

# Callings

77

in Church of the Saviour

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*Chapman Taylor, Carol Martin, Dixcy & Nolan Bosley-Smith, Jim Marsh and Kate Lasso. (Photo by Jennie Goschè)*

## AT 77, OUR COMMON PURPOSE

**By Kate Lasso**

On Saturday November 9th, many of us gathered at Wellspring to celebrate the founding of the Church of the Saviour 77 years ago. It was heartening to be in a room overflowing with old friends and new acquaintances, to identify what holds us together as a vibrant church and discern how we are being called, as individuals, church communities and the Church of the Saviour, to be Christ in the challenging times we face today.

Jean Brown of the Dayspring Community named what was in my heart beautifully – we must sing our own song while encouraging others to sing their own songs, out loud and strong. Grounded in the bedrock of relationship with the Divine, we are here to plant seeds of life-affirming community amongst our fellow travelers and companions, both remembering and reminding that all of life is sacred. We are all God's Beloved. During our afternoon worship service, we both sat together in communal silence, and we lifted our voices together in unity and harmony.

Our walk as followers of Jesus has always include a commitment to be in relationship with the poor and disenfranchised in our local communities and around the world. Many of us are deeply troubled by recent events in our country, as we anticipate a turn towards increased exposure to environmental devastation along with a more marked definition of who belongs and who doesn't,

where the poor and disenfranchised among us face even greater vulnerability and lack of safety than before. We heard a deepfelt testimony about challenges experienced in staying true to one's identity and commitments as followers of Christ in a cultural environment that does not share our understanding or values. We recognized that different stages of life, from childhood to elderhood, imply different needs from and offerings to the community. We reaffirmed the wisdom of our early leaders and teachers that it is vital for us to stay connected – to God, to our inner truth, to each other. We are united in purpose to proclaim God's love to the world; we are diverse in our expression of gifts and servant leadership.

So where do we go from here? Onward, inward, outward, together, on separate paths of creative expression, embodied faith and service. Listening carefully for God's voice, we welcome others into the safety of loving community, allowing our lives to make plain the Good News that Christ lives, and that the outpouring of God's divine love is unstoppable. What do we do now? We remain steadfast on the journey we embarked upon when we first responded "yes" to God's call. Drawing upon the words of Church of the Saviour's original membership commitment, we count ourselves as a local expression of the Church, the body of those on whom the call of God rests to witness to the grace and truth of God.

*Kate Lasso is a long-time member of the Eighth Day Community*

*More on pages 2, 4 and 5*

# Editor's Corner | The Hidden Ingredient



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What is so hard to capture in a brochure or a timeline is the power of call, which arises from the inward journey. It's easy to spell the inward journey in words: silence, prayer and reflection. But the work is ongoing. Silence includes anxiety, wonder, despair, delight, surrender, brooding, and a host of other internal conversations between soul and ego, between Self and God. Prayer is not only the formal words we offer in worship or over a meal, but also cries of the heart and whispers of worry. Prayer is not just speaking to the Holy One, but listening, noticing, waiting and watching. For us, silent retreat is a container that allows us to do that work in community.

Reflection may be the hardest inner work, because it means self-examination, learning from mistakes and failures, and shedding the defenses that we no longer need. What Elizabeth O'Connor brought to the leadership team at Church of the Saviour was her deep commitment to self-reflection as the necessary work of being in community, of loving others. Over time, her books led us deeper into those insights, offering exercises for individual and group use. Her final book, *Cry Pain, Cry Hope*, gives us an in-depth look at how a call ripens into fruition over a decade – not a quick answer to “What shall I do next?”

The other unnamed element of the inward journey is spiritual hunger. That, I believe, comes as a deep desire from God mixed with the particulars of each person's life. There are predictable seasons of spiritual hunger: early adolescence, amid the tiredness of early parenting, at midlife, just after retirement, and in old age. But I think we can also spot spiritual hunger in times of excessive accumulation or drug use or climbing suicide rates. Like now. Spiritual hunger makes space for call that leads to new life.

Listed below is an impressive array of ministries that were birthed by people in Church of the Saviour who listened deeply for God's call and were willing to respond without the promise of success. None would have taken shape without the inner journey of surrender and sacrifice. All were birthed by volunteer labor in the beginning and then released to a professional staff that may not even know how the work was begun.

