

# Callings

in the Church of the Saviour

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## Happy 93rd Birthday, Mary!

### Cami Seward, *Mary's niece*

When things in life are most beautiful, and most gracious, I think of you MayMay. In sunlight and shadows across a table, the most beautiful music, in many green things, parsley, mint, in Nandina, and in the deep feelings of enjoyment after an evening with closest friends and family, you are always with me. I think of our times together with so much love and laughter as some of the happiest in my life. Phone calls with you have been a line to God's mercy, wisdom, and grace and every mile driven to reach you has insured sanctuary, or at Christmas there was magic! You offered your holy home to be my home in all the truest ways.

Walking from school along King Street as a child, the best days were the ones when I could spot your car parked in front of our house. It was wonderful! All our beds would be made, socks that matched would find their way to our drawers, and the other shoe I was always looking for would appear, when you would come to be with us. You always came to us with blessings and such joy, and it continues!

I once read about the creative power of our words as part of our being made in God's image: we have the ability to speak things into being. You make me know this is true. You have been speaking into being God's gracious realm of goodness, hope and beauty all of my life. Thank you.

Love you wildly,  
Cami



### Jimilu Mason, *Sculptor*

I first met Mary Cosby in 1957 when I was invited to attend worship at 2025 by Liz Dougherty, who was my younger sister's first grade teacher. I was sitting on the bench under the big mirror when a lovely young woman came down the stairs and immediately came over to greet me. We have been fast friends from that very Sunday morning.

Mary and I had a number of things in common. She played the piano as did my mother, a concert pianist. As an artist, I was keenly aware of Mary's love for beauty and her awareness and gift for ambiance. We later started a mission group called Art and Ambiance, where we deepened in our faith and friendship.

Among my fondest and most vivid memories is working with Mary and others getting the original Potters House ready to open. I had noticed that 1658 Columbia

Road was for rent while driving home from my former church. When I saw the sign, I called Mary right away. Several of us went by to check it out. It was quite unattractive inside—orange, green and yellow. We couldn't wait to get started with the renovations. Mary and I worked on design and ambiance while Hart Cowperthwait worked on the lighting. We used burlap on the walls and hung beautiful pieces of art. What memories and what fun.

What do I think of when I think of Mary Cosby? I think of love, her love for Jesus, her hospitality, her beauty, and what a wonderful teacher she was. She didn't just teach, she was!

### **Marjory Bankson, *Editor of Callings***

Because of Mary, I was drawn to Church of the Saviour. She was speaking at a Faith At Work conference. Her text was from Rom. 8 :22, "All of creation groans as in childbirth, waiting for the children of God to grow up!"

(Mary's translation). She pointed out the environmental and social crises as the context for God's call for ALL to claim some part of God's plan for creation. I was transfixed. Where was the church that took call so seriously? And so I began reading Elizabeth O'Connor's books until we moved here in 1976 and could share this life with others. Mary's sister, E.A. Campagna, wove stories of their childhood into the biblical narrative, and together, they made scripture come alive for me.



On my first silent retreat, Mary must have seen the stack of books that I brought. As a recovering Presbyterian, I simply could not imagine spending a weekend "doing nothing." In her introduction, Mary smiled and said, "If you've brought any books, I hope you'll lock them in your car." With that, she opened a door to the spacious wonder of God's presence, unfiltered and true – a presence which could be held around me by others when I could not find my own stillpoint. In so many ways, Mary embodied the inward/outward journey as invitation rather than rule. And still, she's on the path ahead of me, teaching me the wisdom of love.

### **Barbara Moore, *Church of Christ Right Now***

Though I have known Mary Cosby for many years, there are two early memories which will stay with me always. One was the joy of



listening to Mary sing and play the piano at 2025 when the offering was taken each Sunday. I loved her beautiful voice. My favorite song was Charles Gounod's "O Divine Redeemer." She would sing it once or twice a year. Pure heaven.

Secondly, I was entranced by Mary's teaching of the New Testament class in the School of Christian Living. As a young woman of 25, I hung on every word in every session. Jesus became so alive to me. I left floating on air and so grateful to God and for Mary's faith-

fulness. One night I was flying so high after the class that I ran a red light at 20th and Massachusetts and caused an accident!

