

# Mission Groups In Seekers Church



Seekers Church  
An Intentional Christian Community  
*In the Tradition of the Church of the Saviour*

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# Dedication

This guide is dedicated to all those whose experience with Seekers mission groups has taught us how important it is to be clear about what a mission group is and how it functions.

**COVER:** The image on the cover is the four-foot wide mosaic that graces the front of the Seekers Church in Washington DC. It was made by members of Seekers Church as we prepared to move into this new home. The mosaic is made from pieces of broken plates, bowls and pots donated by Seekers. The design comes from the pattern on the plates Marjory Bankson made for us to use to offer Communion bread and to receive our offerings during worship. *The pattern on the plates and bowl speaks of God as our source and our Caller with its pattern of waves and circles. In the beginning, God's spirit brooded over the face of the deep, calling us forth as part of God's good creation. Then, centered by Jesus, we come to know God's love for the world and our part in the sacred process of redeeming our broken parts.* (Marjory Bankson, *The Story of Seekers Church, 1976 – 2006, June 2007, pg 30.*)

Affirmed by  
STEWARDS OF SEEKERS CHURCH

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# Introduction

Mission groups have been a core element of the life of Seekers Church from our beginning in 1976. A decade earlier the Church of the Saviour established mission groups as the place of primary belonging for everyone in the congregation. Today, Seekers mission groups are a primary place where we are living out God's call on our lives, the place where we belong most deeply to this small part of the Body of Christ.

This booklet provides information on –

- Why we think mission groups are important;
- How they are structured in Seekers Church;
- How mission groups support our Christian servanthood in the life of the community and its service to the world;
- What a mission group and a participant can expect from each other;
- The significance of a mission group for its members;
- How to join an existing group; and
- How we nurture the birth of new groups.

It also includes short descriptions of the different mission groups that were active at the time of writing.

Our mission groups live in the midst of a community that is guided by the Stewards of Seekers Church and supported by our Servant Leadership Team (SLT). Information about Stewards and the SLT can be found in the Guide to Seekers Church, or on line in our web site at <http://www.seekerschurch.org>.

## Why Mission Groups?

For Seekers Church, mission groups are the focal point for living out our commitments to spiritual growth (the journey inward), mission (the journey outward) and community (the life of Seekers Church). For us, mission groups carry the seeds of the destiny of humankind. We believe that the future depends in large part on how God acts through faithful, committed groups like these around the world.

At Seekers Church we believe God calls each of us to an active partnership, to be co-creators of God's realm here on Earth. Young or old; regardless of experience, skills or education; despite our past successes or failures – God gives each of us a call. This call comes through a sense of awe and mystery as we live into a growing relationship with Christ. It is a persistent, costly commitment to give ourselves to the task of bringing peace and justice to those in need. At the same time, once we accept God's call, God's gift to us is that this call leads to a life of love in service. Concretely, God's call is a deep, inescapable desire to transform the world and the church. It is a desire placed by God in the heart of each of us, to be servants to others and stewards of God's creation.

In Seekers Church, we understand that a mission group is an important place to live out God's call. It is an expression of the Body of Christ as described in the New Testament. That is, a mission group is a committed group of believers in which Christ is resident and present. Because of this, we believe that the mission group is the place of deepest belonging to the Body of Christ that is available to us in this community. For its members, the mission group has the power to convey God's forgiveness. It is our primary structure for spiritual formation.

We sustain the life of our community, and support ministry in the wider world through mission groups. Support for the life of Seekers Church includes core activities like our worship, and spiritual formation of adults and children through education and retreat. Through other mission groups we participate in "corporate" missions that serve the needs of the world and we support individuals who are called into their vocation as ministry.

Once a mission group has been called into being and its call has been affirmed by the Stewards of Seekers Church, the group has both the authority and the responsibility to lead the community in living out its call.

The Call of Seekers Church sets the foundation for our mission group life. Mission groups are key to how we live out the core of our call to be Church: *Our call is to be a "Seekers community" which comes together in weekly worship rooted in the Biblical faith, with shared leadership; and disperses with a common commitment to understand and implement Christian servanthood in the structures in which we live our lives.* (Find our Call at Appendix A.)

## **The Anatomy of a Mission Group**

A mission group is a place where you can join with a few others who share a commitment to God's call on their lives to do some particular kind of transforming work in the world. A mission group is a place of safety in which you can share your inner journey, find forgiveness and understanding, ask and answer hard questions, and discern ever more clearly the ways in which God is calling you to embody Christ in your daily life. A mission group is a place where you can find support and encouragement for your spiritual growth while engaged in a particular work of transforming service. A mission group is a place where both your journey inward to knowing God and your journey outward to service can be held as we journey together in loving community.

