

# Callings

in Church of the Saviour

Vol 10, Issue 2 • Summer 2021

## BUILDING A NEW SPACE FOR JUSTICE

By Bill Mefford

In Elizabeth O'Connor's book, *Servant Leaders, Servant Structures*, which came out shortly after the opening of the Festival Center, she writes that in a class Gordon Cosby was teaching at the time he told the students,

*There are very few...radical alternative structures pointing the way to a new society...This is why the Christian church in so many areas of our diseased society has little impact on the quality of life in America. These mini institutions must grow out of the biblical vision. And if they grow out of that vision, they will dramatically proclaim a solidarity with the poor, with those who suffer most deeply on the margins of society. These structures will not isolate the poor while serving them. They will recognize that the poor are the true leaders and work alongside them in their struggle for a more just world. They will provide an opportunity for the privileged and deprived, the rich and the poor to be together – to break down the dividing wall of partition that separates. (p. 86)*

Thirty years later, this is still our call. Though the COVID pandemic has limited our ability to welcome groups and individuals into our building, we have taken our call to hospitality and justice

online and into the streets of DC. Since the pandemic began we have welcomed close to 700 people from across the United States and the world to our classes and teach-ins.

The work of hospitality and justice is not limited to just opening your doors. Hospitality is about coming alongside people struggling for justice, going to where they are, showing up and being present in their space, so that, when the time comes, groups that have been marginalized will know they access to space with us. We are doing that. In the last year alone:

- We have joined cash-based workers – undocumented immigrants, restaurant workers, sex workers, and others excluded from government COVID stimulus packages – and we have showed up at the homes of members of the Washington DC City Council, strongly urging them to include money for cash-based workers in the city's budget. And we won!
- We have joined and led vigils, protests, and rallies to stop police brutality and end mass incarceration.
- We have helped create vigils and we have marched for the rights of ALL immigrants, regardless of their legal status.

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# Editor's Corner | Signs of New Life



Thank you for all  
your kind words and  
2020 contributions,  
for *CALLINGS* and  
InwardOutward.org.  
We so appreciate  
your support!

As we begin to climb out of our pandemic isolation, signs of new life are stirring along Columbia Road. Gentrification has, of course, continued throughout the pandemic: a huge apartment now dwarfs the Festival Center and gigantic cranes swing supplies to other construction sites along the street.

At The Potter's House, tables outside are full and book discussions fill the calendar as the staff celebrated 61 years of serving the Adams Morgan neighborhood. Now that the weather has warmed, and vaccinations make it possible for groups to gather outside, the Potter's House take-out traffic is brisk and in-person meetings are suddenly more visible.

In preparation for a major renovation at the Festival Center, to upgrade heating and air-conditioning as well as rearranging space inside, several ministries are in the process of moving to the space on Ontario Road formerly known as Andrews House: Faith and Money, Little Bird Acupuncture, and a third-floor office for Church of the Saviour. On the first floor, Platform of Hope welcomes small cohort groupings in person again. There is much discussion (but no conclusion yet) about renaming Andrews House to acknowledge its different purpose now.

The center-fold article in this issue describes Platform of Hope, a relatively new venture supported by Jubilee Housing, Jubilee Jumpstart, the Sitar Arts Center, and Mary's Center. By grouping low-income families and providing a way for them to share knowledge and experience that they have in dealing with city and federal programs, Platform of Hope has already garnered recognition by the Biden Administration.

Although all of the CoS communities are still gathering for worship on Zoom or by phone, many mission groups have begun meeting in person. At Seekers, a weekly vigil to proclaim BLACK LIVES MATTER in front of the church has continued throughout the cold winter months. It provides a safe setting to see each other outside and in person. As violence against Asian and Pacific Islanders increased, the focus of the gathering has broadened to the RACIAL and ETHNIC JUSTICE VIGIL, but the task remains: to bear witness in a visible way.

In the Shaw neighborhood, New Community Church has continued to offer outdoor activities for their sizeable youth group, and Jim Dickerson has officially retired from Manna (although he still pastors New Community). And finally, at Dayspring, a limited number of people attended the Easter sunrise service (pictured on page 7) and smaller in-person Quiet Days are beginning again on May 15. Overlook is also accepting individual retreatants. Stay tuned for more openings there.

As Pentecost approaches this year, we are praying for yet another touch of the Holy Spirit to quicken new life in all the mission and ministries of Church of the Saviour.

