

Mar 2008 Soundings

This issue of Soundings includes:

The Wider Seekers Community– News from Alumni and Missioners, an invitation from Family Place, and Holy Week Calendar

Seekers Ministries



Calendar

- Sunday, March 2– InterPlay “First Sunday” Playgroup & Bodyspirit Celebration, followed by an Information Session for InterPlay Leadership Program. 1–4:30 pm, Seekers Sanctuary. (See story.)
- Saturday, March 15–Singalong at Sue Johnson’s house, Annandale, 7:30 pm. Bring a snack and join in singing from “Rise Up Singing.” Glen Yakushiji plays guitar and facilitates.
- Holy Week services–see story.
 - o Sunday, March 23–Easter Vigil ends with Communion about 7:00 p.m. Easter breakfast 8:15, Circle at 9:30 and Easter Service at 10:00 a.m., the usual Seekers schedule*
 - o Saturday, March 29– Crossings Gathering and Celebration, at Seekers, 9–6. (See story.)*
 - o Friday–Sunday, April 11–13–Seekers Spring Silent Retreat (see story).*

Seekers Spring Silent Retreat

Nancy Lawrence sends information—Seekers Silent Retreat at Dayspring will take place April 11–13, with Keith Seat as retreat leader. Stay tuned for further information coming soon about cost, registration, and other details.

Crossings Gathering and Celebration

The Crossings group will hold its Tenth Anniversary Gathering and Celebration on Saturday, March 29, 9 am–6 pm, at Seekers Church.

Beth Knox not only suffered the grievous loss of her young child a decade or so ago, but also experienced the “rules” for dealing with that child’s body after death. It left her devastated at her inability to be with and care for her child’s body in the hours following her death. Out of that tragedy, Beth went on to found Crossings, dedicated to giving people the choice of caring for their loved ones when they die.

And now Crossings is celebrating its tenth anniversary, reflecting on the transformation from an organization to a home funeral movement. The day will include not only stories from Crossings’ first 10 years, but also presentations on green burial sites, networking with home funeral practitioners from around the country, and a keynote address by Mark Harris, author of “Grave Matters.” A delicious lunch will be provided at Beth Knox’s home a short walk from Seekers Church. Although the cost for this event is \$40, it is free to Seekers.

From its early days, Crossings touched a desire among Seekers to reclaim the role of the church and family at the time of death, offering options and knowledge for after-death care of the body, home funerals, and green burials. Already, one or

more Seekers have stated a desire for this kind of care for their body when they die, so we are seeing this Crossings day-long event as a real opportunity for learning more about how to lovingly fulfill this role for each other as part of our life together. The day promises to be anything but morbid, as it includes stories, singing, delicious food, and fun. To register or obtain more information, please visit the website: www.crossings.net; or phone (301) 523-3033.

The Wider Seekers Community

Alumni and Missioners

Sonya Dyer—Sonya's email address has changed. The new address is boson1@bellsouth.net. Also, Sonya had a birthday last week, if anyone would like to send belated wishes.

The Seat Family—Keith writes—Less than a month after losing my maternal grandmother, my other grandmother, Helen Seat, died this afternoon in northwest Missouri. She was 94. As I'd mentioned at church, she recently broke her hip after falling due to a heart attack, and was receiving hospice care. She had been very healthy until the last few weeks, but had not recognized anyone for many months. Services will be this Saturday in Grant City, Missouri, so Brenda (who has returned safely from Japan), Marian, and I will be flying to Kansas City on Friday evening and returning home on Monday. Lauren will meet us there, flying in from Columbus. Please hold us in your prayers.

Ron Kraybill—Pat Conover reports: Ron came by to visit February 12. He was back in the United States briefly on business. He looks good and has the usual gentle energy we have learned to appreciate. His marriage with Odelia continues

to grow, and she is happily engaged in her graduate studies. Ron's commitment in the Middle East with the American Friends Service Committee runs through June, and he hopes to continue in his role there for another year. He continues to build relationships, and plans are maturing for a series of seminars he will offer, starting in late February. He was eager for news of Seekers and was glad to hear that things are progressing in all aspects of developing our redesigned website. He feels our spiritual support and asks for continuation of our prayers.

Phoebe Girard—Phoebe writes: Everyone—I am an alumna. Just wanted to say hello and let you know that David [her husband] and I are onboard with the discussion group. We have become active with our peace and justice ministry here in Santa Fe, although we have not found a very welcome environment in our UCC local church. We send our best to each and every one of you. Let us know when you next plan to be in Santa Fe. [See the Seekers website for Phoebe's contact information: on the Members Area home page, open a box with a drop-down menu, and click on Alumni.]