### **The Call of the Group**

Like Seekers Church as a whole, each mission group has a written call describing the purpose or mission of the group. This call begins to emerge before a group is formed. The call serves as the framework or skeleton for action by the group. It describes the part of our life together where the mission group will lead the congregation.

### **The Authority of Mission Groups**

Each mission group of Seekers Church holds a part of the life of the community, and is accountable for the way it cares for that part of our life together. Just as the individual members of each mission group have authority for their roles in the group because the mission group as a whole has confirmed their gifts, so mission groups exercise authority at the point of their call as confirmed by the community. In Seekers Church, the Stewards affirm the call of each mission group based on their discernment of how the call of the mission group grows out of and supports the call of the Christ on the Church, and our growing understanding of the needs of the community and the world.

A mission group supports the implementation of the Realm of God. As part of their life together, members of each mission group should be reflecting on how well they are doing in achieving that goal, how they can modify their approach or change their strategy to be more responsive to God's call.

Periodically the Stewards invite all members of a mission group to meet with the Stewards for a conversation about the life of the mission group and the role it is playing in the life of the congregation, and its role in bringing about God's Realm.

### **Mutual Expectations in Seekers Mission Groups**

Every group should be clear how much time and energy is required of its members, both in and between meetings, for full participation in the group. Groups with corporate missions normally require some commitment of time from participants outside regularly scheduled meetings. Mission groups that support individuals in their vocations encourage a continuing awareness of the presence of Christ in the vocational environment.

Balance is as important for our groups as for ourselves. Each group tries to balance the work of the group with celebrations of birthdays and other special events, retreats, an occasional dinner together, or other play time. Worship is a part of every meeting, and a major part of most mission group retreat activity.

You can expect from your mission group:

- A clear commitment to live out God's call on the mission group;
- A regular schedule of meetings;
- Help in offering yourself to the group (calling forth of gifts);
- A clear understanding of the amount of time/energy involved in group participation;
- A structure that has room for all participants to share their gifts;
- Guidelines to nurture personal spiritual growth (common spiritual practices or disciplines);
- Support as you face the challenges and pain in your life;
- A spiritual companion who will receive and respond to regular written reflections on your life and spiritual growth;
- Confidentiality for what you share with the group; and
- Group life that balances work, play and worship.

The mission group will expect from you:

- Commitment to God's call on the mission group;
- Regular attendance at group meetings;
- Readiness to share your gifts with the group;
- Commitment of the time and energy needed to belong to the group;
- Participation in the structured activity of the group;
- Commitment to follow the spiritual discipline of the group;
- Honest and open sharing of yourself;
- Regular written reports to your spiritual companion (accountability);
- Confidentiality for what others share with you; and
- Work, play and worship.

## **Balancing Mission and Support**

Mission groups are the structure we have found most helpful in supporting us as we respond to God's call on us as individuals and as a community. They are structured to offer support and spiritual accountability for living out God's claim or call on our lives. Belonging to a mission group will support you as you:

- Nurture God's call on you, grow and mature into it, and go out to serve in the name of Christ and the church;
- Discover and nurture your own gifts in a group that shares God's call;
- Offer your gifts in service and witness to others and to the whole of creation;
- Pursue an interior life of spiritual growth along with others who are similarly called;
- Deepen your spiritual practices, or disciplines, not only in your individual life but in the life of the group;
- Deepen your commitment to accountability for who you say you are and what you mean to do;
- Receive caring feedback to stimulate and support your personal growth; and
- Shepherd others, as well as allow others to shepherd you.

## Discerning Spiritual Gifts

In 1975, Gordon Cosby, founder of the Church of the Saviour, described the evoking of gifts in a way that still rings true for us:

*When all is said and done, the discovering and nurturing of the gifts of its members remains the primary work of the mission group. The teaching of St. Paul is clear (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). Each person confessing Christ as Lord, living within the Body of Christ, is given a gift by the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the Body. We can even say that the person himself, as his essence unfolds under the power of the Spirit, is gift. He becomes more fully human, more fully Christian. Functions naturally flowing from this new being are recognized. As these gifts are recognized by the member and confirmed by other members, they are employed for the enrichment of the group's life. If every member has discovered the unique treasure of his or her own being and it is being received by the others, there is tremendous fulfillment and power. The unity of the group consists in the faithful use of the variety of gifts. If even one or two members have not identified their gifts, the problem of envy will be a serious one for the group. (Handbook for Mission Groups. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975. Pg 60-61. )*