With care,

**Marjory**

Marjory Bankson

Send address changes to: [callingseditor@gmail.com](mailto:callingseditor@gmail.com)

## The Church of the Saviour Council

Bread of Life • Dayspring Church • Eighth Day • Festival Church • Friends of Jesus  
Jubilee Church • New Community • Seekers Church





## Tree Planting at Dayspring

Dayspring welcomed 50 new trees on Saturday, May 1. A group of 17 volunteers planted the red oak and red maple whips/seedlings about 18" tall, purchased from the MD Department of Natural Resources. The majority were planted in the Retreat area by the Christmas/pine grove; two short rows in front of the Farmhouse near the road; and the last few near the labyrinth by the large field gate. The day started with a liturgy brought by Kolya Braun-Greiner, with a tree blessing offered at each planting site. The week before two 8' trees were planted as memorials. The whole of Creation was blessed!

## Festival Center, from page 1

- And to highlight the danger of laying more gas and oil pipelines on the sacred lands of indigenous people, we have rallied in front of the Army Core of Engineers.

Hospitality is both to welcome all people into our space and to join our siblings in the streets who are marginalized by unjust structures out. Hospitality naturally leads to solidarity and that is a core part of our call.

For thirty years, at the intersection of the Adams Morgan, Mt. Pleasant, and Capital Heights neighborhoods, the Festival Center has stood, welcoming all people to come and meet, pray, learn, worship, and strategize. This ultimately leads us to hit the streets to join in the sacred work of building movements for justice. And after thirty years the building has experienced its share of wear and tear. It's a good kind of being worn out for our wear and tear signifies countless number of people who have entered our doors to be changed inwardly and work for change in society.

## So, to get ready for the next thirty years we are renovating!

Here is just some of what we will be doing:

- We will honor creation by installing solar panels on our roof and reducing our energy usage by up to 2/3, lowering the cost of maintaining our building dramatically.
- We will have a state-of-the-art kitchen where partnering organizations will be able to train students for food service jobs and culinary arts classes.
- On the second floor we will provide fairly priced space for start-up social justice organizations – whose work is often hampered by a lack of space. Just as Gordon Cosby originally envisioned an incubator space for new ministries and works to be birthed, the second floor will fulfill that vision for organizations and faith communities today.
- We will prominently place the work of local artists throughout the building and work with local organizations to ensure that art remains an essential part of worship and the ongoing struggle for justice.

- We will be at the forefront of technology while using advances in architecture to enhance the mission of the Festival Center

And so much more!

If you want to know more, and see a sneak peek at our vision, join us May 20 at 7 pm ET via Zoom. Just let us know ([info@festivalcenter.org](mailto:info@festivalcenter.org)) you want to join us and we will send you the details.

The work of the Festival Center is so important in the world right now and through our renovations we will dramatically increase our impact in world. Join us!

*Bill Mefford is Executive Director of the Festival Center*



# The Festival Center

IS

## Building a Space for Justice

LEARN HOW AT OUR ZOOM EVENT

May 20, 2021 | 7-8 PM EDT

The Festival Center is a leader in the fight for justice.

Renovations on the building will begin this summer so that we can more faithfully live out our call to create movements for justice and to train and mobilize faith leaders to serve in those movements.

How can a building impact justice? Join us to find out.

RSVP to Dawn Longenecker  
([dlongenecker@festivalcenter.org](mailto:dlongenecker@festivalcenter.org))  
by May 18th

# The Platform of Hope

## By Judy Estey

The Platform of Hope is a paradigm-changing non-profit initiative that partners with families to pursue self-directed goals and build social capital while seeking to streamline social services and amplify family voices for systems change.

Based in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC, we were founded in 2018 by a strategic alliance of Ward 1 non profit organizations committed to combating the displacement of low income families of color from our community: [Jubilee Housing](#), [Jubilee JumpStart](#), [Mary's Center](#), and [Sitar Arts Center](#). Our strategic alliance partners- which span the affordable housing, health, education, arts and youth development fields- continue to provide programmatic collaboration, executive leadership and priority referrals. Our office is now located on the first floor of Andrew's House.

Launched in September 2018, the Platform of Hope works with cohorts comprised of 20 low income families of color and has created an unique model of service with three special ingredients:

- Family-centered goals and strategies
- Emphasis on social capital and collective power
- Strategic collaboration across non profit fields

In September 2019, we had begun our second program year with 19 Cohort A families and a new cohort of 20 families in Cohort B- 40% of whom were referred to us by Cohort A participants. In



*Gigi laughing*

our first Family Saturday, each cohort met to outline their goals for the year. In Cohort B, families shared inspiring personal goals like “be a better person” and “show our children it’s never too late to start.” In Cohort A, returning for their second year, families were focused on how the group could work together to mobilize and inspire change, brainstorming ideas like “advocacy,” “support groups,” and “voter registration.”