In this issue, we have two stories of call and commitment: Janelle Goetcheus and the birthing of Christ House, and Marja Hilfiker's story of adult learning at the Academy of Hope. Both began with a sense of call nurtured by an inner journey. Both grew beyond their founder's wildest dreams and now stand secure with organizational independence.

As Church of the Saviour moves into the future, I pray that we will hold fast to the importance of the inner journey at every stage of life, because it is there that we hear God's call for healing the wounds of the world and it is there that we come to know the abiding presence of God's love.

With care,

**Marjory**

Marjory Bankson  
Chair, Church of the Saviour Council  
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## 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

# Janelle Goetcheus, Physician and Founder of Christ House



When Janelle Goetcheus and her husband, Alan, met Mary Cosby at a Faith At Work Conference in Indiana, they were planning a move to Pakistan as missionaries. When they stopped to see the Cosbys in 1975, they visited Jubilee Housing and felt a call to stay and serve the poor here on the streets of Washington DC. With their children, they moved to DC the next year.

In 1979, Dr. Goetcheus helped to start Columbia Road Health Services, a clinic next to the Potter's House. Designed to serve the poor and homeless in

that neighborhood, it was the springboard for Christ House and later for Unity Health Care, now the largest network of community health centers in the District.

Working with Gordon Cosby and others from Church of the Saviour, Janelle and Alan received a million-dollar gift and turned an abandoned building across the street into Christ House, a 30-bed respite center for homeless people who are too sick for a shelter and too well for a hospital. On Christmas Eve, 1985, the first patient was admitted.

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The Goetcheus family lived upstairs in the Christ House building, along with other medical providers. Offering 24-hour medical care, communal meals (often provided by volunteer church groups) and a range of activities to encourage the men toward healing, Alan brought his gifts of theater and creative worship as a Methodist pastor. It was a vital ministry in the family of Church of the Saviour.

During the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 80s, Janelle traveled the city in a van, caring for people on the streets. Out of that came Joseph's House, a hospice for AIDS patients, founded by Dr. David Hilfiker, who also lived with his family at Christ House. Later, Kairos House offered patients from Christ House a simple and safe place to

live when they had recovered enough to live independently. In a sense, they are graduates of Christ House and often volunteer there. One example is the shower program, which provides homeless people with hot showers, free toiletries and a change of clothes.

This wide range of health services is funded by grants and reimbursement from Medicaid, Medicare, private insurers and donations to Christ House. Today Unity Health Care operates throughout DC in homeless shelters, schools and the DC jail, serving about 85,000 patients a year. None of that was available before.

Janelle Goetcheus, 84, died at Christ House on October 26 of lymphoma. Besides her husband, Alan, Janelle is survived by her daughter, Dr. Ann Goetcheus Gehl, her son Mark, a nurse, and another son, John, who works for the Senate Legislative Counsel on health care policy. Married 59 years ago, Alan continues to live at Christ House.

Visit [www.christhouse.org](http://www.christhouse.org) or donate to Christ House at 2300 18th St NW, PO Box 21467, Wash DC 20009.

## The Future is Possible

In the presence of the Holy  
whose word has called the universe  
Into being,  
we stand in awe.

In the presence of the Spirit's wind  
that stirs within us  
and causes our hearts to thirst for love,  
we stand in need.

In your presence, Giver of life,  
we come to worship,  
open to truth and love  
and  
wholeness.

*Sonya Dyer, co-founder of Seekers Church.*

*This is a sample of Sonya's creative liturgy which shaped our worship from the beginning in 1976. She died at age 95 on Nov. 13, 2024.*

# Church of the Saviour 77th Anniversary at Wellspring

## GROWING EDGES

Prayer partners to deepen practice  
Need for collective reflection  
Connecting w/ marginalized people  
Advocate for servant leadership  
Leadership: can we trust people w/o degrees?  
Technology: risks & opportunities  
Are we recognizing God in other people?  
Dealing with changes of aging  
Wellspring as assisted living community?