When we speak of the authority of each participant at the point of their gift, we mean that as each person in the mission group exercises their gift, every other person in the group will confirm and be obedient to that gift. For example, if you are the worship leader of a mission group, you can expect all participants to enter into worship from the heart. When this process causes disagreement or tension, it is the task of the group to work through the issue with prayer and love until the gift can be confirmed by all in the group. If this confirmation is not possible, the group must enter a period of discernment to reassess where gifts for the group are being given.

## Individual Roles and Authority

Every participant should have a part to play in the life or mission of the group -- responsibility for some part of the life of the group. Every group needs participants who will take several basic roles. These roles may have different names, or be combined in different ways, but each group needs a moderator, someone for spiritual accountability, and someone to uphold the vision of the group.

- Moderator / Abbot – The member of the group who structures the group life, develops the agenda, makes sure everyone has a chance to share, saves time for the essentials and helps keep the balance of work, play and worship.
- Spiritual Companion / Director – The person to whom others in the group are accountable for the faithfulness and richness of their spiritual lives; the one who receives, prays over and provides comments on weekly reports from group members.
- Vision Keeper / Prophet – The person who takes the longer view of the life of the group; the one who keeps the group in touch with its call; the one who challenges when things get too comfortable.

Other roles that may be combined with those described above, or with each other include:

- Worship Leader – The one who leads the worship life of the group.
- Ecumenist – The person who keeps the group in touch with the rest of the church: other groups, the larger Seekers community, the other Church of the Saviour descendants, and the wider church.
- Activist – The one who leads the group into action. This may be directed toward the corporate mission of the group, or toward the growth and development of the group itself.
- Celebrant – The person who calls the group to play, and encourages full expression of our joy.

## **Discerning Roles in the Group**

In Seekers mission groups, selecting participants to fill roles requires a process of discernment that allows the group to call forth and confirm God's special gift to each participant in the group. Sometimes this gift is a skill or talent that the individual has developed outside the group, like administration or accounting, or leading meditation. In the same way, God's gift is sometimes a desire to learn something new by offering it to the mission group. The important thing is to be open to the quiet voice of God, and honest with one another in the group about what we hear. As long as any participant in a mission group does not feel that his or her gift is essential and making a contribution to living out the call of the group, there will be problems.

Once the gift of each member has been discerned (within the context of the group) and confirmed, roles can be structured to allow each participant to give to the group from a position of authority. This allows authority within the group to be shared by all participants, and gives each person a position of leadership. Discerning the gifts of mission group members should be done for all participants at the same time. As new participants join a group, the distribution of gifts will change. Discernment involves sharing God's hints, praying together, discussing, claiming what is revealed, and confirming the gifts in the presence of everyone. This can be an important opportunity to ask questions or offer constructive reflection to one another in the context of the call of the mission group. In the end, specific roles are unique to each group.

There are times when God's gift to a group is through an individual's pain or weakness: the participant in pain can draw forth the healing love of the entire group by being open and vulnerable in sharing that pain.

There are many processes for clarifying and confirming the gifts of members of a mission group. Typically, the person leading the group will include these elements:

- Quiet, prayerful reflection by all members of the group about the call of the group and what each member of the group brings to that call;
- Affirmation of the contributions of each member of the group to group life and group mission;
- A statement from each member of the group about what God is calling them to bring to the group;
- Reflection on each member's sense of call to the group;
- Confirmation of each person's call by all members of the group; and
- Discussion of how the work of the group can be structured to fit the call of each member and remain faithful to the call of the group.

## **Servant Leadership**

The corollary to the authority of gifts is our understanding of servant leadership in Seekers mission groups. We believe that leaders are called to lead in the way Jesus taught. The leader must be the servant of the group. This means being faithful to the call of the mission group and the good of the community in the exercise of gifts. It means not using your role within the mission group to push for a personal agenda, even as you bring your hungers, interests and concerns to the call of the group. It means keeping clearly in mind that every participant has authority at the point of his or her own gift. A member's ability to contribute to the health of the mission group and the ability of the group to follow God's call flows from each person seeing her- or himself as part of the community rather than a lone individual. Servant leadership underscores a natural tension between the efficient employment of skills, experience and power and true collaboration in service to Christ through the call of the group. Mission groups are one important place where we are learning, from the teaching of Jesus, a way that the world has rejected.

