

# **Who Do We Say We Are?**

This term paper by Kate Cudlipp looks at the history of Seekers Church as it appeared in 2002. Kate was a Steward of Seekers Church and a member of the Servant Leadership Team. She was also Chair of the Ecumenical Council of the Church of the Saviour, where she coordinated and facilitated the sale of the Headquarters building where Seekers Church was born in 1976.

---

## **WESLEY SEMINARY**

### **WHO DO WE SAY WE ARE?**

### **A QUESTION FOR THE SEEKERS CHURCH**

### **A PAPER SUBMITTED IN CANDIDACY**

### **FOR THE DEGREE OF**

# MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

KATE CUDLIPP

WASHINGTON, DC

APRIL 2002

## CONTENTS

Contents      *ii*

Introduction      1

Section One: Where Do We Come From?  
5

Our Roots in The Church of the  
Saviour      5

The Beginnings of the Seekers  
Church      8

## **Section Two: Models Of Christian Community 14**

**The Church as Colony-or Not 14**

**The Church as Culture 17**

**The Church as a Round Table 21**

## **Section Three: A Round Table Fellowship 23**

**Our Culture 24**

**Our Struggles 26**

**Our Vision 29**

**Bibliography 30**

## **INTRODUCTION**

I am grateful that Wesley Seminary made a paper of this type a requirement for the Master of Theological Studies degree, for if it had not, I would not have undertaken this inquiry, and I needed to. I needed to because I needed to probe my own faith. I needed to because for several years I've wanted to know more about the birth of Seekers Church-my church-out of the Church of the Saviour (C of S) and about how that birth may still be influencing our connections with our sisters and brothers in

other communities that are also offspring of the C of S. And I needed to because, as Seekers Church prepares to move from Massachusetts Avenue to a new home on Carroll Street, I wanted to contribute to our work of naming and claiming who we are and whose we are.

This project has certainly succeeded in making me probe my own faith. My fresh encounters with the Church of the Saviour story-through Gordon Cosby's sermons, interviews (my own and others') with Gordon and Mary, and Elizabeth O'Connor's storytelling-held up for me what truly committed lives look like. Interviews with Seekers' founding pastors, Sonya Dyer and Fred Taylor, vividly presented two people whose lives are about reaching out to all sorts and conditions of people and always, always, engaging the faith dimension of the choices they make. The authors I came to know through their writing helped me see how the Christian story continues to unfold in a variety of ways and how the truth of that story cannot be captured by any one account or interpretation. Finally, conversations with some members of Seekers Church who have made faithful-and tough-vocational choices in their lives revealed how apparently small, faithful choices can change a person's life.

All of these encounters are forcing me to ask: Out of what core beliefs do I operate? Do I really want to be part of God's new reign? Do I want that badly enough to begin to relinquish the familiar patterns of a comfortable life? (I am realizing that, for me, it matters not that I may have, by grace, been enabled to shed a few old ways of being. Each new call to change feels like beginning again.) What steps might I take to open myself to participate more fully in life as the being I was created to be, as a unique player in the unfolding revelation of God? Not surprisingly, writing this paper has helped me to sharpen the questions but has not provided the answers.

Personal faith questions spill over into my discomfiture at

what appears to me to be unresolved questions dating from 1976, when the Seekers Church and five other faith communities were formed out of the Church of the Saviour (C of S). I first showed up at a Seekers Church service in August 1982, having read O'Connor's Call to Commitment and not knowing that the early Sunday service was by and for an entirely different community from the later worship at which Gordon preached. So I came to Seekers, in one sense, by mistake. However, on that first Sunday I found the worship, led by Sonya, to be both inviting and challenging, and the preacher that morning was David Lloyd, a former classmate of mine at Georgetown Law School! I kept returning on subsequent Sundays, and for almost twenty years have found in Seekers a community that has both supported and challenged my faith journey and invited me to enter more deeply into life with others and with God.

Notwithstanding Seekers' role in the ongoing formation of my faith life, I couldn't help but acknowledge that for me-and for other Seekers-certain questions recurred: Is Seekers Church on a different faith journey from the rest of the former C of S communities? Are Seekers' structures-for life together, worship, and accountability-as faithful as those developed by our "parent" church?

As I've sat with these questions, what has come to me is the gift that the different responses to the gospel-Seekers' and the other C of S communities'-have been and can continue to be to each other. At any one time we may be giving different answers to the "how to" questions regarding the living out of our faith, but the questions are the same. The variety of answers, like the variety of gifts present in the Body of Christ, can strengthen the whole, and the answers embraced by each community can challenge the others and help hold them accountable for their answers.

Seeing more promise than problem in diversity is nothing new in Seekers Church or the C of S. Sonya has said on many occasions that one of the beauties of being in community is

that no one needs to feel he or she has to do everything. Each person in community-and by analogy, each faith community in a family of communities-can celebrate, support, and be fed by the gifts and missions of others.

Gordon, who holds so clear and specific a vision of what Christ calls us to, nevertheless recognizes the open-endedness of God's work in the world. In a sermon entitled "The Essence of Church," preached on October 8, 1995, soon after the C of S faith communities had incorporated as independent churches, he said, "The seed of the Church of the Saviour has died in the old form and been planted in the ground...The later form is hardly recognizable; one has to try hard to remember the old form." And in A Handbook for Mission Groups, he wrote, "In calling out the gifts of others, somehow we'll have to stop trying to control them. We have the feeling that if we do take our hands off-what in the world might emerge? Our church might become something entirely different from what it is now." [1]

Writing this paper has renewed for me a sense of the importance of accountability, not only for individuals but also for faith communities-churches. Being an independent church without formal ties to others can be a prescription for insularity and smugness and for the temptation to "stop envisioning and believe it is well to celebrate life as it is."<sup>2</sup> [2] I pray that we in Seekers Church and our sisters and brothers in the C of S tradition will find more and better ways to stay connected in order to enrich and challenge each other's faith lives.

The paper is structured, first, to look at our history. In very brief form, I have tried to sketch some of the milestones of the Church of the Saviour, particularly those that bear on the life of Seekers Church, such as the development of the idea of mission groups, and, as we prepare to move into our own physical space, the C of S story related to the visions it had for the property it acquired. I believe that knowing about

the C of S is essential to knowing who we, as Seekers Church, are. We are, of course, part of a much longer and more complex story than just our immediate past or just the C of S piece of our immediate, past-but this is a finite paper!

