

Callings

in Church of the Saviour

Vol 15, Issue 1 • Spring 2026

O Earth! O Earth! When will we hear you **Sing?**

--Thomas Merton



Cheryl Hellner

Unlike the earliest musical instruments made from sticks, gourds, bones, or shells, these instruments, made from clay, open a nearly infinite range of possibilities for shape, sound and tone, and elaborate decoration.

And clay, when it is fired in a kiln or open pit, becomes one of the most durable and long-lived natural materials on Earth.

This lively tradition of clay-instrument making continues in the dedication and skill of today's artists.

May this story awaken and nourish in our children a deep sense of reverence and wonder. And may it call forth the gifts their creativity, and ours, can bring to the whole sacred community of Life.

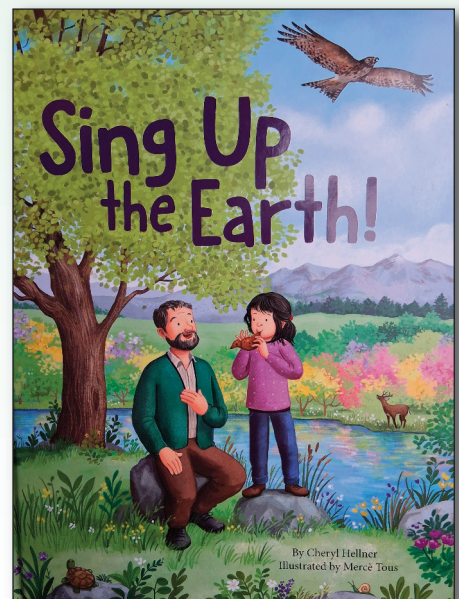
*Cheryl Hellner is a core member of Dayspring Church and author of **Sing Out the Earth!** –a beautiful book for children (and adults). Find it at your favorite independent bookstore or Paraclete Press, the publisher.*

Sing Up the Earth! by Cheryl Hellner Is a joyful celebration of creativity, nature, and the family bonds that inspire and sustain us. In it, Meadow and Grandpa love making musical instruments out of clay—the very body of the Earth—that sing with the voices of nature. When a fierce storm destroys their workplace, loss and sorrow fill the air until Meadow unlocks the secret behind Grandpa's powerful music that “sings up the earth.”

In February at Wellspring, friends celebrated the launch of *Sing Up the Earth!* and in her author's note, Cheryl wrote:

With this story, I place in your hands an ancient musical instrument, something mysterious and intriguing, something beautiful, something real from a time long ago.

It might have come from the ancient peoples of Mexico, Guatemala, or Peru, or perhaps from the ancient pueblo people of the American Southwest. In fact, this way of shaping the clay of the Earth into a whistle, or a flute, a bell, a horn, a drum, has been happening for thousands of years in places and cultures all over our world.



CoS Council Chair | **Kate Lasso** — *When a Season Changes: The Next Chapter of the Potter's House*



Central to our understanding of the faith journey is the recognition that certainty is often an illusion and that we must remain open to new directions. Again and again in scripture, people are called to step away from what is familiar and into something they cannot yet fully see. Times like this can feel unsettling, but they are often the very places where new life begins.

Such a moment has come in the life of our beloved Potter's House.

For more than sixty years, the Potter's House has served as a ministry of hospitality within the Church of the Saviour — a space for community gathering, creative expression, dialogue, and service to neighbors. We all carry treasured memories of conversations around the tables on Columbia Road: moments of spiritual awakening, the birth of new ministries, friendships formed, and the quiet restoration that comes when people simply have a place to belong.

At the same time, faithful stewardship requires us to recognize when a season is changing. As current stewards of the Potter's House, it has become clear to 8th Day that we have reached a moment when the Potter's House needs a new direction to continue to thrive and serve our community well. Moments like this ask us to listen carefully, to hold our memories with gratitude, and to remain open to new possibilities for service in this time.

What remains constant is the heart of the Potter's House. Our hope is not simply to preserve a building, but to nurture the spirit of welcome and community that we have all experienced. The call to hospitality, creativity, and service to neighbors — the values that shaped this place from the beginning — can continue to flourish in this next chapter.

Please pray with us, and for all who are affected by this change, as we enter this time of discernment, asking for wisdom, patience, and openness as we seek God's guidance. We trust that the same Spirit that inspired the founding of the Potter's House will continue to guide us as we look toward what comes next.

Editor's Note | **Marjory Bankson** — *Jubilee Year for the New Lands*



Fifty years ago, Church of the Saviour divided into six small communities, bound together by their common commitment to their inward/outward journey with Christ. Called the New Lands Project, the division was an intentional conscious effort to call forth new leadership AND to release Gordon Cosby from increasing pastoral demands as the 30-year-old church continued to grow into separate missions. He was freed to focus his initiating energy on successive missions and continue preaching at the headquarters building on Mass. Ave.