## **Mission Group Meetings**

Regular meetings are important. The frequency of meetings will affect the depth of connections within the group. Seekers mission groups usually meet weekly. Weekly meetings foster a sense of closeness that encourages sharing in depth and mutual support, and allows for visible progress on the work of the group. A few groups choose to meet every other week. This makes it possible for some with full schedules to attend more regularly, but slows the development of intimacy and trust within the group.

Some groups work on their tasks or mission at the group meetings. Others plan task work during meetings and do the work at other times. Groups use some meeting time to evaluate past work and nurture group visions of the future.

Mission group meetings begin with worship, to help bring us consciously into God's presence. Some groups use a brief reflection on the weekly Lectionary Scriptures or other reading, with time for silence or comments, and prayer. Other groups provide an opportunity to use art materials or other less traditional activities such as dance, or a choral reading of the Lectionary, or singing several hymns, or drumming. There are many ways to come together through worship.

Sharing is an important part of the life of every mission group. Each of us needs to be understood and supported through the challenges and pain of life. Equal participation by all members is particularly important in sharing and support. Mission groups use different structures for personal sharing. Some groups give each person a brief opportunity to share the highlights of the week, then allow one person to share in depth. Others focus the sharing around a question drawn from the weekly Lectionary Scriptures or other readings. Others use non-verbal elements in their sharing such as art or movement.

## **Confidentiality**

We believe that a mission group is the place within the community where we are most intimately known. In order to be open and vulnerable to each other within the mission group it is essential that each participant have the assurance that, when something sensitive is shared in the group it remains there. Members of the mission group agree that each participant's story remains hers or his to share as desired with others.

## **Spiritual Practice in a Mission Group**

We understand that the personal and group disciplines that come with joining a mission group are demanding. For someone joining a mission group for the first time, the practices/disciplines of the group may feel like an affront, as controlling, or perhaps as unreasonable or unfair. Those who have embraced the practices/disciplines and expectations tend to think of them as gift and freedom. This is not a freedom from constraints but the freedom to invest one's life and caring in a group. Such investment encourages personal and group transformation towards God's intentions. Living out the common call expresses the ministry entrusted to us in baptism, in communion, and in deep moments of connection to God.

Seekers mission groups include a specific commitment to nurture the spiritual life of each participant in the group. Typical elements of mission group discipline include:

- Regular attendance and participation in the mission of the group;

- Commitment to discovery and use of one's gifts through ongoing reflection and interaction with group members;
- Prayer, scripture reading and reflection on one's life in light of the lectionary scripture;
- Writing a report covering both inward and outward journey, given to the designated spiritual companion at mission group meetings;
- Regular attendance at Sunday worship, usually with Seekers; and
- Giving time and money for the missions of Seekers church and to meet other needs.

## **Spiritual Direction or Companionship**

The role of spiritual director or companion is perhaps the most important and least understood function within a mission group. Each participant in the group, as one of the conditions of joining the group, agrees to enter into a spiritual guidance relationship. Each Seekers mission group has at least one member who serves as a spiritual companion or director. Often one member is confirmed in this role, receiving reports from all other members. When one individual is not called to the role of spiritual companion or director, the group determines other arrangements so that each participant is accountable to one other person in the group for her or his spiritual nurture and growth. We believe that the Holy Spirit will provide within each group the gifts necessary to nurture the participants and sustain the life of the group.

## **Time for Reflection**

Most groups find it important to structure regular time to nurture the growth of the group. This may take the form of working with a book that addresses the call of the group; participating together in some outside activity related to the call; or going on retreat together. Many groups schedule longer meetings (weekend retreats or half day meetings) to give them more time to share their stories and build the bonds of community. Longer periods together help deepen the sense of community, and allow extended opportunities for sharing and mission work together. A weekend at Wellspring or Rolling Ridge is nice, but groups also plan an occasional Saturday at someone's home, at the church, or in a park. The moderator must be sensitive to each participant's need to share, and provide time for all.

Retreat leadership, to help structure the time and help the process along, can come from within the group, or from outside. Seekers Church is rich in leadership resources that can help plan or lead a group retreat. For example, the Living Water Mission Group is called to help individuals and other mission groups deepen their inner journeys.