In the second section I attempt to provide a somewhat broader context for thinking about the theology and structures of both Seekers Church and the Church of the Saviour. I have selected five books, each of which presents a critique of North American Christianity at the end of the twentieth century, and I summarize some of their analyses to inform the content of the last section of the paper.

The last section was hard to begin. I wanted to draw on our history and the broader context of our life as a church in twenty-first century North America to write about who we in Seekers Church are and who we might want to become. I realized that was a task for which I am not equipped. I see things partially, not in their fullness. I can offer only limited perspectives, not broad visions.

As I thought about my limitations, it came to me that these are the very reasons I am part of a community. My vision is partial. I need others to help me see more clearly and expansively what is, and to open for me new vistas of what might be. It is through others that God's vision for creation is made available to me, and through me, I believe, that others sometimes see glimpses of that vision. My goal in this paper is to initiate conversations. Thus, it is my hope that the observations and reflections in the last section will contribute to the ongoing conversations that help us grow in our life together and become more authentically one small expression of the Body of Christ.

# SECTION ONE: WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

## Our Roots in The Church of the Saviour

The Seekers Church was one of six small faith communities formed from the Church of the Saviour in 1976. The Church of the Saviour came into existence in 1947 when nine people, led by Gordon and Mary Cosby, came together to establish an ecumenical Christian church in Washington, DC. The church grew slowly in membership, relative to the standards of other churches, but was influential beyond its numbers in Christian circles in the United States and abroad. An article by Catherine Marshall in Reader's Digest in 1953 helped publicize this "new" type of church, and throughout its history, there has been both religious and secular interest in a church so small in size and deep in commitment.

Two years after its founding, the Church of the Saviour moved from its first home to a building at 2025 Massachusetts Avenue, NW. Members knew the church was not defined by a building but rather was a community of faithful people whose center was Jesus. At the time the building was purchased, there were thirty-two members, twenty of whom were employed. Elizabeth O'Connor, the long-time interpreter of the C of S, wrote, "Our distinction at that time was that we probably had the highest per capita indebtedness of any church in the country." [3] The church moved into its new quarters in 1950.

Less than two years later, church members began to name the need for a retreat center outside the city, and although the church was still carrying a large debt on its headquarters, a search was begun for a suitable retreat property. In 1953 the church bought a farm with 176 acres, named the property



"Dayspring," and began the work—largely with unskilled, church-member labor—of renovating the farmhouse and designing and building a lodge where retreatants could gather for silence and contemplation. After two years' work, the Lodge of the Carpenter was dedicated. Later, a facility for overnight lodging was constructed as the need for more extended periods of silence was identified.

The still-small church took on another physical project out of a call to plant a place of hospitality in the city. It rented a vacant storefront space in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood, spent hundreds of members' hours cleaning and turning the space into a warm place for the public, and in 1960, opened the Potter's House, a coffee house that offered much more than coffee. It was envisioned as a welcoming place for any who cared to wander in, a place for music and art, a place where church members could gather to discuss and pray and plan for new calls. It was to be a place of living evangelism. Several C of S members who would later become members of Seekers Church were part of one of the various mission groups that grew up around the Potter's House.

The Church of the Saviour has always been unswervingly Christ-centered. A booklet distributed by the church in 1967 contained the following description:

*The quest to which the Church of the Saviour is devoted is this: Is it possible, in the twentieth century, working with people recently turned from secularism or from merely nominal Christianity, to create conditions under which the Living Christ shall manifest himself as he did when his church was young? Is there any leaven by which the mere numbers of a great congregation can be transformed into dynamic, redemptive fellowships? Can the Church of the Saviour act as a pilot project, a demonstration of the kind of fellowship which Christ required of his followers, a fellowship so intensely alive that it will shine as a harbor light to men and women puzzled and lost?*

Another formulation of the essence of the church in that booklet notes that, "From the earliest days of the church...a core assumption has been that the greatest impact on the world comes about by small, highly committed and disciplined communities of people focused on outward mission, inward transformation, and loving, accountable community."

With these understandings at its heart, the church developed as a core structure the concept of mission groups. In its earliest days, the church had had what were known as "cell," "growth" or "fellowship" groups, based, in part, on John Wesley's models. The belief was that out of these groups mission would be found and followed, but that was not the experience. Gordon Cosby described the result as follows: "We felt that if we could nurture people in small groups they would then be able to move into mission. We found that never happened. Not that it seldom happened. It never happened." [4]

Within two to three years after the church began, a decision was made to abandon the fellowship groups and work to nurture calls to outward mission. The notion of "call" was (and still is) central to the C of S understanding of faithfulness. Gordon stated, "[Call] has the element of faithfulness to your own inner being. You are enhanced by what you do. Your own awareness converges with some need out yonder in such a way that you have the sense that you were born to do this." [5] The original discipline pertaining to groups, which was included in the founding documents of the church, was changed as follows, with the new language in italics: "Be a vital and contributing member of one of the confirmed groups, normally on corporate mission."

In 1965 the question of the necessity for membership in one of the corporate mission groups arose. After several weeks of discussion, the mission group discipline was reaffirmed, but exceptions were permitted, including an exception for those who agreed to meet together around their work-conceived as vocation or mission-in the world. Four years later, in 1969,

the church realized that one quarter of its members were not in mission groups. The annual recommitment by members was delayed that year while the membership deliberated over retaining or changing the discipline pertaining to mission group membership. The decision was made to retain the discipline.

*We ended up by saying that the members of the church would live out their lives in small groups on corporate mission. To drop out of a mission group would literally be to drop out of membership in the church. What we did at that important juncture in our life was to face the importance of structurally implementing a description of "Who we are." "Verbal assent," said Gordon, "can mean little. The implementing structures are crucial."*[6]

The centrality of the corporate mission group understanding for the C of S is illustrated in another statement by Gordon:

*Anybody can have a prayer group, a group to study scriptures, therapy groups, anything they want to. We've had hundreds of them through the years. We welcome it. But the membership structure is based on a person being called to the inward life and the outward journey in the same group. These are not groups just to strengthen each person in his or her individual mission, but in a corporate mission...I would say it's the most crucial structure we've discovered...*[7]

By 1975, the C of S had grown to 110 members, with many more associated with the church either as intern members (those moving toward membership) or simply by participating in worship or in other ways in the work of the church. There were two services each Sunday, one at 10 a.m. and one at 11:30 a.m. There were numerous mission groups (some with daunting missions such as the renovation of two slum apartment buildings) and an increasing sense of a breakdown in communication and community.