We had concluded our first year with Cohort A families making progress towards their goals in every category of our holistic radar chart and with a 73% increase in connectivity with one another. Life seemed hopeful. We hosted trauma-informed care with Ms. Georgette of Mary's Center in October, two absolutely packed November and



*Hailey and Zion playing chess*

December Family Saturday holiday gatherings, an inspiring Budget 101 advocacy training with Fair Budget Coalition in February, and had just re-launched our signature biweekly Parenting Class with Sylvia.... And then the pandemic hit.

## Loss and Grief

We closed our offices on Friday, March 13th, 2020. For the first month of quarantine, like most, we were not quite sure how to pivot. How long would this last? We signed up for a zoom account and began to plan for a (temporary?) virtual model. On April 3rd we hosted two video calls with families to talk about COVID-19. Someone in the Platform of Hope community had tested positive for it and we wanted to share what steps we should all take to stay safe and not infect others.

On April 14, 2020, Sylvia Stokes, our Family Care Lead and the first Platform of Hope staff member, passed away. It was truly devastating. We spent that week in April calling and messaging families, sharing our heartbreak. The sudden passing of Sylvia was deeply destabilizing to families, who lost the person they worked on their goals with, on top of the chaos and confusion of the start of the pandemic.

It felt so isolating to be at home with this overwhelming grief and unable to connect with the other members of our community in person. We collected people's messages in a google doc to share with her daughter, Aliya, so that we could reflect on what she had meant to us. On April 18th, our Family Saturday together with program partners, we hosted two zooms with families to talk about the loss. Through tears, families shared why “Ms. Sylvia” was so special. Throughout April and beyond, so many members of our community shared their feelings of loss and honored Sylvia's incredible memory. One POH family member wrote:

“[Sylvia] will always be remembered as part of our family, my kids, my husband and I are in shock. We can't believe this... Something I hate from these days is that we can't [say] goodbye, we can't stay with her as she deserved. All POH members now as a family we have to support each other. No race, no color, no religion makes us different in these difficult times for each person. Thank you Mrs. Sylvia for showing us we are a family. And will always be thanked from here to heaven.”



## Recommitment

At the same time that we shared this painful loss and entered the abyss of COVID life, something remarkable happened: everyone—families, staff, partners—recommitted to the promise of the Platform of Hope.

Throughout 2020, our partners collaborated with us on programming *August ceremony group* whether it was our weekly/biweekly support group with Ms. Georgette of Mary's Center, or a conversation on schools reopening with Ms. Dominique and Ms. Patty of Jubilee JumpStart, or a zoom art session for mother's day with Ms. Katie from Sitar Arts Center, or Ms. Audrey of Jubilee Housing sharing her experiences protesting with her family in support of Black Lives at a "Spill the Tea" zoom. Our partners kept showing up.

But most importantly, the families recommitted to the Platform of Hope. They wanted, more than ever, to live up to the



vision that Sylvia had helped begin to manifest for them: a supportive community where families led, guided one another and made change. Families decided to keep the program going and so we did.

The pandemic has exacerbated the existing inequities and made our work to support families in pursuing their holistic goals

more crucial than ever before. We must look at the intersection of these fields together and we must acknowledge the additional investment needed to create equitable outcomes for families of color. Families are facing extreme situations. Our data will not show the same success story as our pilot year but this is not to say our program does not work or our families are not successful—our systems do not work. We are proud of our families and our program for continued resiliency in the face of so many challenges.

Throughout 2020, we returned to our founding goals to examine how we were doing and how we could move towards them. Like families, we discussed our strategy to get to our "North Star" despite the many challenges ahead. I hope you will continue to follow our progress in 2021 towards these goals: More centering of families. More explicit articulation of racial inequities. More efforts towards systems change. And most importantly: more connection. More love.

Sylvia wrote on a post-it at the conclusion of her 2018-2019 parenting class session that she was inspired by "The strong women in this group that never give up!" Join us and be inspired too.



*Edwin and Julian*

*Judy Estey is the Vice-President of the Platform of Hope. To join the Platform of Hope's email list, visit [www.platformofhopedc.org](http://www.platformofhopedc.org) or email Judy at [jestey@platformofhopedc.org](mailto:jestey@platformofhopedc.org). The 2019-2020 Annual Report: Resiliency, is available at [www.platformofhopedc.org/annual-report2](http://www.platformofhopedc.org/annual-report2)*



# A Call to the Community of Peace

By Br. Stefan Andre Waligur

When I moved to Washington D.C. in 1999, and became part of Church of the Saviour, I joined a strange people. Meeting in basements and coffee houses, giving away most of the money they received, and working hard to crack the nut of racism in the name of Jesus and the Gospel. This was not your usual church on the corner.