## **Joining – and Leaving – a Seekers Mission Group**

Although most members of Seekers Church belong to a mission group, not everyone chooses this path. Participation in a mission group is a balance of giving and receiving. Participants are called to give themselves to the group and its mission. In return, they receive support and affirmation for their unfolding lives as Christians. Membership in a mission group demands a commitment to discerning and living out God's call. Learning to embrace this level of commitment must precede membership in a mission group. Joining a mission group requires a commitment to the call and the spiritual practices of the group.

Many mission groups have members who have been involved in the life of the group for years, even decades. There are also members who move in and out of mission groups, sometimes because of a

changing sense of call, sometimes to give more energy to other demands in their lives, and sometimes just to regroup and reassess.

## **Preparation for Joining a Mission Group**

As part of the process of joining a Seekers mission group, prospective members are expected to participate in the School of Christian Living for at least two semesters. This gives the prospective member an opportunity to experience a regular midweek meeting with a small group from Seekers and time to get to know other members of Seekers Church. Joining normally begins with a trial period, to help all participants in the process confirm the joining.

Seekers mission groups are generally open to new participants. Some groups are open on a continuing basis, while others receive new members only periodically. The "closed" periods allow group members to deepen their sense of community and develop their gifts in response to the call of the group. Here again are some suggestions to help guide you toward an existing Seekers mission group:

- Complete two semesters of classes in the School of Christian Living;
- Find a shepherd to help you clarify God's call on your life;
- Pray and listen to God's leading. Ask yourself:
  - Where has God burdened your heart with the needs of Creation?
  - Where is your anger, your compassion, your hope?
  - Where does your energy rise in response to this need for transformation?
- Reflect on the calls of existing mission groups;
- Talk with members of existing mission groups. Listen to your heart as they talk; and
- When a direction begins to emerge, talk it over with the moderator of the mission group and arrange a specific schedule for exploring further.

## **Visiting an Existing Group**

One way some Seekers mission groups introduce prospective participants to the group is to invite them to attend part of a group meeting. This visit is a time for the prospective participant to share about his or her call to the group. If this call is not clear, additional possibilities for sharing include parts of the individual's spiritual journey, or the history of the person with Seekers or similar churches. In many cases, someone from the group will meet with the prospective participant before the initial visit to help clarify the individual's call.

The group can use this meeting to share the specifics of their life together: when they meet; their weekly tasks and roles; and who fills them. There needs to be a mutual consensus of the fit between the person and the group. This may be reached at the meeting or after further reflection.

This visit usually precedes a trial period of participation in the life of the mission group. The trial period is normally set for six to eight weeks - long enough for the group and the new participant to discern whether the call is right, and short enough to allow the prospective member to move on without undue pain and disruption if it is not. Once the trial period is over and it is clear that the new arrival is called to be part of the mission group, there is a period of discernment as the members consider their roles in light of all those who are now part of the group.

Some groups have also invited recent arrivals at Seekers who express an interest in a mission group to visit for a period of time. Even though preparation for mission group participation normally takes some

time, a visit with an existing mission group provides an opportunity to learn more about the group and may lead to a shepherding relationship with someone from the group.

If you are interested in any of the groups described in this guide we encourage you to contact any of the participants to talk about the current life of the group.

## **Leaving a Mission Group**

When an individual participant in a group no longer feels an internal identification with the call of the group, the participant is expected to discuss this with the group, receive the blessing of the group and leave to seek God's new call in some other part of the life of Seekers Church.

## **The Life Cycle of a Mission Group**

New mission groups come into being as we discern a fresh call from God to follow Christ in service to the world around us.

### **Discerning the Call of the Group**

The process of giving birth to a new mission group begins when one of the Stewards of Seekers Church hears a new call. This person carries the emerging sense of call, deepening the discernment through prayerful reflection, journaling and conversations with her or his spiritual director and other Stewards. As the call begins to clarify, another Steward is invited to join the discernment, so that there are at least two Stewards carrying the emerging call. Over time others may join this process of initial group discernment.

In recent years several new groups have emerged in the life of Seekers Church as several Seekers join together in a common effort which grows over time into a "call to commitment" and spawns a new mission group.

A valid call will focus on some specific need, some area of brokenness, in the world or the church. This is a place where God's Realm is waiting for some co-creator to bring transformation. It may seem too broad or too simple, or simply impossible. But as the initiating group works with the images revealed in prayer and conversation, they will be shown a particular place to start.

### **Affirming the Call**

As the call becomes clarified the initial group will bring it to a meeting of the Stewards of Seekers Church. The Stewards review the call and share their insights with the initiating group. This may lead to further refinement by the initiating group, and a subsequent review of the refined call by the Stewards. After reflection and prayer, if there is a positive sense of the call, the Stewards affirm it.