At that time Gordon made a statement to the Council, the C of S governing body, describing what he saw as the need for a next stage of development for the church. Its growing size, the complexity of its increasing number of missions, and the growing demands on him and the other two church staff members seemed to be calling for new structures.

A New Lands' Servant Group was formed with eight members chosen by the community. Sonya Dyer and Fred Taylor were members of the group which, after meeting for several months went on a two-day retreat at Dayspring and returned with a proposal for the church to be reconstituted into three or more sister communities, each with its own leadership and missions. The New Lands proposal read, in part: "These congregations would be bound by deep spiritual ties because of their common parentage but would be legally and organizationally independent. They would be separate churches, closely linked by history, ongoing fellowship and potentially interlinking missions." [8] By the end of 1976, six new church communities had formed, among them, the Seekers Church, called into being by Fred and Sonya.

## **The Beginnings of the Seekers Church**

Fred was (and is) an ordained Baptist minister who had pastored a church in Northern Virginia before being drawn, in 1965, to the Church of the Saviour and to being present with poor and marginalized people in the District of Columbia. When the decision was made to reconstitute the C of S into smaller faith communities, Fred responded by exploring with Sonya the possibility of calling a new faith community into being. He sought a co-leader both because he wanted to continue to lead For Love of Children, which he had been doing for ten years, and because he believed in the gender balance that would be exemplified by a man and a woman as co-pastors.

Sonya and Fred had both been participants in the creation of For Love of Children (FLOC). FLOC began as a vision of Gordon's and became a mission of the C of S. The mission was designed to involve churches throughout the metropolitan region in addressing the plight of poor children in DC and in particular, in finding an alternative to Junior Village, the District's facility for children who had been removed from their families for a variety of reasons. Fred was FLOC's first (and only, to date) fulltime director, and Sonya participated in various capacities, both volunteer and professional.

True to the theology of the C of S, mission groups were central to the work of FLOC, but the structures and disciplines were modified because volunteers came from churches other than the C of S, and some were not associated with any church. Some groups were made up entirely of members from a specific church, while others were ecumenical, with members from several churches. "Even some of the unchurched found the combination of small group nurture and social action surprisingly invigorating," Fred wrote.[9] The experience of mission groups more open in form than those strictly aligned with the C of S helped inform Fred and Sonya's vision for the church they were calling into existence.

They had also observed that the intensity of commitment called for by the C of S and its focus on church-based corporate mission gave only limited recognition to the possibility that Christian servanthood might be lived out in other arenas. At the time Seekers was formed, Fred knew that being the director of FLOC was call for him even though he was no longer part of a C of S mission group for FLOC. Both Fred and Sonya wanted to create a church that explicitly honored and supported people's commitment to their families-to raising children. They had noted that in the C of S, some couples with young children felt that only one of them could afford the time and energy required to be a member, and so they had to choose which would follow her or his call to the church.

Sonya and Fred developed a call for the Seekers Church that sought "to create church, to build a Christian community that would encourage expression of faith in four aspects of life: worklife, family and personal relationship, citizenship, and particular ministries."10[10] Provision for these four centers of engagement, rather than a primary focus on corporate mission, was one of the ways Seekers would be differentiated from the C of S. The original call of the Seekers Church included the following statement (which is also part of the current call):

*For us, Christian servanthood is based on empowering others within the normal structures of our daily lives (work, family and primary relationships; and citizenship) as well as through special structures for service and witness. In Seekers Church we will equip and support each other in all these areas and seek a balance among them (emphasis added).*

Another way that Seekers would be differentiated from the C of S was in the understanding of what type of group a person who sought to be a member of Seekers would be required to join. A paper submitted by Seekers to the C of S Council (made up of representatives from each new faith community as well as certain other members of the C of S) in August 1977, stated that each member would commit to be part of an "affirmed group," which meant one of the following:

- 1. a covenanted group on corporate mission;*
- 2. a covenanted group supporting and holding accountable one another in defined individual missions (emphasis added);*
- 3. small ad hoc combinations of two or more partners who go out from their small groups for specific time periods to engage in special tasks of service to the body, the larger church and society. During this time the two or three will function as a mini mission group for mutual support and maintain close ties with the parent group.*

In addition to explicitly stated differences in expectations for membership, there was also a difference in the way Sonya and Fred expected vision and authority to emerge in Seekers from the way they had seen those facets of community operate in the C of S. Gordon was the primary holder of the vision for the C of S. He preached every Sunday; he was the visionary most responsible for identifying and raising new calls for others to respond to; and he was the pastor and prophet to whom members most often looked when important individual or corporate decisions were to be made.

Sonya observed that as she and Fred continued to work with how the new Seekers Church would develop, "We began to realize that the form and shape of community would emerge from those in community. When you sound a call for community, people come toward it, and those who come begin to shape it. Who the people are-what they bring-would inform the gospel message that that particular community would be about." [11] Thus, from the beginning of Seekers there was no single voice heard above all others. In the early years, Fred preached twice a month, but others also preached. Sonya rarely gave a sermon.

While there were the differences already noted between the Church of the Saviour's and Seekers' understandings of what is required to be "church," there was also a great deal of agreement. The original Seekers' commitment statement for membership was the same as that of the C of S. Seekers also embraced the C of S understanding that three elements are key to a true life of faith: the inward journey, supported by daily spiritual disciplines; the outward journey of engagement in mission to the world; and a community of committed people who deepen their lives of faith together and hold each other accountable to the covenants they have made.

The concept of "gift," central in the C of S, was also central for the new Seekers Community. In his Handbook for Mission Groups, Gordon wrote:

*Christ makes each of us something unlike any other creation ever fashioned by God. This uniqueness...is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the primary gift we bring to the Body and without it, the Body is immeasurably impoverished. It seems self-evident that this is our primary calling as Christians...to call forth the gifts of other people. To love a person means to help them recognize their uniqueness and discover their gifts.[12]*

In different language, Sonya said, "Part of the definition of love [in community] comes back to really wanting for each person the fullness and wholeness that is possible for them, that they have a full sense of themselves and seek to live out of that in positive ways."13[13] Also, a listing of disciplines for covenant members of Seekers from 1978 includes a commitment "to the discovery and use of personal gifts in the total life of Seekers."