Of those six church communities, four still exist: Dayspring, Eighth Day, Jubilee and Seekers. Each has its own character, worship style, budget and mission focus. Others have joined Church of the Saviour since then, but this year I want to feature each of the original four. In this issue, we feature some of the background for entering the New Lands and a brief glimpse of Dayspring's rich life.

As the steward of our shared land, Dayspring Church has a unique role on behalf of the whole Church of the Saviour community. Not only do Silent Retreat, Wellspring, and Overlook nourish the inward journey of each current community, but the land itself grounds our creation-centered theology and spiritual heritage. As Lent gives way to Easter, we celebrate the beginning of our Jubilee Year in the New Lands, grateful for the commitment and sacrifice of those who have brought us safe thus far on our journey together.

With care,

Marjory

Marjory Bankson, Editor of InwardOutward.org and Callings callingseditor@gmail.com

Related Ministries

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

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

The New Lands Take Shape

Gordon Cosby's Call to restructure Church of the Saviour (1975)

I have just time to raise a few questions concerning my own sense of call, which is intimately related to the whole community. I have come to the place where it is not possible to carry out responsibly what I have traditionally been doing and also to help create new structures that have to do with people at the point of oppression. Ever since I can remember I have felt this as a claim on my life, a claim that has deepened with every new mission.

With each step the community has taken it has grown in numbers. When it averaged between 60 and 70 we went through a time of redefining our corporate life. Now we have no members and 40 intern members, and much more demanding structures, many of which have become centers of life.

As the membership has grown and the missions have expended the time demand on us all has increased. The questions raised with me are: "What is the reasonable size? When does community become so large that it cannot operate on the basis of human dimensions? How big should administrative units be?" We must look at the issue of whether as a totality we are larger than we should be. Do we want to go the traditional way of pulling in more staff? I have these question as a pastor. My guess is that Bill Branner as treasurer has them in the financial area. Can we keep on stretching without affecting the quality of work to which we are called?

I do not feel that it is right for me to withdraw energy from new structures that we are just beginning to develop. Have I a right to withdraw energy from these to pastor the whole, and do any of us have this right? Or can we discover ways together to move into the future without losing our richness or diversity? Is it possible that we divide into different combinations cohering around different worship centers and, in the process of creating the new, not lose that which we value? There are many, many people in the life of this community with rare gifts of leadership that are not being used. Is it possible that we can have The Church of the Saviour at Massachusetts Avenue with its council, worship, and mission groups cohering around it; another on Columbia Road, cohering around the Potter's House; another around Dayspring?

Or is that not the way to go? Should some leave and just go out while the main body remains intact? I think we have to raise all these questions—bring them into full consciousness. Otherwise, we grow larger and larger and struggle to hold it all together and what happens, happens by default.

I am sensing an inability to be faithful to my call and also faithful to the structures that we now have. I am recognizing a developmental stage which can be exciting, if we do not decide to hang on—if we can look at it together. It will be difficult because there is the difficult question, "What is my place in it?" But we can work with it, struggle with it, and trust that the same Spirit which brought us to this point will still be around. We as an organization have been blessed, and my guess is that leadership might be developed at an even deeper level than we have known it.

I am not saying that I have any time schedule, or that I have a master plan, and know how to do it. I am saying that if we ask for the Holy Spirit, pray about it and talk about it, we may discover what is next for us, and that it could be a tremendously exciting and helpful time in our life. [quoted in *Servant Leaders, Servant Structures*, pp 48-50]

That brief statement was to alter the life of the Church of the Saviour as had no other event in its history. Others were also sensing that change was needed. The small mission groups had flourished. The membership had grown to 120 in number, but that was deceptively small. Each of the groups had intern members and in addition a large periphery of people who gathered around them. The housing group had bought two slum apartment houses. These had literally become their parishes. Other groups were equally involved in ministry. We had the distinct feeling of having grown too large and of being flung out in too many places. Communication was breaking down. Some had suggested adding more staff to try to keep it all together, but that never felt quite right.

When Gordon made his statement it fell on hard as well as churned-up soil. There was no time for discussion at that council meeting, but in the days to come it became abundantly clear that

we were moving into the eye of a major transition crisis. The conversation centered around "splitting up" and "dividing." Though we strove for a more positive expression of the issues we were confronting, these words were often injected into the conversation and best described what many of us were feeling.

— Elizabeth O'Connor, *Servant Leaders, Servant Structures*, p 50.