Since many mission groups in Seekers Church carry core parts of the life of the faith community – worship, lifelong learning, retreat – this affirmation is a sign to all who are part of Seekers Church that this mission group has the authority to act in the name of the church. Mission groups are accountable to the Stewards for the call they have accepted.

## **Sounding the Call**

Once the Stewards have affirmed the call of a new mission group, the initiating group sounds the call, inviting all those in Seekers Church who are ready to join them in the life of the mission group. As others join the new mission group, the group begins regular meetings, evoking, affirming and nurturing gifts of members of the group, and carrying the mission of the group. At this point, the new mission group is on the path described earlier in this guide, following the Holy Spirit, living out God's call on the group – together.

## **When Group Life Becomes Painful**

When the life of a mission group generates issues or concerns that can not be resolved within the group, the group may invite someone from outside to help facilitate the healing process. The Servant Leadership Team is committed to providing that support or working with members of the mission group to find someone else who can help. If there are issues that cannot be reconciled then it is time to discern the most constructive way to change relationships and possibly dissolve the mission group.

Mission groups pursue a mission and are not simply for sharing or study or personal and spiritual growth. Sharing or study or personal and spiritual growth might dominate from time to time, but the expectation is that they should contribute to mission. When members of a mission group find that they are not following their stated call, they usually take time to redirect their activities, discern how their call has changed, or consider ending the group.

## **Ending a Mission Group**

Mission groups last as long as their calls remain vital. If a group chooses to no longer live out its call, the group should come to an end to free up the energy and attention of members to pursue other visions and callings. It is important when ending comes to honor and celebrate the life of the group and the Good News it has helped to bring into Creation. It is also important to create an opportunity for members of the group to release their own visions, commitment and hopes, so that they can be open to some fresh call from God.

When mission groups end, the members of the group should take time to help each other make a transition to some other way of belonging deeply within the community. The moderator of the group should report to the Stewards of Seekers Church on any unfinished work of the group. The Servant Leadership Team is available to help with this process of grieving and letting go. Members of a mission group that is ending should close with a time of worship and celebration to celebrate the life they have lived together.

## Postscript

Like this guide, the mission groups of Seekers Church are not perfect. Our commitment to be faithful to the call of Christ is limited by our humanity. So we try, and sometimes we fail, and then we try again. By God's grace, we can sometimes learn from our failures. And as we learn to love and forgive each other, we can also begin to learn from our failures as a community.

This guide describes the mission groups of Seekers Church, but there are many other kinds of groups that come together to address specific needs. The renovation of our new headquarters was guided and supported by several self-organizing teams, where all were invited to focus on some particular element of the work, like building development, decoration and furnishings, community outreach or stewardship. There are regular, informal gatherings for breakfast and conversation, monthly for the women of Seekers and biweekly for the men. A group of musicians provide regular support for music in worship, and one of our members organizes a monthly "sing-along" where we gather in someone's home to sing the old favorites.

We also have several "ministry teams," each with a particular focus:

- a ministry to youth in Winterveldt, South Africa;
- support for families served through the ministry of a local inter-faith housing coalition;
- a support group for those called to healing professions;
- a group that nurtures our ecological awareness and Earth-sustaining practices, and;
- a quarterly building maintenance group.

While these groups do not share the commitment to both the inner and outer journeys, and many of their participants are also members of a mission group, they are an important part of our expression of Christian servanthood.

As alternatives to mission groups, Seekers can participate in School of Christian Living classes and in non-mission group service and fellowship activities. Seekers can gain some of the benefits of mission group involvement and contribute to the common life by practicing the disciplines and reporting to an independent spiritual companion or director, by being conscious and intentional about offering ministry in the context of everyday life, and by sharing in Seeker's wide opportunities for fellowship.

Although there are other options for small group experience, we are committed to the mission group structure for as many Seekers as possible. Responding to a mission group's call is more a matter of recognition and commitment than of maturity, strength, or skill. In the end, in Seekers Church mission groups are the place to belong.

If you have questions, ask a member of the Servant Leadership Team, or talk to the moderator of one of our current mission groups. They are identified on the mission group page of our web site at <http://www.seekerschurch.org/mission/index.htm>.