The concept of "call" in the C of S was also important in Seekers. When one answered the questions, "What does God have for me to do? What is God's task for me? What is the place God would have me on mission?" that person was naming her or his call. In the C of S context, responding to one's call meant finding at least one other member who shared the call and beginning the work of figuring out concrete steps needed to be about the mission. In Seekers, an early discipline for a covenant member was to "belong to an ongoing group with two or more members for accountability in spiritual growth and for living out his/her intentional ministry" (emphasis added). The unstated presupposition for this discipline was that each member would have named his or her place of ministry.

Implicit in the differences between the C of S and Seekers, I believe, is a different sense of the relation between "church" and "the world." Both the C of S and Seekers name the necessity for churches to equip people to confront injustice and live in ways that challenge many of the values of the



dominant culture, but their approaches to doing this differ. The underpinnings for the C of S, as articulated by Gordon, are clearer and less equivocal:

What the Bible really means by sin is that we are addicted to the values of the world, the systems of the world. Jesus said that if we stay with the world's system, the way the world views life, it leads to death. Every church has got to have a structure to help people make a passage from the world's culture into another Reality.[14]

Seekers' understanding puts greater emphasis on recognizing permeable boundaries between church and the world. Whereas the C of S approach can be seen, in Fred Taylor's words, as "akin to a lay monastic movement," Seekers may be said to see its challenge, in Sonya's words, as being a "prophetic community," which means "re-inventing for our times what it means to embody compassion and justice in our homes, at work, in the community and the whole earth." [15]

Seekers Church is a Christian church. Our full name is "The Seekers Church: A Christian Community," and we describe ourselves as "being in the tradition of the Church of the Saviour." The call of our church states that we are "an intentional body which sees Christ as our true life source" and that we see ourselves as "called into Christ's ministry of deliverance from bondage to freedom in every personal and corporate expression." What do these statements mean? How do we intend to manifest our identity as Christians-to live in such a way that others may see what we believe the Christian life is all about?

## **SECTION TWO: MODELS OF**

# CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

To assist in looking both at how we, as Seekers, are living as a Christian community and how we may want to live in ways different from the present, I want to examine three conceptual models that have been proposed by different authors. I do this with some trepidation, for in conversations with Fred, Sonya, and Gordon, each in his or her own way shied away from talking in terms of models as a way of thinking about the C of S, Seekers Church, or churches in general. In *Models of the Church*, Avery Dulles, a Jesuit (who explored the notion of models in a more profound and explicitly theological way than I will undertake) offered two observations that encourage me to proceed down this path:

First, he noted that using the concept of models minimizes the likelihood that we will come to believe that our finite language actually encompasses the Infinite. I would add to this insight that the use of any one model quickly disabuses us of believing that any simplistic understanding of the nature of Christian community—an incarnation of the Infinite—is adequate.

Second, Dulles named two different uses for models: an explanatory use, which helps us synthesize what we already know, and an exploratory use, which has the capacity to lead to new theological insights. I hope that by examining some different models as ways of thinking about the relationship between “church” and “world,” we may, as Seekers, gain insights about who we are and are not, and who we do, and do not, want to become.

## The Church as Colony-or Not

In *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon propose conceiving of Christians as resident aliens in the world. A church is a colony, which

the authors describe as “a beachhead, an outpost, an island of one culture in the middle of another. To be resident but alien is a formula for loneliness that few can sustain.”[16] The colonists’ true home is heaven.

For Hauerwas and Willimon, the church as colony is in constant conflict with the culture around it. Cooperation, exchange, or accommodation is fraught with danger because the values of the two cultures are, practically speaking, mutually exclusive. It is impossible for the world to understand or accept the Christian message. The authors juxtapose true Christian values against those of the Constantinian system-the intertwined system of world and church in which the church is co-opted by worldly values and under which system Christians are led “to judge their ethical positions, not on the basis of what is faithful to our peculiar traditions, but rather on the basis of how much Christian ethics Caesar can be induced to swallow without choking.”[17]

The authors use the ethical pronouncements of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount to make their point that Christians cannot, in good faith, preach ethics that make sense to everybody. The Sermon on the Mount will make sense only to those who share Jesus’ understanding of the meaning and goal of human life-sharing in God’s nature as exemplified in Jesus-and most of the world does not have this as its ultimate goal. “The basis for the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount is not what works but rather the way God is.”[18]

Jesus’ call was not addressed primarily to individuals because it is as individuals that human beings are least able to respond to Jesus’-and God’s-invitation. Jesus’ call is for the formation of nonviolent communities-churches-in which we humans have our best hope of attaining the goal of friendship with, and likeness to, God. Hauerwas and Willimon distinguish Christian community from communities that form for reasons other than living a life that grows out of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. They note that in modern Western culture,

there is a hunger for meaning that the culture, with its emphasis on individualism and detachment from long-term commitments, does not provide. People will be attracted to communities that provide a way out of loneliness based on common interests, racial or ethnic makeup, or mutual self-interest, but these are not communities that move us toward more authentic lives.

Western culture has encouraged an ethic of the isolated individual that elevates the value of a person who can stand, choose, and act alone. Christian ethics, the authors say, elevates above all else the value of being faithful to Jesus. This faithfulness can only be pursued in a community of believers who seek to discipline their wants and needs in the quest for truer lives. Togetherness is a by-product, not the goal, of such believing communities, but life together in such communities is essential, not optional, for those who would be Christians. The authors write:

*Peter [the apostle] stands out as a true individual or better, a true character, not because he had become "free" or "his own person," but because he had become attached to the Messiah and messianic community which enabled him to lay hold of his life, to make so much more of his life than if he had been left to his own devices.[19]*

True Christian communities are signs of what God intends for all creation. Christians are not encouraged by Jesus to abandon this world for some otherworldly escape. Rather, Jesus, in showing us what God's realm is like, invites us to join him in beginning to bring about in lives today the new, real world in which it is not the powerful, independent, and successful who are blessed but the poor, hungry and persecuted. The authors expect the church to be part of secular movements against war, hunger, and other injustices but they insist that the true church "knows that its most credible form of witness (and the most 'effective' thing it

can do for the world) is the actual creation of a living, breathing, visible community of faith,"[20] "a place where God is forming a family out of strangers." [21]