More recently though, when I visit Mary at Christ House, I love that she asks every single time, "How are those big gorgeous sons of yours?" I love it. Blessings, dear Mary.

### **Basil Buchanan, *Festival Church***

Visiting with Mary is always an enspiriting experience. So a few weeks ago I checked with Mary to see whether I could come to see her. She always responds with alacrity so I showed up after lunch with a bouquet of her favorite yellow long stem roses. Mary is always cheerful no matter the underlying issues. "Thank you for these beautiful roses. Please put them where I can smell them. Thank you so much".

I said, "Mary, you are more than welcome. You have always been so good to me. Do you remember a conversation we had during my time with a mild bout of anxiety, depression and feeling of being alone? What did I say? You reminded me one Sunday after morning worship at 2025 as we stood by the piano. 'You always have the power of invitation.' Would you say that again? Basil, you always have the power of invitation? You will get a response and it will get your juices flowing again".

"Did I say that? You are so kind to have attributed that to me."

"Yes, Mary. You gave me a way forward to dealing with loneliness at a time when I was just beginning to learn the meaning and joy of solitude.

### **Jim Dickerson, *New Community Church***

The greatest influence for me was the basics of their dream, and a community that, for better and for worse, nurtured me and gave me freedom to do it differently – create a church that was unique to our own context and people involved. We did it our way, the way Jesus and the Spirit led us to do it ... and they, Gordon and Mary, were tremendously supportive ( Mary commented to me that I didn't do NCC the CoS way). Also their clarity about Jesus as the center of our lives as individuals and the Church gave me something to come up against and work with on my own.

One of the things I do remember is how tough she was underneath that gentle southern charm and manner of hers when she had to be. She could cut to the chase and mix it up and confront with the best of them. When I took her classes, I never did remember the substance of the subject she was teaching, but rather all the stories she could tell and get off on. She and her sister, Elizabeth Anne, had an entertainer in them, and it made Mary a very good teacher.

But mostly it is her love that has most influenced me.

### **Ann Barnet, *8th Day***

A source of Mary's enduring inspiration to me is her amazing capacity for gratitude. Mary radiates faith in God's goodness and belief in the goodness of ordinary people like us. Once, many years ago, she responded to a substantial theft from her Mount Vernon home of family silverware, the culprit being someone to whom she and Gordon had shown unfailing kindness, saying, "It's only silverware. (Our relationship) is founded in God's grace, not silver."

In recent months, living as she does on the second floor of Christ House, she tells me at every visit of how comfortable she is, how thankful she is for the people around her, how her every need is met, how she never hears a cross word, how good her health is: "I don't need any medicines!" Many years ago, I attended Mary's "Call" class at the Servant Leadership School. Along with many other wise words, she said, "The Bible holds a mirror up to us, showing us God's intentions for us." Mary's life is a bright mirror of God's intentions.



### **Dixcy Bosley-Smith, *Potter's House Board***

There are memories of Mary Cosby that many of us share. Her smooth, satisfying, Southern style in offering a Biblical teaching around the wooden tables of the Potter's House felt so good. Just about anything that rolled off her lips was convincing. Her sound, her speech, her words, her kindness comforted me. I remember home-made bread, cheese, with a sprig of parsley (Mary's touch) which flavored the stimulating conversation about her teaching. I remember how Mary made me feel.

Mary and Gordon visited his brother Beverly's little church in Lynchburg, Virginia, often. The Cosby visit and learning about CofS is what lured me to Washington. Mary was warm and welcoming of my arrival to DC. I remember how she made me feel.

As Mary approaches the end of her long and lovely life, I find myself making more frequent detours to the Christ House to capture a short glimpse of her smile and feel her sweetness. It fills me up for the day.

Mary's days are simple now... small meals, a quilt blankets her frail body, treasures from her Mt Vernon home adorn her bedroom walls. Her desires are few. Like Gordon, she seems to be enjoying this slow and sacred journey. She expresses gratitude for the hospitality of Christ House as she refers to the sounds of patients in the hall. She tells me that she never hears an unkind word. "Remarkable love" are her words. Her appreciation of her exquisite care make me feel good.

Mary will ask, "What brings you joy?" And while she may not recall your answer, the question is genuine. She wants to know you more deeply, to know what brings you closer to God. In a very human way of simply welcoming and asking, Mary Cosby reflects the Divine welcoming and asking what we so much want to experience from our God. When I tell her stories of daily life, family life, 8th Day life, she appears engaged and delighted. What a feeling...

