news of peace and justice in current circumstances? What has God' put on your heart?

*--Kate Lasso is a long-time member of 8th Day.*

*If you would like to share your thoughts and experiences about Church of the Saviour with Kate, please email her at [klasso@aol.com](mailto:klasso@aol.com)*

Church of the Saviour  
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Washington DC 20009

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## Special Events

Also see [Pottershousedc.org](http://Pottershousedc.org) and [FestivalCenter.org](http://FestivalCenter.org) for their current listings

**Sat, Sept 14 | Festival Center** "Call to Justice"  
Fundraiser. 3pm. Live music, great food, silent auc-  
tion at the Festival Center, 1640 Columbia Rd.  
[www.festivalcenter.org](http://www.festivalcenter.org).

**Sun, Sept 22 | Fall Equinox, Dayspring Outdoor Ceremony**  
at 5, Overlook supper at 6, Sharing Circle @ 7. RSVP  
[jimhallmd@yahoo.com](mailto:jimhallmd@yahoo.com).

**Wed, Sept 25 | Creation Spirituality: Autumn Letting Go,**  
led by Ann Dean, 10-3, \$50. Register at  
[office@dayspringretreat.org](mailto:office@dayspringretreat.org).

**Thurs, Sept 26 | Christ House "Turning Toward the Sun,"**  
Celebrating 39 years of healthcare services, awards,  
reunion of volunteers at St Francis Hall, 1340 Quincy  
St NE. 6-9pm. Reserve spot at  
[christhouse.org/events](http://christhouse.org/events).

**Oct 4-6 | Finding Peace at the Heart of Change,** led by  
Billy Amoss. \$275. Pre-register:  
[office@dayspringretreat.org](mailto:office@dayspringretreat.org).

**Thurs-Sun, Oct 24-27 | Embracing Relationship and Reve-  
lation with the Living World,** led by Ann Dean and Leah

Rampy, \$400. Register with [office@dayspringretreat.org](mailto:office@dayspringretreat.org).

**Nov 8-10 | The Divine Feminine, Healer for All,** led by Connie  
Ridgway. \$275. Register at [office@dayspringretreat.org](mailto:office@dayspringretreat.org).

**Sat, Nov 9 | Celebrating 77 Years as Church of the Saviour,**  
Wellspring Conference Center, 9:30-4pm. All are invited.  
No charge. See info on front page of CALLINGS.