The New Lands Servant Group was selected by the Council representing four mission areas: Potter's House, FLOC, Jubilee Housing and Dayspring, plus Elizabeth O'Connor from the staff. They were asked to report back to the Council on what its shape might be and how the new Exodus might be made. According to Elizabeth O'Connor, the meetings of that group, called the New Land's Servant Group, were long and arduous.

The New Lands Take Shape, *continued*

In the next year each of the new communities had to do the hard labor of pitching tents and driving down stakes, often requiring seemingly interminable meetings in which new structures had to be hammered through. We also had to do the painful inner work of finding new territory within ourselves on which to stand.

Since the communities had no paid leadership or ordained clergy in charge, the identifying of gifts became an urgent matter. Many of us agreed to preach, who in our wildest imaginations had never thought we would. We found the courage because there was no professional to do it. Soon we were all taking turns and surprised to find our little congregations growing in number.

We made mistakes, but grew practiced in getting up and going on, learning to be healers of each other, accepting and forgiving each other and in the process discovering each other. It never would have happened if the church had not been based since its inception on the New Testament concept of the priesthood of all believers. In his first brochure on the church Gordon Cosby had quoted the counsel of the writer and Quaker leader, Elton Trueblood, "No passengers---everyone a member of the crew."

A church cannot take seriously the concept of the priesthood of all believers without conceiving of itself as a seminary for the training of the laity for the priesthood. The School of Christian Living had been doing just that through all the years---training its members to be servant leaders. [*--Elizabeth O'Connor, Servant Leaders, 65-66.*]

1980 – In addition to the expanding services of Jubilee Housing, Dr. Ann Barnet founded The Family Place (TFP), a home-like, drop-in center for young immigrant mothers and their small children. Its wide range of programs includes social services, counseling, support groups and meals. [*O'Connor, Servant Leaders, Servant Structures, 80*]

In 2025, Family Place celebrated 45 years since it began in a basement on Columbia Road. Six years later, TFP purchased a row house on 16th Street to expand into a learning center for parents and children in Spanish and English. Today Family Place has again expanded to serve even greater needs. [*See CALLINGS, vol 14, Issue 3*]

1982 – Not many blocks away, but deeper into the inner city, is The New Community Church. Its home is a partially restored four-story house on a battered and stricken street where discarded furniture and old boxes litter the broken sidewalks and half the houses are boarded up. Once the street might have been called Godforsaken, so lacking was it in any evidence of divine grace. [*Servant Leaders, p 68*]

Today, New Community Church and Manna, Inc. are deep into a daring project that will create 90 units of new housing for low-income residents, new office space for Manna, Inc. and complete renovation of the historic building that is home for New Community Church. [*CALLINGS, vol 14 Issue 2*]

1982 – A chance visit was behind the story of The Columbia Road Health Services. Allen and Janelle Goetcheus were waiting for a visa to go to Pakistan when they came to visit the Church of the Saviour and were taken to see Jubilee buildings that were being restored. Knowing that Janelle was a physician, her guides for the day shared with her the health needs of those

living in the buildings and neighborhood. She and Allen returned home and after a number of months, made the decision to go to Washington instead of Pakistan.

Allen, a gifted United Methodist minister with a major in drama, took a job as manager of The Potter's House, while Janelle worked in a suburban hospital several days a week to help support their household which included three children and a dog. The rest of the time she worked in an inner city clinic and planned Columbia Road Health Services. It first opened in a vacant commercial flat and then moved into space that became available in The Potter's House building. By that time the health team included three doctors, several nurses, a social worker and a receptionist.

Janelle and her colleagues quickly became aware that many of the people they were seeing were living on the streets. The shelters gave them beds at night but during the day they had to walk the streets in all kinds of weather. "Little by little," said Janelle, "we began to know that we could not continue to turn people away after treating them. We needed a place where they could stay until they were well. We also wanted to know our patients in more depth. We wanted not only to do for them—we wanted to be with them." [*Servant Leaders, p 78-9*]

Now known as Unity Health Care, Columbia Road Health Services is part of a network that provides high-quality health care that is accessible to all and advances health equity in Washington, DC. As the largest network of community health centers in the District, their team of compassionate and multicultural health professionals place Unity values into action every day to bring whole-person care and wellness to over 76,000 patients through 283,000 visits annually through their network of over 27 traditional and non-traditional health sites and a mobile medical outreach vehicle. [*Data from the Columbia Road Health Center website.*]



New Community S-St Project



Christ House

1985 – Across the street, Christ House opened in December 1985 as the first 24-hour residential medical facility for homeless persons in the United States. Today, Christ House is the largest facility of its kind in Washington, DC. Since our inception, we have had over 10,000 patient admissions.