During the five years I lived in Addams Morgan, I became part of this strange and beloved people in many ways. I loved the Servant Leadership classes and eventually began to teach there. On Sunday morning, I was at Eighth Day, and on Monday nights, at Festival Church. I was part of a mission group with David Hilfiker and Carol Marsh, offering retreats of silence and song at Wellspring and Dayspring. The love, encouragement and challenge I received from my friends grounded and inspired me.

Every Friday night, we gathered at the Potter's House to offer a sung prayer where people from the streets came in to raise their voices. Every Sunday, I was at Christ House playing piano as voices were raised in praise and lament. Over the years, the relationship with the men at Christ House became a cherished friendship. Once we accompanied some men from Christ House on a pilgrimage to Taizé, France. In many ways, it was the best journey ever!

**In a country so deeply divided and  
longing to be healed of past and  
present wounds we believe that the  
creation of Community of Peace is  
timely. We are an expression of the  
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's  
"Beloved Community."**



The Community of Taizé in France is an ecumenical community of 100 monks that welcomes hundreds and thousands of young people every day. There I saw the most beautiful thing I had ever seen – young people from all over the world, sitting together in silence and song, seeking peace and seeking the Divine. I saw these young people from different countries working together every day, sharing meals, laughing, playing and becoming friends across national and racial boundaries. They spoke of peace and justice, sharing their dreams and the work they were called to as Christians living the Gospel. The beauty of this experience became the heart of a call to create a new ecumenical community here in the United States.

After many years of traveling the country, offering retreats, workshops and concerts, this call is now emerging in one place and with one small group of people. I can hear Mary and Gordon Cosby saying, "Is there any other way?"



Community of Peace is beginning in Louisa, Virginia near Charlottesville, on 270 acres with a retreat center on it. A small group of us will move in this summer. We have become a non-profit 501 c-3 with a board that is mostly people of color and women. Community of Peace is a deeply welcoming place, a place of beautiful sung-prayer, shared meals, learning and dialogue, racial reconciliation, deepening friendship, affirmation and empowerment of marginalized people, especially African Americans, LatinX people, Native Americans, the LGBTQ+ Community and women – a place of deep care and respect for the land and the planet.

In a country so deeply divided and longing to be healed of past and present wounds we believe that the creation of Community of Peace is timely. We are an expression of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's "Beloved Community." Come and join us! Support this call to community with your prayers, presence, and donations.

Br. Stefan Andre Waligur

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Website: [www.communityofpeace.org](http://www.communityofpeace.org)

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New Music from Community of Peace: "All Shall Be Well."  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcmsnAtgopY&t=6s>



# Easter 2021



*"While it was still dark, just before dawn on Easter Sunday, a small group gathered and walked from the Dayspring farmhouse to the garden in candlelight. Dayspring, Eighth Day, Rockville United and Seekers churches processed in silence before pausing in a circle to greet the sun's rising, symbol of Jesus' resurrection. Jean Brown shared the story of Mary at the tomb, new hope quickening in her depths as she heard Jesus call her name. As a sign of that hope and promise of new life, we planted seeds in the garden and Nona Beth Cresswell led us as we sang our Alleluias. Christ is risen; he is risen indeed!"*



## 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 • Faith & Money Network • Family Place • Festival Center • For Love of Children • 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 • Samaritan Inns • Sarah's Circle • Sign of Jonah • Sitar Arts Center • Wellspring Conference Center

*Callings*

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## Special Events

### UPCOMING EVENTS ... in person retreats resume on May 15

**Sat, May 8 | "Calling Upon Sophia,"** online silent retreat.  
Register at [Dayspringretreat.org](https://dayspringretreat.org).

**Sat, May 15 | Quiet Day,** 10am-2pm. Resuming LIMITED in  
person retreats. Registration at [Dayspring.org](https://dayspring.org) required

**Thurs, May 20 | Festival Center Zoom Presentation.** 7-8 EDT.  
Register: [dlongenecker@festivalcenter.org](mailto:dlongenecker@festivalcenter.org).

**Wed, May 26 | Quiet Day,** 10am-2pm. Registration at  
[Dayspringretreat.org](https://dayspringretreat.org) required.

**Wed, Jun 9 | Ember Day,** 10am-4pm. \$25. Dayspring regis-  
tration required.

**Sat, June 26 | Quiet Day,** 10am-2pm. Dayspring registration  
required.



*View from the Lodge in spring.*