In contrast to Hauerwas' and Willimon's model of the church as colony and Christians as colonists in alien territory, David Watson, in *God Does Not Foreclose: The Universal Promise of Salvation*, [22] offers the image of Christians as "patriots." As patriots, we have joined with Christ in the battle against the powers and principalities, not of "the world," but of "the present world order." The distinction is important because it is Watson's view that everyone will be included, everyone will be a citizen, in God's coming reign. In effect Watson is saying, "We're all together-the whole world-in this business of being saved from ultimate alienation from God." The view that salvation is universal means, for Watson:

*The church is the community of those who, within the divine plan that is common to all humanity [emphasis added], are entrusted through the revelation of the Christ event with an understanding of what is really happening in and to the world...It is liberating to find God's salvation operative beyond the Christian community...liberating in that it absolves the Christian from the two-kingdom riddle of being in, yet not of the world. There is fostered instead the reality of being wholly in and of the world, yet knowing that a new age is already present and imminently to be fulfilled.[23]*

Watson believes that the whole world hears the call of God, and he asserts that this belief is at the heart of Christian faith. It is not Christians only whom God calls to God's self, but the entire creation. Some members of this world family find their way into the particular family of the church, he says, and believe Christ's teachings and endeavor to follow them. These Christians are nurtured by the grace present in the church and share that grace through their lives in the world.

Some of those in the church-a few-respond to Christ's call to be his disciples. Disciples, according to Watson, are not simply members of the large crowd whom Jesus fed in so many ways on so many occasions but those in every age who accept the costly disciplines of Jesus' own life. Disciples are those who continually push the larger church into being more authentically Christian. The larger church must permit these successors to the early disciples to function as leaders, and both parts of the body-disciples and members-must function together in the world so that Christ is not divided.

These insights open the way to recognizing that "we must accept a very wide range of Christian commitment in our congregations." [24] Drawing on John Wesley's experience and theology, Watson concludes, "A Christ-centered gospel would always allow people to respond in their own way and in their own time with whatever measure of grace the Holy Spirit would extend." [25]

## **The Church as Culture**

What conceptual model might help churches become more powerful agents for change in the world? Rodney Clapp's response to this question is to propose the concept or model of the church as culture.

He notes that from its beginnings, the church has offered an alternative vision to that of the world's ruling powers. This alternative vision has always been a threat to those powers, and the church has succumbed in each age to inducements to step back from its prophetic stance. More often than not, churches have been the sponsors or supporters of rulers and nations. In a seemingly contradictory phenomenon, Christians have also been seduced throughout their history into seeing their faith as a private and individual affair with no real implication for worldly powers. As Clapp notes, however, this latter tendency also serves the ruling powers because it

shifts the believer's focus from advocating for social change to adjusting to the status quo.

In today's world of diverse cultures there is growing recognition of the power of culture to form the way people see and think. "It is culture that gives us the context from which we see and the categories by which we see...So it is that we must be molded in certain ways, trained in certain skills, in order to see rightly what is happening around us and to us." [26]

Clapp argues that the culture wars that have become so much a part of the daily news from around the world –

*...can be welcomed on the count that they help return us to a place where we can conceive of Christianity as a way of life, as a specific manner of being and doing in the world. And they make it possible for Christians...to move more easily and directly into the public, the social, the political and the economic realms-and to do so specifically as Christians. They make it possible for the church not merely to be relevant to culture but to be a culture, a "cultivating process that produces people in a particular way"; not merely to contribute to politics from the sidelines but to do politics of a peculiar kind-a kind that once turned the world upside down. [27]*

Conceiving of church as a culture helps us to see what is distinctive about our way of viewing the world and to communicate those distinctions. One distinguishing characteristic of the church as culture is that the church does not exist for itself. It is not a gathering of people whose primary goal is to preserve their way of life against assault from the outside. Rather, it exists for the sake of the world; it is on mission to the world to witness to the current reality of, and future possibility for, the reign of justice and love in all creation.

Clapp sees worship as essential for equipping Christians to be on mission to the world. He notes, "The root of the word culture is cultus, or worship." [28] While modern worship is most often seen as a time to get away from politics, business, and conflict, a time to be fed, or a time out from "real life," liturgy-the work of the people-can remind us that things are not as they seem in everyday life. "[T]he business of worship...is to stand things on their heads in the perceptions of its audience, to rob the established order of the most fundamental power of all: its sheer facticity."

For both practical and moral reasons, Clapp argues that Christians are not required to try to impose their values and way of life on non-Christians but instead need to propose to others-through the example of our own lives-the good news. Because human beings are "inescapably communal creatures," [29] the work of offering the gospel must be done from a foundation in community. Like Hauerwas and Willimon, Clapp suggests that the visible life that emanates from a truly Christian community is the best means of bearing witness.

While there is a "mass-techno-liberal-capitalism" that Clapp describes as "a pervasive, infinitely insinuating social, political and economic ethos...that in biblical terms might be called a principality or power, a vast and captivating structure that both holds our world together and threatens to destroy it," [30] [30] there is no monolithic world culture that must be opposed in its entirety. In fact, Christians are members of more than one culture at any given time and must confront different cultural practices on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, Clapp believes, Christianity does not need to be immune from correction or change from outside itself.

In his final chapter, Clapp suggests that as a first step in forming plans to recover the vitality and strength of the Christian message, churches address two necessities: rebuilding truly distinctive communities, starting where we are in our churches today; and practicing "sanctified



subversion,” that is, looking for ways to change the dominant world system from the inside.