## PRACTICES

Walks, prayer, speaking truth in love  
Being in nature: Dayspring  
Self-massage, reiki  
Whole-body prayer  
Gratitude as an antidote to fear  
Open pulpit, website, zoom worship, music  
Resistance (protecting immigrants)  
Service activities

## WAYS TO INVITE PEOPLE IN

Set ourselves apart from dominant culture  
Notice new interest in silent retreats  
Resist oppression (vocal & silent)  
Song Circles at Dayspring  
Retreats  
School of Christian Living  
See desperate need for connection  
Practicing arts, community garden, safe spaces  
Invite young activists at Festival Center

## DIALOGUE WITH OTHERS?

Confront lies  
Opening Festival Center after election

## CHILDREN'S GROWTH IN CHRIST

Let children do a whole service  
Supporting parents  
Children at retreats? Develop thoughtful policies



Ron Krabill, Judy Lantz, Paige Gruber & Vidalbina Flores-Fitch (Photo by Jennie Goschè)



Ann Barnet (Photo by Aiyana Adams)



Matthias Everhope (Photo by Aiyana Adams)



Phyllis Holt, Rachel Rudy & Alden Lancaster (Photo by Jennie Goschè)



Terry Flood (Photo by Jennie Goschè)



John Goode (Photo by Aiyana Adams)

## WHAT BINDS US TOGETHER...

Call & commitment  
Inward/Outward Journey Together  
Priesthood of all believers  
Spirit of service  
Social justice

## Dayspring – inward journey

Silent retreat  
Letting the land teach us

## Weekly worship

Understanding of God has grown  
Recommitment to following Jesus  
Confession, thanks & commitment  
No “orthodoxy” or creed

## Community

Consensus decision-making  
Nonhierarchical shared leadership  
Mission groups  
Struggle w/inner journey  
Identify & use gifts  
Radical discipleship  
Welcoming & accepting

## History

Inclusive worldview  
Memory of Gordon (his modeling)

## CHALLENGES

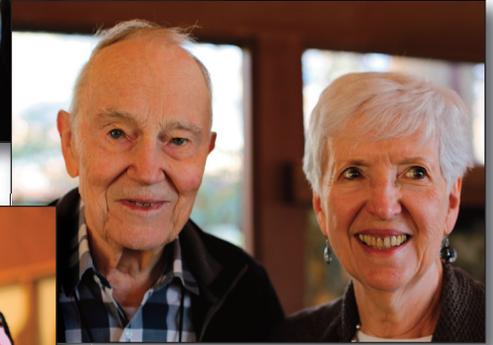
Aging core group  
Creating new structures  
Political environment  
Social media  
High membership expectations vs. age-appropriate activities

## INCLUDING CHILDREN...

Using an “object lesson” in worship  
Children’s word in worship by older children  
Periodic retreats to intro CoS traditions, especially silence & inward journey  
Service: Making lunches for...  
Volunteering at Potter’s House & reflecting on that as outward/inward journey



*Ann Dean and Marjory Bankson*



*Allen and Phyllis Holt*



*Harmony, Destiny & Michael Wright.*



*Jim Dickerson & Chapman Taylor*



*Carol Bullard-Bates, Amelia & CW Harris (above)*



*Jim Hall and Cheryl Hellner.*

Photos on page 5 by by Jennie Goschè

# The Academy of Hope Today

By Marja Hilfiker

In 1983, the Church of the Saviour minister Gordon Cosby spoke to me the words of freedom:

“Money is not important, prestige is not important, power is not important. What is important is to follow God’s call for your life and to be faithful in it. Throw caution to the winds.”

I kind of agreed with the first part, but what was God’s call for my life, and how would I find out? Throwing caution to the winds beckoned to me as a thrilling challenge.

I had been teaching high school German and some English in Minnesota, but hardly any German was taught in DC, and teaching German also did not feel like the call I should pursue, so I spent 15 months looking around, getting to know people and joining different groups to see what they were doing.

## The Call

One fall day, it was a fellow church member Gayle Boss on the phone asking, “Would you like to begin teaching GED-classes with me?” I wasn’t quite sure what GED was but said that I would pray about it. As I hung up, my heart was already beating faster, and I had a strong feeling that I had just heard my call.

## Following the Call

Gayle already had a box of 10 heavy GED-manuals and a vinyl door sign that said Academy of Hope. She also had two students who were eager to continue their studies, and by making an announcement in my parent group, I found two more students who wanted to pursue their GEDs.

Gayle paid the first month’s rent of \$50 for an unused guard room in one of the Jubilee apartment buildings. One student brought in a small blackboard she had found in a thrift store, and another contributed a coffee pot and blue lace curtains for the window. There was no phone, but the copy machine was only two blocks away.