Being known and valued is an essential to community with others. Mary has infused our beloved little churches and a diaspora of friends across the miles with a feeling of love that we will never forget. I celebrate these 93 years of Mary!!!

### **Sunny Branner, *Poet***

I first met Mary Cosby in 1946, when she was splashing paint on the drab walls of the newly purchased home of the Church of the Saviour. Her radiance was like sunlight filling that space. Through the years, her music had the same effect. Her rendition of "O Divine Redeemer," and other solos were enduring gifts that took us to new depths of Spirit. How fortunate we were to have journeyed with one who lives her life in the realm of grace.

### **Terry Flood, *Jubilee Jobs***

Elizabeth O'Connor dedicated her first book, *Call to Commitment* to Mary Cosby with the inscription, "To Mary Cosby, whose life is music in our midst." From her bed at Christ House, Mary Cosby is still 'music in our midst'. She tells you very early in the conversation, "I'm 92 and I am very wise. I live here at Christ House in luxury, with three delicious meals every day, nothing ever expected of me, and as I listen to the conversations in this place, there is never a cross word." In my regular visits, especially among the Sunday after church group which gathers in her room, we are in the presence of her amazing wisdom, depth with all issues, and humor.

My first memory of Mary is of a lovely woman in a lavender dress and large matching flowered picture hat, coming out of the chapel of 2025 in 1960. Her love of beauty permeated the activities and missions of the Church of the Saviour, from the headquarters building, to the Potter's House, to Dayspring Farm. She and Jimilu continued to call forth artistic beauty at Jubilee Housing in 1973 through their mission group, Art and Ambiance (sometimes mistaken for Art and Ambulance).

Mary and I often reminisce about our unexpected children and wonder how we became so involved. Michael Murphy, at age 8, came to live with Gordon and Mary from Junior Village. I more recently have had young grandson, Tavis, living with me. We look at one another in bewilderment and then both point to heaven. Only the call from God could have placed these precious lives in our homes.

Her gift of storytelling, about the Bible, her family, the Church of the Saviour community or the many people whose lives have touched hers continues to entertain us and magically draw us into her deep and wise understanding of the world. We do not forget that she is 93 and very wise with great joy.



### **Fred Taylor, *8th Day***

The name of Church of the Saviour evokes feelings of respect and appreciation far and wide, across the USA and from the United Kingdom to South Korea among generations of Christians seeking an alternative both to repressive and casual Christianity. It is indeed extraordinary what God has wrought through years of accumulated faithfulness that started in the late 1940s from a tiny community of seven people answering the call of total commitment to the call of the God to reconcile all people and all creation to him-self and one another. At the heart of that tiny original community of seven was a young, ambitious-for-the-Lord couple, Gordon and Mary Cosby. Gordon crossed over in 2013. Mary in her 90s is still very much with us.

I am one of those old timers who pray often with immense gratitude: "Thank you Lord for the gift to my life and to the world of this couple." I think of them in their shared identity and as distinctively different individuals, each with unique gifts and personal style. Being on the serious side, I was drawn in particular to Mary's "lightness of being" and the hope that, if I stay on the path, that too is a possibility for me. I share Elizabeth O'Connor's simple and profound tribute to Mary in the dedication of our first book, "Call to Commitment": "To Mary Cosby whose life is music in our midst."

Mary, I thank God for your rich mixture of strength of conviction and grace of hospitality. In your presence I think of a line from a movie character played by Jack Nicholson, "You make me want to be a better man."

# Celebrating Mary Cosby

By Kayla McClurg

It is quite easy to celebrate Mary Cosby, who has been and is “music in our midst”. Mary’s life carries the lovely tones of harmony, grace and gratitude, and the peaceful assurance that regardless of circumstances, all shall be well. Living now in the community of Christ House, in a small room on the nursing floor among men and women she greatly admires, she says daily how really good her life is. “I have everything I could ever need or want,” she says. “And most importantly, I have my church. Don’t you think we are blessed to have our church?”