Church of the Saviour—Related Ministries

Family Place ministry—A note from a Church of the Saviour Ecumenical Council representative, Carolyn Parr: Please save March 20 for a free dinner and fundraiser for Family Place, starting at 6 pm at The Festival Center. The theme, anticipating Easter, is "Hope Rising" for the children we serve. We plan to celebrate the Resurrection with joy, to sing, to eat, and to hear inspirational stories of how people's lives are being changed by the work of Family Place. Our goal is to raise \$40,000 for our work with prenatal counseling and with women triumphing over domestic violence, two absolutely vital programs for the lives of our participants and their children. Please mark your calendars

now, and plan to come and bring a friend! [e-mail: carolynparr@hotmail.com]

Holy Week—Reflections and Seekers

Celebration Circle writes—Worship in Holy Week: In recent years, Celebration Circle has added the all-night Easter Vigil to our familiar Maundy Thursday footwashing and Easter Sunday morning breakfast and worship service. Last year, when we invited you to join us for about an hour at noon on Good Friday for more prayer and contemplative chant, about 20 people showed up, so we've decided to offer this service again.

This pattern of sustained prayer is called the Easter Triduum, or "Three Days." In ancient times, the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus were commemorated as a unified celebration lasting three days. The time from the Maundy Thursday footwashing until the Sunday morning Communion was considered as a single service, and people fasted from all food and drink for that entire period. Although they were not in church all the time, the frequent (and often long) gatherings served to help people live into the reality of each moment in the story.

One interesting detail about this pattern is that there was no benediction at the end of the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday gatherings, and no Communion on Good Friday. Instead, people simply left in silence, returning at the next stated time to resume the interrupted service. In recent years, many churches have sought to recover this ancient pattern.

Please join us for—

Footwashing and Communion on Thursday, March 20, at 7:00 pm.

Taize chant, Scripture readings, and prayer at noon on

Friday, March 21.

The Easter Vigil, beginning with the lighting of new fire at midnight between March 22 and 23. The Vigil will last until about 6:30 am and will conclude with the proclamation of the Risen Christ and Communion at 7:00am on March 22 on the back porch (weather permitting).

Seekers traditional Easter breakfast, at 8:15 am, followed by our usual Gathering Circle at 9:30 and formal worship at 10:00.

Until then, may we all continue to keep a holy Lent. Fast if you like.

Seekers Ministries

Reflections on SSIHC from Trish Nemore

Sandra asked me to speak to an SSIHC mentor training event tomorrow. To help me think through what I wanted to say, I wrote the following, which then struck me as a good submission for Soundings.

I joined the mentor team of the Silver Spring Interfaith Housing Commission—which I think of as more of a “companionship” team—to have a concrete experience of being with someone who has substantially fewer external resources than I have. My day job is very abstract: I am a policy advocate for low-income Medicare beneficiaries, and it is rare to see very concrete effects of my work.

My life has been privileged; I have not known economic or housing insecurity ever. Interactions with our mentee are daily reminders to me of the hurdles many people have to jump to accomplish ordinary things. Like getting to appointments on time without a car. Like finding child care for the random moment when a job interview is offered and you are desperate for a new job. Like working for over a year in a just-above-minimum wage job that gives only 20 hours a week of work, regardless of your performance as an employee and your desire to work more hours. Like having extra barriers put in your path because of past behavior, which has been accounted for. Like having to rely on unreliable people because they are the ones you have the closest ties to. I get discouraged just knowing of the hurdles; I don't have to actually jump over them.

The experience of being with this family helps remind me that there are big differences between me and them (resources and privilege)—and that there are no differences (we face the same underlying challenges and have similar needs). It is, in my opinion, wrong to forget either one of these aspects. We can't be real about the situation if we forget the former; if we forget the latter, they will always just be "folks we need to help," rather than sisters and brothers in God's family.

A spiritual and practical challenge is to draw the line between helping and enabling, to make suggestions and model different behavior without trying to impose our view of "the right answer" on a situation. Because of resources of time (sometimes), money, and reliable cars, we can help out in a pinch. But we don't want to be a default plan that inadvertently becomes The Plan.

From a practical standpoint, the greatest challenge in being part of the team is, for me, not the relationship with the family, but coordinating communication between the family, the team, and SSIHC. This is very important and very difficult. Having everyone know the mentee's goals and the team member's own role in helping her/him achieve those goals is something worth working at. Our team of five tries to get together with the family as a whole group periodically, and occasionally we are successful. More often, it is one, two, or three of the mentors with the family, or one on one. In the nearly two years we have been working with our family, we have come to realize that each person in the family needs mentoring or companionship. Some of us spend more time with the kids, sometimes one on one, sometimes with the kids together. The kids need a lot of loving and special attention as their parent or parents work hard to get back on track.