In his book, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*[31]-an important resource for Seekers Church in its early days-John Westerhoff does not explicitly write about the church as culture but the idea of “enculturation” has a prominent place in his work. His descriptions of education within a faith community implicitly are all about church as culture, and his work with what makes a group of people into a community of faith complements Clapp’s analysis. Westerhoff uses the term “enculturation” to characterize the educational method he proposes for churches:

*[Enculturation] focuses on the interactive experiences and environments within which persons act to acquire, sustain, change, and transmit their understandings and ways. In enculturation one person is not understood as actor and the other as acted upon, but rather both act, both initiate action, and both react. It is the nature, character, and quality of these interactive experiences among people of all ages within a community of faith that best describes the means of Christian education.[32]*

With respect to the relation between the church and the world, Westerhoff, like Clapp, sees Christians as living in more than one culture:

*Christ calls his church, however, to be a community of change, to act with God in transforming the world into the community of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To make an adequate response to that vocation is to live simultaneously in this world and in the community of God. We cannot escape from the world and be faithful. Neither can we become so enmeshed in the world that we lose our souls. To live on the boundary is difficult and demanding.[33]*

Westerhoff describes a community of faith as having certain

essential characteristics: a common (biblical) story; a commonly acknowledged authority to hold it together when there are disagreements; common rituals around which it celebrates and orders its life; an end or purpose beyond itself; and a valuing of diversity (because a Christian community binds people together because of their commitment to a common end, not because they are all alike).[34] He emphasizes the need for agreement within a community of faith on what it believes. "Diversity of interpretation can be valuable, but only if there is agreement on a statement of faith and the authority to be used as a guide to interpretation."[35]

## The Church as a Round Table

Letty Russell, from a feminist perspective, offers the image or model of church as a table around which all may gather. She says, "The measure of the adequacy of the life of the church is how it is connected to those on the margin, [that is,] whether those the NRSV calls 'the least of these who are members of my family' are receiving the attention to their needs for justice and hope." [36] In order to be a table at which all will feel welcome, a church must actively be open to those of its own members who are on the margin and must also begin to recognize and join with oppressed and marginalized groups in the wider community as they struggle for justice.

For too long, Russell believes, the Christian church has privatized the concept of sin, splitting it off from issues of injustice. This has led to what she calls the "double sin" of the church, which is to be of but not in the world:

*According to Robin Scroggs, Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are to continue to participate in the life of their communities, but they are to live as if the New Creation were already at hand. Instead, the churches of our day often live of, but not in, the world. Their structures, class divisions, sexual orientation, and prejudices all reflect the culture of*

*which they are a part rather than the New Creation. All the while they refuse to be involved in social, economic and political advocacy for justice.[37]*

In order for churches to be in the world but not captive to the world, Russell suggests that conversion and transformation are necessary. For her, conversion is a change in the churches' perspective of what "reality" is. The change required would be from seeing reality (that which is and cannot be changed) as the domination of subordinate groups by dominant ones, to seeing that reality is based on just relationships with our neighbors-in the most expansive sense of that word. "Until the paradigm of partnership and justice makes more sense than that of domination and injustice, the churches and their members have not begun to repent of the sin of being of the world." [38]

Russell sees transformation as the move by churches beyond social outreach and action to recognizing the root causes of injustice, the systemic factors that deny people the resources to address their own problems. "The issue is not in what way one works for justice, but whether one's work is on behalf of transformation of the society so that God's justice is done on earth." [39]

Russell describes a process for churches to engage as they seek conversion and transformation. She calls this process a "spiral of action and reflection." In acting, we draw on our own experiences-in society and in the church community. In reflecting, we connect these experiences and actions to our Christian tradition and to other persons who are struggling for life, and then we look to see what effect our reflections have on our understanding of what our faith calls us to-the basis for future action. Crucial to the faithfulness of the spiral is reaching out beyond our immediate community to others who are the rejected ones of society.

The process is a spiral because it is always covering new ground, integrating new experiences and insights into new, provisional understandings of what God wants in our lives. Of paramount importance to Russell and other feminists is that this process-and any process or methodology with a claim to integrity-moves beyond the old "competitive and hierarchical forms which seek a truth that is made secure by the vanquishing of all other truths." [40]

Russell's "church in the round" is an open church, welcoming at its table all sorts and conditions of people and moving out from the table to join with others, especially others marginalized by society, to seek and advocate for justice.

## **SECTION THREE: A ROUND TABLE FELLOWSHIP**

In this section, I would like to appropriate and adapt Letty Russell's model of an open, round table fellowship as a central image for Seekers Church. I would also like to draw on Rodney Clapp's and John Westerhoff's insights about cultures to help us look critically at our life in Christian community. I want to use these models to think about what I see as the two-fold challenge facing Seekers Church-and every Christian community: To build true community with each other-to deepen our capacity to live with and for one another-and to care passionately for life beyond our community. It is in Christian community that we really come to know God and Christ. This means, for me, that as a result of life lived together our desires for our own well-being and that of those closest to us expand toward becoming a longing for the well-being of all creation. To be both committed to each other and open to the world is what God in Christ is asking of us.

The image of community as table fellowship is not a new or abstract image for Seekers Church. We have meals together as a

whole community at Christmas and Easter, we gather for supper and foot washing on Maundy Thursday, and we come together in smaller numbers weekly during the school year for meals before classes in the School of Christian Living. A central element of our worship is Communion, a ritual meal we celebrate once a month and to which we invite all who wish to come.

An open, round table fellowship is one at which a host family or community prepares food for itself and for extended family members, guests, and strangers. At a round table, there is no head of table or preferred seating. Room is made for guests and strangers among community members where the newcomers may learn as they eat a little of what life is like in this community.

If guests return, sooner or later they are no longer guests. They begin to help prepare the meals. Soup kitchen hospitality is not the essence of this table, although it may be a place of respite and feeding for those who do not choose to stay. The essence is both to welcome all sorts and conditions of people into the fellowship where their gifts and uniqueness may build up this part of the Body and to create, as Russell writes, "a safe and welcoming space for persons to find their own sense of humanity and worth,"[41] from which space they may move on to follow God's call on their lives in other places.

Of course, a table fellowship is more than simply a gathering for food. Some of us learned in a class in the School of Christian Living in the fall of 2000 that most gatherings to eat are not only gatherings to consume food "but are [also] what anthropologists call commensality [which] means the rules of tabling and eating as miniature models for the rules of association and socialization." [42] Rodney Clapp, in *A Peculiar People*, observed, "People endow eating with all sorts of significance. Culture pervades our meals." [43] So the church as table fellowship assumes a culture undergirding it.

# Our Culture

What can we say about the culture of Seekers? In “A Guide to Seekers Church” we declare that our life as community is defined by our call. In our call we say, “By ‘Seekers community’ we mean an intentional body which sees Christ as our true life source. Koinonia with one another and genuine self-giving to the world are the ways we can be in Christ today.”