From the time of Mary Campbell’s birth on September 27, 1922, to the Rev. Dr. Ernest Campbell and his wife Anne Goetchius Campbell in Gainesville, Georgia, she knew the love of church. Along with her sister, Elizabeth Anne, and her little brother, Charles, the family was devoted both to one another and their spiritual community. About her family, Mary says, “We just seemed always to enjoy each other. My sister and brother were my best friends, and our parents knew the art of staying out of our way so we could be who we were without having too much pressed upon us. They encouraged us and loved us, but without demands. It was a remarkable gift.”

Mary says it was imprinted upon her in these early years that the world was a trustworthy place and people could be depended upon and trusted. “When you know from the start that you are loved, that others wish only the best for you, it changes who you are. It gives you the confidence to believe you can take the risk of doing nearly anything.”

Mary’s father was a minister in the Southern Baptist tradition. (“Not the way we think of it today, but the way it used to be,” she is quick to add.) “Father was so good to us and to everyone he met. Everyone in the church—in the entire town for that matter—knew they could count on Father if they needed him.” When she was 10 years old, he answered a call to the Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, where Mary would grow up, where she would blossom into a beautiful young woman devoted to Christ and his work, and where she would meet a young man named Gordon.

Gordon Cosby was 15 when Mary Campbell’s family moved to town. Already a leader in the Rivermont church, he spent much time in the Campbell home where the young people frequently gathered and dreamed big dreams. Over the years Mary and Gordon found in each other a grand love, built on a compatibility of faith and a vision for a church that calls people to high commitment and adventure. Their early dreams carried them for the rest of their lives.

Mary, a gifted musician and vocalist, used her talents often in the church. She loved music and singing, but she chose to major in history at Randolph-Macon Women’s College. “I suppose I was hoping that studying history would be easier than other subjects. I confess my main focus was on the people and fun activities more than my studies.” During these years Mary and Gordon kept dating, which mostly meant doing church-related things together. After college they married in 1942 and moved to Arlington, where Gordon was minister of the Ballston Baptist Church. When he enlisted as a chaplain for the 101st Airborne Division during World War II and went overseas, Mary moved to Alexandria, where her father had become the minister of First Baptist Church there.

“While Gordon was away, church was central,” Mary says. “It was all I did, work in the church. I missed Gordon, but it never occurred to me that things wouldn’t work out and he would return and we would pick up from there. I suppose I was a bit naïve, which can be one of God’s best gifts to us sometimes, don’t you think?”

When Gordon got home, they realized if they were going to pursue their dream of a different kind of church, the time was now. So together with Elizabeth Anne, they got down to work. On Sunday evenings they met with a few others at eating establishments to pray

and plan, and even began to think that perhaps theirs would be a “restaurant church.” But another path came to be, and in two “run-down but glorious” buildings near Dupont Circle, the life of the young church began to take shape and grow.

“Our early years smelled more of paint and turpentine than candles and incense,” Mary says. “Our work parties were legendary and I think the hard work, along with our knack for southern hospitality, attracted more people than our plans to save the world. Our goals were a bit grandiose, I suppose, but it was also a very sweet time.”

In all the buildings and missions, Mary has been always an advocate for beauty and hospitality over mere utility. She insists that “art and ambiance” are marks of the Holy Spirit, and that people find healing in the midst of beauty. With others she established an Art and Ambiance mission group to be sure the community did not overlook this aspect of ministry. She encouraged School of Christian Living dinners and other gatherings to be beautifully appointed and festive. She would close her classes at the Servant Leadership School by inviting the students to her home for a feast around her spacious dining room table.

Mary also provided hospitality in even more substantial ways as she and Gordon became the foster parents of young Michael Murphy,





who gave them extra lessons in the power of tenacity and love. She also has been a favorite aunt of her nieces and nephews, some of them having enjoyed extended periods of living with their beloved May May. Dogs, too, especially those languishing in shelters, were near and dear to Mary's heart.

When the church scattered into small communities, Mary became a member of the Potter's House Church, pouring herself into its ministry of creativity and hospitality. Her influence in that little church and in the various stages of the coffee house's growth was immense. Her love of music and theatre (having written and delivered dramatic monologues for years) found a home at the Potter's House. In the early 2000's the art wall at the Potter's House was officially named the Mary Cosby Art Gallery.