I have no doubt the family appreciates us. Our mentee parent will sometimes call us if she hasn't heard from us for a while. I think she knows she can pretty much count on us if we commit to being available to her. Communication is not always perfect, and we've had missteps. Often these are just ordinary miscommunications—a message left with one person did not get transmitted to the person who needed to hear it. Our mentee is usually very apologetic when things go wrong, and very appreciative of various ways in which we help her out. We have involved Seekers with the family in various ways. One summer, several not on the team help transport kids to and from camp. One family, with children similar in age to our mentee family's, has brought the mentee children to church regularly and invited them over to their house to play on many occasions. Many in the congregation are on the lookout for needed items for the household, and several folks helped move the family into their present SSIHC apartment. At Seekers Circle Time, we often give an update on how the family is

doing and what's going on for them so folks can pray for them and be more included in their lives.

I think you have to be both intentional and opportunistic in this position. Intentional in the sense that you can't just fit your companioning activities into everything else you are already doing in your life; you have made a commitment, and it has to be a priority activity as you plan each week. (I say this because I have to remind myself of it from time to time.) Opportunistic in that you have to be flexible in relating to your mentee/family, so that you might be available on short notice now and then to either help them out or to take advantage of a short-notice opportunity (like doing something fun on a snow day).

Even though we have long debates in Seekers about the meaning of our commitment to "be in solidarity with poor people," I feel that my walking with this family during a time of extraordinary need and change for them is part of my fulfillment of that commitment.

Bokamoso Scholarships

Roy Barber writes—Today we wired one full year's tuition to 12 colleges for a total of 26 young people from the Bokamoso Center from Seekers sponsored fundraising efforts. Congratulations and thank you! from Bokamoso and all her supporters.

La Paz Women's Shelter (Mexico)

Brenda Seat forwards a message from the directors of the shelter, which we support through our international giving.

Dear friend of the La Paz Women's shelter—Tragically, the shelter continues to be a booming ministry. We are beyond capacity and have had to turn women away. We simply do not have room for them.

Do you know how hard it is to tell a woman we can't take her in when we know there is nowhere else for her to go? We would be happy to take some of them into our own home, but our high profile would make secrecy impossible. We could not keep them safe. The nights are unusually cold this year, and if you follow international news you will know that violence is rapidly increasing here in Mexico. The streets are simply too dangerous for young moms and their children. As I write this we are struggling to figure out what to do with a mom and three little girls. We simply can't take them in. We will be working with one of our church women today and finding a cheap hotel where we can house the family. How many more calls will we get this week?

Pray with us that...

.... more Christians and other churches in La Paz would understand the God-given privilege it is to serve the lost and hurting.

.... our church people will understand that we are tools in God's hands and that he has chosen to use the church as the

means to accomplish his will.

.... wisdom for us to know how many families to take into the shelter.

... safety for those women we cannot protect ourselves but for whom we are attempting to find help.

Pray also for a Mexican woman to become the director of the shelter. Lois and I have been running the shelter for 5 years as just one part of our church planting ministry. It really should be a full time job. We have two candidates for director. As usual, it is a case of funding. We are hoping to have regular monthly promised support before we hire one of these women. We are grateful to a growing number of you who do give monthly. Once we can "guarantee" a living salary to a director, we will hire her.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" Matthew 9:36-38

Serving Him who served us all, Steve and Lois Dresselhaus

Miguel Angel Asturias Academy

Dave McMakin forwards this email from Ryan Richards of the Academy.

Dear Jackie and Dave: Just wanted to personally send you our latest installment of the Academy's newsletter. There's also a link to the Need Magazine writeup on the school which could be useful for spreading word about the project. There is also a

proposal for adding a third floor onto the school, which will extend education access to an additional 100 youth per year. Please feel invited to get involved in the campaign as individuals or as Seekers Church if you are interested.

Guatemala's 2008 school year is in full swing and enrollment at the Academy has jumped a whopping 33% over last year's 204 students. Word continues to spread throughout the city of Quetzaltenango and its surrounding communities about our innovative and accessible educational offering and new vocational training track.

Happy Carnival!

While North Americans were following the Super Tuesday presidential primaries, students at the Academy were celebrating Fat Tuesday. In the Carnival spirit, children danced, played, and smashed confetti-filled eggs over one another's heads. Parents let loose, helped sell snacks, and enjoyed the festivities.

