

Sonya Dyer's Prayer Book

Growing Our Life Together

by Sonya Dyer with Jackie McMakin



For years, Sonya and I have joked around, had lots of laughs about everything under the sun. It would be easy to miss her more profound side. For me, her pastoral prayers have been a unique window into her soul and into her deepest theological insights. So an idea popped into my head: why not ask Sonya if she would be willing to select from her years of prayers some that had particular meaning and let me render them into a form that others could use easily. She liked this idea. Pondering each selected prayer, I decided to give them a poetic form through centering each line. Sonya and I liked how they came out and thus produced the collection you have here.

Having studied systematic theology in seminary, I was aware that these beautiful prayers contain a clear theological vision that is so embracing of larger truth that it invites a deep "yes" in me. In an almost innocent way in these prayers, Sonya jumps over doctrinal hurdles that have stumped theologians for years. Who cannot want to address, for example, the Spirit described in these words?

*Graceful soaring spirit,
source of creation*

*sweeping across the bounds of time and space,
holy breath of love,
divine imagination...*

As we worked together with these prayers, we created, in effect, a "Sonya Prayer Book" that I want to use personally but that I could imagine others using individually or in groups.

As I thought about Sonya leaving Seekers, I wanted to capture more of her wisdom and skill so that I and the community could understand it better. A question that preoccupied me was, if Sonya does not usually preach, lead meetings or teach in the School of Christian Living, how does she lead? If she does not articulate her theology in sermons, papers or books, how does she put it out there?

I loved what we were producing with the prayers but realized that they were not addressing this question of leadership. So I suggested we add another piece – a collection of Sonya's thoughts on key issues in the community. We brainstormed which subjects we wanted to do. Then for each subject, Sonya would do a "stream of consciousness" outpouring of her thoughts which I typed verbatim into the computer. Then I would go over the copy, edit slightly, and put it in the same poetic form as the prayers. Again, we both liked what we produced.

To cap it off, we asked Tish Kashani if she would transcribe the interview Jane Engle did with Sonya on her 70th birthday. We include excerpts from this interview as our final piece. Meg Kinghorn agreed to take my disk, format the text more attractively and produce the booklet you now have. Sonya and I are extremely grateful for this help.

For me, this has been a wonderful venture. It is always fun to work together Sonya on a project. We interspersed our work with walks, talks, and laughs – always a great combination.

Sonya, thank you for agreeing to do this with me. And thank you for your years of inspired and unique leadership among us.

Jackie McMakin

When Jackie suggested this idea, it seemed like a wonderful opportunity for the two of us to work together on a project as we had done so many times in the past and to have a gift to give to the community which would express the importance to me of the journey we've been on together. I am so grateful to Jackie for suggesting this idea and helping it to become a reality. Her initiating energy is one of the gifts that has encouraged our friendship and brought about some wonderful joint efforts.

This has been a chance to gather my life over the last twenty-five years, to reflect on what's gone on and to distill what I want to leave with you and also what I want to take with me to my new life. So this has been a helpful process in my transition and has validated and put into solid form many of the contributions I've made that I value in myself.

As you will read in one of the essays, Seekers has provided a place for me to do what I love to do and to do things I'm good at. I have received so much from all of you. So it is wonderful to have a tangible gift that I can give to each one of you. I have worked hard at trying to include everyone in our life together. This is a way I can link to each of you. Having this gift to give several months before I'm actually gone gives us an opportunity to talk together about our recollections and ideas for the future.

I hope that our little booklet will also enable the community to let go of me in good ways. It articulates and validates what has been and helps us all recognize pieces that I have sought to offer. I hope it will be useful as you decide which pieces are important to pick up in different ways and which

are not needed at this juncture of our community life.

One of my calls for many years has been to build bridges. Perhaps some of what Jackie and I have gathered here can provide bridges into the future as new forms, new leaders, and new ways of being community take shape. The future life of Seekers is open, filled with possibility, and can be a faith statement not unlike the book of Acts.

Sonya Dyer

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