When the Church of the Saviour started gaining attention around the country, Mary traveled to hundreds of congregations, conferences and retreat centers to share the story. When I was teaching in Oklahoma in the early 1990s, I heard her speak at a seminary. Her talk was so authentic, intelligent and engaging, as she insightfully wove stories from people's lives here with stories by Dostoevsky and Flannery O'Connor and Fr. Alfred Delp and others, that I felt a deep resonance. How is it that some people are fortunate enough to get to be part of such churches as this, I wondered.

Still today Mary has a wonderful way with words. On Sunday mornings, in Christ House worship, Allen Goetcheus sometimes calls on her spontaneously to pray, and she does so with confidence, her words filled with grace and insight. When people come to her for advice on some issue, such as their struggle to forgive or the dryness of their prayer life, she listens and offers her sage wisdom. One of the gifts when our "forgettery" begins to work better than our memory is that we can be a trustworthy confessor, and Mary holds whatever we tell her in tender confidence. Her years of prayer and trust in God still bear a bountiful crop.

So much more could be said about Mary Campbell Cosby, who continues to be "music in our midst." Dear friend, may bountiful blessings continue to uplift and embrace you as you embark upon this new beginning. May year 94 rise up and meet you with love!

### Jackie McMakin, *Author*

Mary was my sponsor for membership. "Mary, the Church of the Saviour seems so structured. I'm not sure if I should go through with membership – I'm a rule breaker." "Oh, Jackie, so am I!" she replied. "Let's continue."

On retreat, Mary asked, "Whose wounds do you feel called to heal?"

"The wounds between Protestants and Catholics" flashed into my mind. Confiding this to Mary, her response was: "How wonderful! Go and do it!"

Mary asked if I would convene a few people to sing at worship. "Just sing when you have something prepared – it doesn't have to be every Sunday," she said. The group eventually morphed into the Nova Chamber Singers, who presented sacred chamber works and hosted rare Christmas carol sings in our home each Christmas for thirty-five years!!!

Sonya Dyer and I applied Church of the Saviour teachings to help people create meaningful work. When those unfamiliar with Christian ideas and vocabulary wanted to attend our Life Direction Labs, we changed the language and books to appeal to them. Mary exclaimed, "You are universalizing what we have learned at the Church. This is grand!" Later when she read *Our Defining Moment: A Call to Create the World We Truly Want*, she said, "Now you've applied what we've learned in a greater circle. Thank you!"

Visiting with Mary at Christ House, I asked about her call now. "Jackie, my call is the gift of presence." Mary has never been one to skimp over what is wrong in this world, but has kept her focus on what is right with me and so many others and then by her presence and blessing has egged us on to live our call more fully and joyfully. From the bottom of my heart, thank you, Mary.



### Nona Beth Cresswell, *Dayspring Host*

Everything about Mary Cosby has been a witness to me of the importance of beauty in our lives. And this beauty has been all-embracing! For her, there has been the beauty of nature and all creatures, the beauty of music and of language, and the beauty of people. Even in settings where there might be nothing to admire by sight or sound, Mary would find beauty in the value of peoples' lives and the gifts they would bring to the community.

This outlook on life has had a profound influence on me. As a child I delighted in her enjoyment of whatever was going on at the moment. Details have always mattered to Mary, and whenever there was a meal or an event, she would prepare the place with decorations from nature – flowers, autumn leaves, small branches and berries, all tastefully arranged on the table between serving dishes or communion cups. Her touches would turn an ordinary gathering into a real celebration.

We would always feel special and cared for in her presence, and Mary has the most zesty appetite for fun! She and her sister, Elizabeth Anne, used to tell stories or do skits and monologues that were hilarious! They used these talents also in talking about God, and they made the people of the Bible come alive.

Mary also valued language: poetry and music, scriptures and hymns. These came to have great meaning for me, too, as I grew and became a singer and then majored in church music in college. I believe that her careful preparations for worship influenced me in my work as a church musician in other churches.

Elizabeth O'Connor dedicated her book, *Call to Commitment*, to Mary, "whose life is music in our midst." While she played the piano and sang almost every week for church, it is her loving and gracious spirit that fills our hearts and makes us joyous in her presence. Mary shares this gift with us to this day. No matter what time of day or night I have visited her recently (and I have shown up at odd hours!), she turns eagerly to greet me and hear the news. A few days ago I showed her a video of my sisters and me singing at our nephew's wedding this summer. She wanted to hear it again and again and then began to sing along. Her love for music and beauty and life continue to shine out for us.