1982 – Completing the cluster of missions is Sarah’s Circle, a 36-unit inter-generational housing program with an emphasis on the elderly. Its basement also has a kitchen and drop-in center. Long ago we made the discovery that the basements of old apartment houses are the District of Columbia’s richest unexploited real estate. [O’Connor, *Servant Leaders*, 80. For more on Sarah’s Circle, see CALLINGS, Vol 14, Issue 2]

1989 – In the midst of our own communities a Servant Leadership School has emerged to work with all the issues involved in servant leadership. Located in the Adams Morgan area, the School is surrounded by nine of the missions of the



Festival Center

church. The [Festival Center] tower building is gracious in design, but the streets themselves and the missions are its extended classrooms. The deepest learnings of our church communities have come from their intermingling with the oppressed of the world, so it is natural that we would want to make that same opportunity available to other church communities....

Today, the Festival Center is known as a hub for activists, artists, people of faith and no faith, seekers, and mission-driven groups. Filled with emerging non-profits, it is a home for called activists and a beacon of hope in the fractured political environment of our nation’s capital.

A Church and Ministries Deeply Rooted in Christ and God's Creation

Dayspring offers a rich heritage of Christian community, 208 acres of contemplative landscape, with the beauty and blessing of trees, meadows, and creeks.

A small community of faith, Dayspring Church was born out of The Church of the Saviour in 1976. We continue with the traditions and wisdom of our parent church: commitment to follow Jesus in non-violent ways of being and acting in resistance to systems of domination, integrity of membership, a foundation of Biblical vision, and the call to ministry in small groups. We listen for God's Word in scripture, in silence, and in creation. We hope to grow in both the inward journey of relationship with God and the outward journey in service to the needs of the world.

We believe that God created the great diversity of humanity. We celebrate and welcome people of all races, sexual orientations, gender identities, and cultures.

Our worship service is at 10 AM on Sunday in the Farmhouse most of the year and in the Pavilion in the summer. We have evolved a practice of shared servant leadership in the church community and discernment of direction by the Spirit. Out of God's great gift of the community of all life at Dayspring, we have heard the cry of Earth along with the cry of the poor, and we are committed to moving into a more sustainable way of life at Dayspring.



I came to Dayspring about 30 years ago, married my husband here, and this is where we raised our 2 children. I love the shared leadership model, and the depth of teaching and learning about what it means to follow Jesus in our daily lives. I love how my children learned about God's love for them and God's creation as they explored the 200-acre property as part of the Sunday School curriculum. I love how the church, at the request of one of our Sunday School kids, continues, 24 years later, to make bagged lunches once a month for a local homeless shelter. I love that when a few of us issued a call to work with refugees in our community, the church said "yes." I love the people here who share the ups and downs of this faithful journey with me.

~ Jen G.

Join Dayspring's Earth Ministry Mission Group & Overlook Retreat House in 2026!

Ceremony & Celebration of the Seasons at Dayspring



**Mark your calendars
now!**

Spring Equinox
Friday, March 20

*

Summer Solstice
Saturday, June 20

*

Fall Equinox
Sunday, September 20

*

Winter Solstice
Sunday, December 20



Here's a general flow. Come for all or part.

5:00 pm You are invited to an outdoor prayer ceremony to welcome in the change of seasons. Meet at the Farmhouse to walk together to a particular place on the land.

6:00 pm Gather indoors at Overlook for a simple supper.

7:00 pm We will circle for creative sharing time around the seasonal theme. Please bring a poem or a story ... share a favorite work of art or image ... bring your musical instrument and play a song ... guide us in singing or sacred dance ...

For planning for the outdoor ceremony and for seating and food at Overlook, and to inquire about the possibility of staying overnight in the Overlook retreat space,

PLEASE RSVP

to Jim at jimhallmd@yahoo.com and Trish at stefanik.trish@gmail.com

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DAYSPRING Events

April 5 | EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

6:00 a.m. Wellspring Center. ALL ARE WELCOME!

April 15 | Quiet Day,

10-2, bring your lunch. \$30. Register: Dayspringretreat.org.

Wed, May 13 | "Radical Hope and the Cosmic Christ,"

led by Ann Dean. 10-3pm, \$50. Register: Dayspringretreat.org.

Wed, May 27 | Ember Day at Dayspring Retreat,

10-4, \$30, bring your lunch. Register: Dayspringretreat.org.

June 12-14 | "Divine Light and Inner Renewal as Summer Unfolds,"

led by Gordon Creamer. \$325. Register at Dayspringretreat.org.

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

If you'd like to see

CALLINGS continue, please make a contribution by check to:

Church of the Saviour

(In Memo line put "Callings")

Address: 1640 Columbia Rd. NW • Washington DC 20009

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