On January 7, 1985, we began classes that met three times a week. Gayle taught math, and I taught reading and writing skills, and we met weekly to share and to pray about our mission. Soon one of our students, Linda Brown, emerged as a helpful guide on our journey toward GED. Even though she had to get four children out of the house every morning, she hardly ever missed a day, and she had helpful suggestions for us.

Each student paid \$10 a month for tuition, and on the last Saturday of the month, we always had a bake sale in the lobby to cover the rest of the expenses. Everything with frosting sold well.



## Finally Something to Celebrate

After 18 months, there was a glorious potluck dinner on the roof terrace of the Christ House to celebrate Linda Brown’s GED-graduation. What an affirmation that was! We had been on the right track!

## AOH Begins to Grow

At that point, Gayle was tugged away to another mission, but I was energized to recruit other volunteers, and the school began to expand rapidly to other parts of the basement. A great blessing was that John Mohr from Eighth Day Church had just retired as an elementary school principal and stepped in to teach math.

Gordon Cosby recruited people to help us do fundraising, and he was the speaker at our first dinner at the Potter’s House. where we raised our goal of \$5,000.

We hardly needed to recruit students.

## Blessings of Early Years

One thing I remember from those early years was the feeling of being so lucky to know many of our students, whom I would never have met otherwise. They were striving folks who made me pray, “Thank you God for letting me know this person.”

The 1990’s were a hard time economically, and adult students were coming to the Hope from other adult programs that were closing their doors. I remember gritting my teeth, determined not to leave our students in a lurch. Some of us decided we could temporarily give up our pay checks, and board members were lending money to the school.



How could I forget Mary Harshaw, who walked in one day in 1990 with a baby boy in her arms. With that child egging her on, she had completed a drug treatment program, and now she was ready to learn to read. She was a focused student who was often chosen to represent Academy of Hope. She even had a chance to meet President Clinton, who, hearing that Mary was an adult learner, shook her hand saying, “You hang in there, Mary!” Mary didn’t miss a beat but responded, “You hang in there too, Mr. President!” They turned out to be prophetic words.

Mary Harshaw contributed much and accomplished much, but this must suffice as a tribute to her life, which tragically ended 20 years ago, due to a rare brain disease. She was 41.

A volunteer who must be mentioned is Tom Brown, who retired early from the Labor Department to volunteer full-time at the Hope. In addition to being a beloved math teacher with a sense of humor and doing all the dishes every day, he inconspicuously produced all the paperwork to lay the foundation for our future growth. I barely thanked him until years later.

### Challenges of Organizational Growth

In 1993, we finally hired a full-time director, LeAnna Marr, who moved us from the basement to the Baptist Church at 16th Street and Columbia Road and launched the much-needed computer program.

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feel we owe our life to you, Bob! Somehow Bob also managed to make homemade cakes for staff birthdays.

### New Programs and Activities

At the end of the millennium, by far most of the teaching was still done by volunteers, but finally our burgeoning computer program got a full-time director. Also GED got some competition. Academy of Hope was asked to pilot the new National External Diploma Program. NEDP was more life skills oriented than GED and it became a great alternative especially for our older students.

Other activities blossomed as well, like all-school field trips to Philadelphia and Luray Caverns, holiday parties, black history programs, Help-the Homeless walk-a-thons and, of course, festive graduations.

### Getting Seriously Established

A new era for Academy of Hope began when Leicester Johnson was hired in 2006. She promptly moved us to Edgewood Terrace, near the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station, where Oprah financed the renovation of our class space.

Academy of Hope became a DC Public Charter School in 2013, and this year Academy of Hope received a high rating as a DC Charter School. Today AOH has an enrollment of 1,000 students – a long way from our humble beginnings.

Gordon Cosby used to say that “call is big, impossible and persistent.” For me, that has certainly been true. Watching the mysterious way that help came when we needed it the most has strengthened my faith and allowed me to let AOH bloom as an independent non-profit organization.

*Marja Hilfiker is a long-time member of Eighth Day and lived at Christ House with her physician husband, David, and their children.*

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## Special Events

*Check-out other winter events at*  
[pottershousedc.org](http://pottershousedc.org), [dayspringretreat.org](http://dayspringretreat.org), and [festivalcenter.org](http://festivalcenter.org)



### **Thursday, December 5 | Cocoa and Carols**

at the Festival Center, 6-7pm.

Dress warmly, bring a flashlight and your holiday voice.

### **Thursday, December 5**

at the Festival Center, 3-7pm

Enjoy meeting the artists and crafts by a number of our non-profit organizations.