## Carolyn Miller Parr, *Festival Church*

When she returned my first homework assignment in her class on "Call" Mary had written in the margin, "I resonate with this!" I don't remember what she referred to, but I do remember my mental image of a person actually vibrating with joy like a bell. I instantly fell in love with Mary.



Her class was my second in the Jubilee-Potter's House School of Christian Living. I started with Gordon's "Christian Growth". He began by inviting introductions: "Just tell us your name and your deepest pain." His audacity took my breath away. He seemed grim and deadly serious. Later I'd come to recognize his dry humor and see him smile. But in the beginning he reminded me of my super-strict Property professor at Georgetown. He'd warned our first class, "If I call on you and

you're not prepared, just walk out that door and go talk to the Dean about whether you can get your money back." Like the professor, Gordon scared me to death.

I mentioned to Carol Holt how intimidated I felt. Most of the CofS folks I was meeting for the first time struck me as equally solemn and burdened with the pain of the world. A community of introverts. Mystics. Saints. I, on the other hand, am an off-the-scale extrovert. I said to Carol, "I love what people here are doing, but I'm not sure I belong."

She said, "Oh, that's because you haven't met Mary yet!"

Gender designations aside, Mary was the yang to Gordon's yin. He seemed dark and gloomy; she was full of light. She was about music and laughter and beauty. Mary's class began with: "Tell us your name and your deepest yearning." Yearning seemed more inviting than pain.

So knowing Mary helped me feel safe and accepted in this strange and radical little community.

And she gave me a second gift.

In class Mary gave us a wonderful definition of call. As I remember it went something like this:

- You can say it in one sentence. ("Let my people go.")
- It seems impossible.
- It comes back again and again.
- It could cost you everything.

I wasn't sure of my "call." Gordon seemed certain that God was calling each of us to a very specific chunk of the world's suffering. I didn't sense that kind of call apart from my vocation, so I despaired of being able to join a mission group and move more deeply into full church membership.

When I mentioned this to Mary, she said, "Gordon and I have slightly different ideas about call. I think people can be called to a particular community of God's people, and your work will be revealed as you live into that call. You need a community to distinguish that what you're sensing is coming from God, not from ego or guilt." She also said a person could be called into and out of a particular work as time passed.

## Ann Dean, *Dayspring Retreat Mission*

We met in the Great Silence of retreat at Dayspring. If I had met Mary Cosby anywhere else, the extent of her amazing intelligence and charm might have been defining. But it was the depth of her stillness. That our friendship is rooted in deep listening is a gift beyond measure.

Certainly there is great laughter, too, long explorations of vision and imagination, shared stories of our adventures in faith and family and church and leadership. That is the fun of it. Every moment, no matter how serious, is bathed in the wisdom and warmth of her twinkling brown eyes. God's radiance shines in Mary's love and dazzles me every time we are together.

For twenty-five years, Mary has taught me by word and example, life-changing lessons. Of course the vision of launching a new faith community had to include "depth not extent." When there is a conflict in a meeting, follow up with the most wounded immediately. When in error, no need for explanation, simply say, "I am wrong, will you forgive me?" Don't worry if others don't share your vision - uncover what is in them. Most recently, after words of gratitude for life at Christ House and Jesus' abiding presence, Mary twinkled and said, "I don't have to stay in the present."

It's wonderful thinking of all Mary remembers and imagines for the future. I am grateful to have so much to remember and imagine with her. As I think of this birthday, it occurs to me that I am the age she was when we met. That gives me great hope. It is possible for such a momentous beginning to happen at my age! Though there is only one Mary Cosby.

Did I mention our friendship began on retreat at Pentecost?

## Myra Flood, *Wellspring*

In my years at Wellspring, many came because they had heard Mary speak at a Faith at Work Conference, a gathering of their own denomination or wherever Mary had traveled in those years.

Back in 1969, I had been worshipping at C of S for just a few months when I went through a very difficult time in my life. Dorothy Devers was my Shepherd and she suggested that I go on the Silent Retreat that Mary would be leading.

When I drove into that leafy bower, it felt safe and welcoming. Then, as we gathered in the Lodge of the Carpenter and Mary began her introduction to the Silence, I was overcome with tears. By Saturday evening, I felt like a total failure. I would sit in the Lodge and cry. I would walk the meadow and cry. I would go to my room and sleep - several times during the day.