Speaking Tour Recap:

It is official, the speaking tour was an enormous success. Jorge and Ryan spent three weeks touring across the United States at the end of 2007, giving a total of 30 presentations to interested audiences as farflung as Washington State and Washington, DC. Everywhere we went, people opened their hearts and homes to us, and we would like to extend our deepest thanks to everyone who helped make the tour possible. The tour and annual appeal raised sufficient funds to cover the outside donations component of the Academy's minimum operating budget for the 2008 school year. Again, many many thanks for all of your support!

Announcing Further Expansion:

As you might imagine, the school is bursting at its seams. In

order to provide an additional 100 students per year with access to our transformative education, the Academy is seeking \$75,000 to construct and furnish a third floor. Included will be four classrooms, a multipurpose room, and a library to promote literacy and a love of reading among our students and their families. A developed proposal can be found at www.asturiasacademy.org/documents/Third_Floor_Proposal.pdf. Interested individuals or clubs can build and furnish a classroom for as low as \$5,000. Please reply to this email if you would like to be part of this exciting effort!

Need Magazine Feature Article:

For those who missed it, the Academy's director, Jorge Chojolan, was featured in a 14-page article in the Winter issue of Need Magazine. A pdf of the article can be found on [their website](#) . A special thanks to John Abernathey for his stunning photography work and Stephanie Kinnunen, the magazine's director, for placing faith in our project and donating so many free magazines for the speaking tour.

Jorge sends his wishes: "saludos, gracias por todo, estamos trabajando." (greetings, thank you for everything, we are working).

Warmly, The Asturias Team

Alzheimer's Briefing

Trish Nemore writes—Below is an invitation to a briefing about Alzheimer's. I know there may be some among our numbers who are dealing with family or friends with dementia in one way or another. I assume this will be a policy rather than a

caregiving focus, but thought I'd pass it on in case anyone is interested. The Retired Officers Club is right across from the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Constitution Avenue, a short walk from Union Station (red line) or Capitol South (blue/orange line). [The basic information appears below. For an online brochure, please see Trish's e-mail of Monday, Feb. 25.]

March 11, 2008: Briefing, "Understanding the Alzheimer's Epidemic," followed by a reception and screening of 'pocket' films

Briefing: 4:30– 5:30 p.m. Reception: 5:30–7:00 p.m.

Reserve Officers Association One Constitution Ave, NE Washington, RSVP: jhurwitz@agingresearch.org

InterPlay

The First Sunday Playgroup in DC is special this month. We will be having **guest leaders from Raleigh, Tom Henderson and Ginny Going**. They have been the teachers and mentors of many InterPlayers in this area.

Following the Playgroup, there will be an **Information Session** about the Washington DC Leadership Program 2008–2009, now forming. If you are looking for a way to lead a more satisfying, embodied life, or if you are ready to go deeper with InterPlay, the Leadership Program may be for you. During the half hour following the Body Spirit Celebration you will be able to meet with Tom Henderson, Ginny Going, Billy Amoss, Kate Amoss and Players to explore this possibility. If you are interested but unable to attend, please let Kate Amoss know.

InterPlay is a practice and philosophy rooted in the

transformational power of play. It helps us approach life with more freedom, creativity and joy. InterPlay's creative process uses easy-to learn forms of movement, storytelling and voice that anyone can do. It balances experiences with reflection and solo/group activities. InterPlay is dedicated to helping the whole person thrive: body, mind, heart and spirit. It was created by Cynthia Winton-Henry and Phil Porter and is practiced throughout the world. Fun for newcomers and experienced InterPlayers alike. Free for first-timers. Others: suggested donation \$10–\$20.

Next First Sunday Playgroup: April 6, 2008

website: interplay.org

Questions? Call Sue at 703-641-5963

Seekers Sermons in February

The sermons that appear on the Seekers website are listed below, with brief thoughts on their themes. Read these sermons and archived sermons as far back as 1995 on the Seekers home page: find the tab "Worship" near the top. Click on this tab, and the drop-down menu will list both Sermons and Archived Sermons.

[*The Search for Meaning and a New Story*](#), by Peter Bankson—February 17 Our worship theme for Lent, "How can this be?" can be a signal that our hearts are open to something new, perhaps even a whole new way of understanding the world. It's like the idea we worked with during Epiphany, that the Realm of God is close at hand, but sometimes we have trouble finding the gate.

An Interview with Marjory Bankson, with Jackie

McMakin—February 10 In a new format for Seekers, Jackie McMakin interviewed Marjory Bankson. The questions were aimed at uncovering the journey that Marjory has taken in her life thus far, especially exploring her call to outreach teaching, her time as the president of Faith@Work, and her current transitional phase after retiring as the editor of the Faith@Work magazine.