What does it mean to say, “Christ is our true life source”? There is no single answer within Seekers Church to this question. Some may hear the meaning of that statement best reflected in a statement of Gordon’s:

*If one longs for depth in life we must focus on a very few things. And what is that one thing? We are saying it is Jesus. I choose to go deep-sea diving in that ocean. Jesus said, “I am the way, truth and the life.” Is that true or false? By faith I say it is true so I give my entire life to that deep exploration. I want to know him in depth and be transformed into his likeness.[44]*

Others may identify more with Sonya’s understanding of “life in Christ” as meaning:

*For me personally, as long as I want to present myself to Christian worship, to be open to scriptural wisdom, to be nourished by truths from the Christian story and history, I belong with this Christian community. The ways I nourish my inner life vary. This does not seem a bit conflictual. The Christian story is still my story. The ways I engage the transcendent or my own inner life or embrace the Christ spirit flow different ways at different times.[45]*

Never since its beginnings has Seekers Church had just one authoritative voice to answer doctrinal and theological

questions. In a recent conversation, Sonya described Fred's and her sense that with respect to Seekers, they were calling into being a prophetic community, which meant (and means) for her: "The whole business of trusting that the prophetic can come both from the collective and from individual voices [as well as from a single pastoral figure]. People are used to hearing from the preacher and don't name what's coming from the bottom up as also a prophetic word." [46]

Clapp has said that Christianity does not need to be immune from correction or change from the outside. Seekers Church, by our structures and practices, is saying that neither as a church nor as individuals do we need to be immune from correction or change or averse to a variety of understandings. In fact, our structures invite diversity and encourage each of us to be open to seeing our faith anew. Our worship-with the open pulpit and with liturgies written by our own members for each liturgical season out of the life of the community as well as the lectionary scriptures-reflects our ongoing belief that God's voice may come from any one of us and from our life together.

With all this diversity present, what is it we gather around? Westerhoff has observed, "A faith community must agree on what it believes. Only then can the struggle to interpret those beliefs serve constructive ends." [47] And Russell believes, "In all this talk of diversity it needs to be said that there are also limits...[C]hurches with no sense of identity and worth have little to share." [48] Our call statement and the commitment statements of both members and Stewards of Seekers Church express the beliefs around which we gather.

We gather around the Christian story and certain basic beliefs about what this story promises us and asks of us. Because of this story, we believe that each of us is loved by God and is called by God for important work in the world. Because of this story we know we are called to turn toward, not away from, those whom society marginalizes. Because of this story, we

recognize the seductive power of all the forces that would pull us from doing what our hearts truly desire and what God desires for us. Because of this story, we confess that we are incapable, as individuals, of resisting those powers; we know we need a community and spiritual practices to open us to God's actions to strengthen us on our journey.

## **Our Struggles**

We have our core beliefs. We also have our struggles to interpret them and to determine how faithfully to live them out. We have structures and practices that come from our roots in the Church of the Saviour and structures and practices that have grown out of our life together. These structures and practices are not static and are always open to change as we, as a community, discern new ways in which we are called to grow. In our best moments we know that no individual or group among us possesses ultimate authority, that human beings can only be channels for authority we do not own. In our best moments we also know that an ongoing challenge is to learn to recognize and affirm authority when it appears in individuals and groups among us, and we know that we often do this poorly. We either refuse to acknowledge others' authentic authority over us or too easily turn matters over to others to avoid conflict and hurt feelings.

One of the places of current struggle is with respect to Stewards as the body in Seekers Church with the authority to make decisions that affect the whole community. There is not unanimity in the community that this is authentic authority. At this time the whole community readily acknowledges Celebration Circle as the authority for our worship life; Learners and Teachers for our formal adult education; and Journeying with Children for structuring community life for our children. Beginning by looking at the conditions that engender widespread recognition of authority, we can, perhaps, build a base from which to practice listening carefully to



each other to see if, with respect to Stewards, new forms are waiting to be born or if we, individually and collectively, can see the faithfulness of present structures and our participation in them in new ways.

Another place of struggle for us is around structures of accountability for the call of God on our lives. We understand that, in one sense, God's call is rarely to one clear, singular undertaking. At any time in our lives we are called to act faithfully in multiple places and relationships. Seekers Church, in our description of who we are (our "Call"), tries to capture this variety by naming as places of Christian servanthood, three dimensions of our daily lives-work, family and primary relationships, and citizenship-in addition to "special structures for service and witness."

"Christian servanthood" is, I believe, similar to Clapp's concept of "sanctified subversion." Clapp holds up the story of Daniel as an example of someone's working faithfully in structures that do not embody one's values and beliefs. Parenting, working at mainstream jobs, advocating for justice in public forums, or creating faith based service organizations are all arenas for the exercise of sanctified subversion. This is hard work, impossible to sustain, we believe, as individuals.

Based on our belief that we all need a group of people to encourage and challenge us in these impossible undertakings, ideally every member of Seekers, other than those relatively new to the church, would be in a mission group. Mission groups would be either groups whose members come together around a common ministry or groups in which the members have named what they believe to be a place of God's call on their lives and are accountable to each other for those calls. In all cases, the calls, whether corporate or individual, would "help bring about God's vision for all creation"[49] and would "reflect Christ's ministry of deliverance from bondage to freedom." [50]

For a variety of reasons we are far from that ideal. A majority of members and several Stewards are not in a mission group, and some mission groups ask for little in the way of accountability. We may need to consider whether missing the mark so widely is a sign of failure to implement what we know to be valid structures to support our lives of faith or an indication that God is inviting us to new insights and new or modified structures. These are important questions. They go far beyond issues of organizational structures. In fact, the answers to these questions will say a great deal about whether we are seeking to let faith be the framework for all the dimensions of our lives or are simply trying to fit some faith pieces into the rest of life.

In Seekers Church we are working to “create a living, breathing, visible community of faith—a place where God is forming a family out of strangers”[51] as well as to equip members to engage in sanctified subversion against the powers and principalities. (The fact that we hold these two visions in tension, without one’s having priority over the other, distinguishes us, I believe, from Hauerwas’ and Willimon’s model of a Christian colony and from the Church of the Saviour where, in both cases, engagement in the world is subordinate to life in community.)

We are actively forming a family out of the members of Seekers. Quilts made for the babies born into the community, with squares contributed by most members; individuals stepping forward to coordinate meals, transportation, and companionship in times of illness or death; festive weddings within the community; and services to celebrate the lives and grieve the loss of those who die are all marks of an extended family—but what about strangers?