Mary had told us that if we really needed to talk during the Retreat, we could go to her, so in my despair, I tapped on her door. I poured out my sense of failure at this business of Silence. Mary's gracious response was something like, "Myra, you are doing exactly what the good Lawd would have you do. You are broken hearted, you need to weep. You are exhausted, you need to sleep."

By the time of the closing Communion and Celebration on Sunday, it seemed healing had begun in my life. I am forever grateful to Mary and for the myriad ways God has shown compassion through her.

*" People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did but people never forget how you made them feel".*  
Maya Angelou

### **Muriel Lipp, Seekers**

When I first came to the Church of the Saviour in the early 1950s, I was not prepared for its wonderfully unusual co-founders, Gordon and you, Mary. I saw Gordon standing by the pulpit ready for his sermon, and Mary, you were across the chapel at the piano, playing the hymn which you and we sang. What a beautiful voice, I thought. And how very spirited the singing!

I got to know Gordon and you more rapidly and intimately than I'd ever gotten to know a pastor and wife. Mary, you had a gift for table fellowship, and 2025 had a huge dining room.

So there were many get-togethers after church. A good way to get to know people, is, as you practiced, to love them. Intimacy grew fast. And since we were neighbors and you were so gifted a hostess, Ed and I sometimes found ourselves invited to meals at your home in Mount Vernon.

One time, after Sunday school, there was a family worship at which you, Mary, tried to teach the children about the book of Isaiah: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord," you read, and then admitted that Isaiah was one of your favorite Scriptures. "What does that mean?" our son Eddie asked when we got home. I tried to explain it to him. Since then, I too have been moved by the book of Isaiah.

When we moved from 2025 and I became a Seeker (separated from you and many others I had come to love), I missed you so much. But now we are a new family in a new building in a new community—a whole life founded on the Christ who had come alive in us at 2025. Mary, you had a lot to do with it. Happy Birthday!

### **Alice Benson, 8th Day**

I first worshipped at Church of the Saviour in October 1975, when the headquarters was at 2025 Massachusetts Ave, NW. The first person to welcome me, in her warm and gracious way, was Mary Cosby. She helped me feel welcomed and accepted, in spite of the strangeness I felt at not knowing what the doctrinal statements were!

With "The New Land," as the breakup of C of S into smaller communities in 1976 was called, I was part of the Potter's House Church. I got to observe Mary and often hear her preach. I was impressed she was considered as much of a founder of C of S as her husband, Gordon. The longer I knew her, the more I could understand her pivotal role in developing this vibrant and faithful community. She had just as many good ideas as Gordon, and they were sounding boards for one another.

I worked at The Potter's House for 20 years – 5 as a volunteer, and 15 on staff. Mary was always involved in its heart and soul, but especially in its ambiance. She had a great love for beautiful things – artwork, music – but especially in the ambiance and growth of people. She showed care to all those she interacted with. She – along with Mary Hitchcock, Dot Cresswell, and a host of others – cared for The Potter's House as if for their beloved child.

Mary has learned and grown her entire life. She used to refuse to wear seat belts in the car, but learned! She sensed when Potter's House customers were truly looking for fellowship and growth, and when they were only looking for what was in it for them. I recall one story she told me of her and Gordon – early in their very long relationship – swimming out to some distant goal. What kept them going during this arduous swim was repeating the entire chapter of Romans 8, which they had both memorized. They knew Scripture has to be integrated into their very being to truly transform them into becoming like Christ.

Mary has been an inspiration to me and to thousands of seekers who have watched and learned from her so far. I haven't known her the best nor the longest, but I'm incredibly grateful for the blessing she has been on my life. While her mobility at 93 years young is more limited than say, when she was 39, I know she will continue to touch hearts, minds, and spirits. Thank you Mary, and may God bless you during another year of life!

### **Rebecca Stelle, Church of Christ Right Now**

Mary Cosby recalls when, as a music major, she composed a piece for the piano. How she worked on that assignment! How she performed for her professors and peers! And then. And then, somehow the piece was lost. She smiles as she delivers her punchline with a nod of humble irony: "Ever since I lost it, that piece has gotten better and better."