## **Appendix A: The Call of Seekers Church**

*Our call is to be a "Seekers community" which comes together in weekly worship rooted in the Biblical faith, with shared leadership; and disperses with a common commitment to understand and implement Christian servanthood in the structures in which we live our lives.*

*By "Seekers community" we mean an intentional body which sees Christ as our true life source. Koinonia with one another and genuine self-giving to the world are the ways we can be in Christ today. Seekers are not persons who have arrived, but persons who are intentionally on the way.*

*By shared leadership we mean empowering the gifts of women and men to help our worship flow out of and feed into the life of the community. We are committed to evoking and giving space to new gifts of preaching, liturgical leadership, creative worship forms, giving, mission and other acts of faith.*

*For us, Christian servanthood is based on empowering others within the normal structures of our daily lives (work; family and primary relationships; and citizenship) as well as through special structures for service and witness. We desire and welcome participation in Seekers of women and men of every race and sexual orientation. In Seekers Church we will equip and support each other in all of these areas and seek a balance among them.*

*Seekers is committed to participation by persons of all ages. We see children, youth and adults of all ages as valuable and valued parts of our community, and desire their inclusion in our care, our ministry, and our life together.*

Issued by Seekers Founding Members in July 1976  
Revised by Seekers Core Members in November 1989, May 1991

## Appendix B: Mission Groups of Seekers Church

Here are brief descriptions of Seekers mission groups. For more information on the activities, disciplines or inner life of any of these groups, just ask.

### Artist Mission Group

*This is a call ...*

*to persons who find in the arts an expression of an inner vision, of a holy and growing place in themselves.*

*This is a call...*

*to those who find in color, line, surfaces, form, movement, sounds, metaphors, and the many other aspects of art, the presence of the mysterious, unpredictable, silent and enlivening power of God...a God who dances and sings.*

*This is a call...*

*to persons who find in the struggle to create, in the discipline of an artistic form, in the encounter with an art object, an experience of faith and grace where God is known as the Creator of their lives.*

*This is a call...*

*to join in a community which will support and encourage individual efforts, and encounters with art. Through communal prayer, dialogue and sharing of experience, the inner vision will be nurtured to be expressed in some outward forms.*

The Artist's Group calls persons to express an inner vision in an outward form. In the engagement with the medium one becomes aware of the gift of creation, and hopes to be a channel for this gift. The artist is held by the group in the faith place where both the creative blocks and creative gifts are experienced.

In the Artist Mission Group we work individually on our art but corporately we become community.

Claiming being an artist means being under the authority of that. Once deciding to join, then comes the sorting through of how this is to be manifested in one's life. Setting priorities is important. Some who come may have set their goals and hopes so high they dare not venture forth. Some humility is needed to accept one's own work. When one experiences the creative process in oneself one realizes that intentionality is needed but also faith to hang in when there seems to be no inner resource to rely upon.

The call to be an artist is radical in that it asks us to find a voice for our uniqueness and be responsible for that as co-creators with God. As created beings we can only express our uniqueness with God's help.

Call issued 1978, revised 1983

Members of the group in January 2010 included Billy Amoss, Jean Adams, Kathy Tobias, Roy Barber

## **Celebration Circle**

Celebration Circle is called to energize and structure the worship life of the Seekers Church. We write Seekers' worship liturgies, plan and coordinate worship and other celebrations, and coordinate preaching.

In Celebration Circle our work is some combination of what is traditionally done by ministers, worship committees and altar guilds. We try to live out that part of the call of Seekers Church to come "...together in weekly worship rooted in the Biblical faith, with shared leadership..." so that we can "...disperse with a common commitment to understand and implement Christian servanthood in the structures in which we live our lives."

During our weekly mission group meetings, we select themes for worship based on the lectionary and concerns in the life of the community, compose the liturgies and special rituals, schedule the preachers and work with them to select the hymns and music, and plan the altar table. Wednesday evenings are busy, lively times, as the work helps us confront our assumptions about God and face our prejudices about worship.

On Sundays, we arrange the worship space and coordinate the different parts of the morning. One of us usually leads the gathering circle, and another usually serves as the liturgist.

In addition to our corporate mission, we provide a place of support and spiritual accountability for the members of the group. We can usually find the time to celebrate birthdays and share each others' joys and sorrows.

We want to give all Seekers the opportunities they desire to contribute to our worship life. We welcome offerings of leadership and suggestions about how Seekers' worship can be improved so that, in worship, we are "...empowering others within the normal structures of our daily lives (work; family and primary relationships; and citizenship) as well as through special structures for service and witness."