In one sense many of us came to Seekers Church as strangers, knowing no one well but having heard something that made us think there might be a place for us here. The church welcomes visitors and invites them to return, to learn more and to

become known. In this sense we are forming a family out of strangers. How strange are these strangers, however? We are a predominantly white, well-educated, reasonably well-off congregation. We struggle individually and as a church to learn how to be more open and inviting to those different from us. This openness must grow out of who we are, not out of a campaign or crash program to diversify. We must, however, never cease envisioning a more inclusive church-and society-nor fail to open ourselves to the strangers we do encounter.

At times we have encountered the stranger in our midst when members have revealed themselves to be other than whom we thought. Lesbian, transgendered and bisexual members have opened us to those we might at one time have thought of as "other." Members with few financial resources have unmasked our faulty assumptions about what "everyone" has. Our children with learning, developmental or emotional issues have changed our understanding of what it takes to make one's way in the world. And those in Seekers who challenged the largely unconscious sexist worldview that made many aspects of women's reality invisible, revealed women to be other than how they had been perceived before.

These experiences show us what it is like to recognize the stranger as one of us, and they can give us a base from which to grow in the breadth of whom we invite and welcome into our midst. I pray that as we move into a new neighborhood we will find more calls-more occasions-to go out from our center and find ourselves in places we never knew we lived.

## **Our Vision**

All of the foregoing-our beliefs and our struggles-are what we offer at our round table fellowship. We bring to the table not just stories of triumph and laughter but confessions of failure and uncertainty. We gather at the table not only with people with whom we are comfortable but also with those with

whom we feel discord and difference. We are inviting the stranger not to a fellowship that magically dispels the pain and suffering of life, but to a community that is learning that each one's gifts build up the Body and each one's burdens are lighter when shared.

Our meals together give us glimpses of a power that unites us in the face of our diversity. We experience moments of knowing that our well-being is bound up with the well-being of the other-with all others. We pray to be one small community of people seeking personal transformation, practicing sanctified subversion in the world, and linking with others of our Christian culture to offer ever more visible alternatives to the dominant systems around us.

## END NOTES

[1] Gordon Cosby, *A Handbook for Mission Groups*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975) 74-75.

[2] John H. Westerhoff, III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2000) 41.

[3] Elizabeth O'Connor, *Servant Leaders, Servant Structures* (Washington, DC: The Servant Leadership School, 1991) 18.

[4] Jim Wallis, "Mission Possible: The Inward-Outward Journey of Mary and Gordon Cosby," *Sojourners* (November-December 1997) 20.

[5] O'Connor, *Servant Leaders*, 25.

[6] *Ibid.*, 36.

[7] Wallis, *Sojourners*, 21.

[8] Elizabeth O'Connor, *The New Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976) 96.

[9] Fred Taylor, *Roll Away the Stone: Saving America's Children* (Great Falls, VA: Information International, 1999) 115.

[10] Sonya Dyer and Jackie McMakin, *Seekers: Growing Our Life Together, 1976-2000* (Author's collection, Washington, DC, 2000) pages unnumbered, quote from section entitled "The Beginnings of Seekers".

[11] Sonya Dyer, phone interview by author, tape recording, Washington, DC, 1 March 2002.

[12] Gordon Cosby, *Handbook for Mission Groups*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975) 72-73.

[13] Dyer and McMakin, *Seekers*, section entitled "Love in Community".

[14] Jeff Bailey, "A Conversation with Gordon Cosby," *Cutting Edge* (Fall 2001) 16.

[15] Dyer and McMakin, *Seekers*, section entitled "The Prophetic Community".

[16] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989) 12.

[17] *Ibid.*, 72.

[18] *Ibid.*, 85.

[19] *Ibid.*, 65.

[20] *Ibid.*, 47.

[21] *Ibid.*, 83.

[22] David Lowes Watson, *God Does Not Foreclose: The Universal Promise of Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990).

[23]Ibid., 117.

[24]Ibid., 138.

[25]Ibid., 112.

[26] Rodney Clapp A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996) 97-98.

[27] Ibid., 75.

[28] Ibid, 94.

[29] Ibid., 194.

[30] Ibid., 189.

[31] John H. Westerhoff, III, Will Our Children Have Faith? (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2000)

[32] Ibid., 80.

[33] Ibid.,41.

[34] Ibid., 74-75.

[35] Ibid., 52.

[36] Letty Russell, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 25.

[37]Ibid., 124.

[38]Ibid., 126.

[39]Ibid., 127.

[40]Ibid., 30.

[41] Russell, Church as Roundtable, 173.

- [42] John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994) 68.
- [43] Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, 106.
- [44] Bailey, *Cutting Edge*, 13.
- [45] Dyer and McMakin, *Seekers*, section entitled "Tension Between Being an Inclusive and a Christian Community of Faith."
- [46] Dyer, interview, 1 March 2002.
- [47] Westerhoff, *Will Our Children*, 53.
- [48] Russell, *Church in the Round*, 178.
- [49] From the Introduction to "A Guide to Seekers Church"
- [50] From "The Call to Seekers Church"
- [51] See notes 20 and 21 on page 16.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Bailey, Jeff. "The Journey Inward, Outward, and Forward: The Radical Vision of the Church of the Saviour." *Cutting Edge* (Fall, 2001) 10-15.

Bailey, Jeff. "A Conversation with Gordon Cosby." *Cutting Edge* (Fall, 2001) 16-17.

Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.

Cosby, Gordon. *A Handbook for Mission Groups*, Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975.

Crossan, John Dominic. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. San

Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994.

Dulles, Avery. Models of Church. Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1974.

Dyer, Sonya and McMakin, Jacqueline. Seekers: Growing Our Life Together, 1976-2000. Author's collection, Washington, DC, 2000. Photocopy.

Hauerwas, Stanley and Willimon, William H. Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989.

O'Connor, Elizabeth. Call to Commitment. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. Journey Inward, Journey Outward. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_. The New Community. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. Servant Leaders, Servant Structures. Washington, DC: The Servant Leadership School, 1991.

Russell, Letty. Church in the Round: A Feminist Interpretation of the Church. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993.

Taylor, Fred. Roll Away the Stone: Saving America's Children. Great Falls, VA: Information International, 1999.

Wallis, Jim. "Mission: Possible: The Inward-Outward Journey of Mary and Gordon Cosby," Sojourners. (November-December 1997) 16-22.

Watson, David Lowes. God Does Not Foreclose: The Promise of Universal Salvation. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990.

Westerhoff, John H., III. Will Our Children Have Faith? Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2000 (revised and expanded edition).