Elizabeth O'Connor dedicated Call to Commitment, "To Mary Cosby—Whose life is music in our midst." I knew neither Betty, nor Mary's gift of music in that era, but I can say with neither irony nor doubt that the music which is the life of Mary Cosby has become better and better since God dreamt the tune into being—increasingly rich, melodious and true.

The music which is the life of Mary evokes what is most real. Like the classes she has taught on call, Mary speaks directly to the heart and asks the heart's response.

The music which is the life of Mary unites the community it touches. Surrounded by the churches and ministries on Columbia Road and beyond, every gathering in her room is a party and she is ever our gracious hostess. In her presence, chords of deep resonance bind us all more deeply, one to another.

The music which is the life of Mary Cosby is pure and redeeming, without guile. Her capacity to expose the core of an issue with insight and wisdom seems only increasingly honed. She is, as she likes to say of her sister-in-law, Ellen, "completely converted": never puffed up, always building up in love.

Music doesn't point to itself, but is an experience of a world beyond itself; a world of art and ambiance, life and light. Mary frequently reminds us that every detail is tended to at Christ House, and how easy things are because of how little is expected of her. In a sense, she is right. She has given us everything; nothing more is expected. And at the same time, our expectations of Mary remain high. We expect Mary Cosby to be unwaveringly Mary Cosby, ever radiating the harmonies of beauty, wisdom and faith she was born to sing. Not once has she failed to deliver. We may be missing Mary's college concerto, but God's opus that is Mary Cosby has not been lost to any of us. Like her college composition in our imagination, Mary grows more gorgeous day by day—a living, musical masterpiece in our midst.



### Killian Noe, *Recovery Cafe*

Listening to Mary Cosby speak is like listening to music. I love the cadence of her stories and the way she called her beloved sister, Elizabeth Ann Campagna, Sistah.” Not only are her words melodically arranged, they are packed with power from the depths of her spirit carved out by decades of faithfulness to her spiritual practices and her community.

Books could be written about engaging, enchanting and enlivening Mary Cosby but what I want to highlight is her “incarnational theology,” or her appreciation for and commitment to the beautiful and sacred being expressed in the ordinary and physical dimensions of everyday life.

When I first became a member of Church of the Saviour, I was 25 years old and Bernie and I had been married for only a year. It was an especially humid Sunday morning in July, so Bernie and I had both worn shorts to the ecumenical service. I was just getting to know Mary, so I was very surprised when she stopped me after the service to say, “Killian, you and Bernie have beautiful legs. I hope you appreciate each other’s beautiful legs.” (That was 32 years ago.)

What I came to understand is that for Mary there is no divide between the spiritual and the physical; between the ordinary and the Divine. For Mary, everything is imbued with spirit, everything manifests the goodness of God. Most of us have heard stories about the early days of Church of the Saviour when Mary was determined that their “church suppers” would not use gaudy, plastic flowers or “tacky” table cloths, but would be candle lit, elegant gatherings that would evoke a sense of the sacred. At worship, we were taken to another realm by the classical LP’s that Mary selected to lead us into worship.

Mary’s understanding that beauty and attention to physical details are means of expressing profound spiritual truths is at the heart of the commitment to beauty evident in all the missions which grew out of Church of the Saviour. I know that the Samaritan Inns buildings in DC, and Recovery Café in Seattle, are tasteful and gorgeous physical spaces because of the incarnational theology that we took in from Mary Cosby. Our philosophy— shaped by Mary — is that every single expression at Samaritan Inns and Recovery Café must communicate love.

That philosophy drives our commitment at Recovery Café to preparing nutritious meals and serving the food on brightly colored Fiesta Ware. That philosophy drove the exquisite interior design of our space—at Samaritan Inns and Recovery Café—the vibrant color choices for our walls, carpet and upholstery. Those choices matter because they help us communicate “your life matters.”

For those who have suffered in body, mind and spirit, beauty is a healing salve. For those weary from trying to navigate the journey from chaos to stability, best practices which affirm the dignity and worth of every community member are crucial. Those who have suffered the degradation of homelessness may not expect beauty and excellence, but they are the ones who especially need beauty and excellence. One woman, after having been shown her new home at Samaritan Inns’ Lazarus House, sat on her new bed and wept. When asked what was wrong she replied, “I never imagined I would ever in my life live in a place so beautiful.” We thank you and we love you, Mary Cosby.