Celebration Circle is committed to maintaining a flexible but familiar framework for worship that offers a variety of opportunities for shared leadership. If you are interested in offering something to Seekers during worship, or if you might like to join us, please let one of us know!

Call Issued about 1980; last revised 1992

Members of the group in January 2010 included Deborah Sokolove, Kate Cudlipp, Ken Burton, Peter Bankson and Sandra Miller.

## **Eyes to See Ears to Hear Peace Prayer Mission Group**

**Introduction** Eyes to See, Ears to Hear Peace Prayer Mission Group came into being out of a yearning of several Seekers to have a place to pray for peace and healing in our violent and chaotic world. Meeting since early 2007 and recognized as a mission group in 2008, the group has actively engaged Seekers community in using its eyes to see and ears to hear things we may not want to see and hear.

As a group or in collaboration with other Seekers, we have invited conversation in Seekers around human trafficking, health care, torture, environmental concerns, healing racism and learning from people of

other faiths. We have facilitated classes in the School of Christian Living on the Beatitudes and Issues of Poverty. We have offered the community opportunities to write to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have organized a children's Peace Camp sponsored by Seekers for one Saturday in the summer. We are collaborating on an ongoing conversation on race and diversity with Covenant Christian Community, creating a rich and diverse community working towards joint action out of our commitment to peace.

**Call** Eyes to See, Ears to Hear Peace Prayer Mission Group is called to be a place of prayer and action for the myriad circumstances in the world that are in need of justice, peace and healing. The group's name is taken from a sermon preached by Pat Conover at Seekers entitled "Seeing What You Don't What to See."

In that sermon, Pat said: *"I want God to account to me for why such awfulness is allowed. I don't find much comfort in Job's message of humility. I want to rush past the cross to the resurrection. I want the Hollywood endings, the fairy tales corrupted to read, 'And they all lived happily ever after.'*

*What I have, in this mean time, is you. Can we bear the Christ for each other? Can we share the suffering and agony. Can we accept each other without being perfect. Hell, can we accept each other before we are even average or ok? Can we share the little bits of hope and caring and faith that we can muster up, or give in to, or dimly see. Can we love before we understand? Can we trust despite the evidence of our hurts? Can we trust after we feel manipulated or humiliated; when we have been manipulated or humiliated?"*

We know that our hearts grow heavy and numb from the news of violence and injustice all around us. We seek to create space to pray, even when we don't see any "way out," any action step, even, perhaps, any hope. We seek to create a place to hold the suffering and agony. But we also seek to promote engagement in addition to prayer in those places where we see possibility for connection.

Each of our activities to date has arisen from the particular interest of one member of the group. We will continue to support each other in bringing such interests to Seekers and to the wider community. As a mission group, we will hold the coordination of the Sunday morning lighting of the Peace and Justice Candle in collaboration with The Green Team.

We meet every Tuesday at Carroll Street or in each other's homes from 5:30-7 pm. Our shared practice is to pray into the silence together about a particular area of concern in the Quaker style, led each meeting by one member of the group. We participate in spiritual reporting. At this time, we are open to new members.

Revised December 1, 2009

Members of the group in January 2010 included Pat Conover, Sallie Holmes, Sandra Miller and Trish Nemore.

## **Koinonia**

The call of Seekers Church states: "Our call is to be a 'Seekers community' which comes together in weekly worship rooted in the Biblical faith, with shared leadership.... By 'Seekers community' we mean an intentional body which sees Christ as our true life source. *Koinonia* with one another and genuine self giving are the ways that we can be in Christ today."

*Koinonia* means “fellowship” or “partnership” and is exemplified by Jesus who called forth disciples and mentored them, who had dinner with outcasts and engaged in discussions with the religious leaders of his time. Jesus valued his interactions with others; he enjoyed a party, and he saw real value in all people whether they were children or adults, rich or poor, powerful or weak. His life is an example of how to live in *Koinonia* with each other. Like Jesus, we Seekers want to partner each other into knowing God more deeply and more intimately, and we believe that we do that by being in fellowship with one another.

Our mission group is called to consciously hold up for the community the ways that we can create *Koinonia* with each other and with those people who are exploring Seekers. We are called to create and sustain opportunities within our life together that will build *Koinonia*, and identify and remove barriers that would prevent deepening our fellowship together. Although the call to *Koinonia* with one another is one that all Seekers hold, the role of the *Koinonia* Mission Group is to make it more visible, and by holding it up, make that call more central and intentional in our life together.

- We are called to shepherd into the life of our community new people who are coming towards us.
- We are called to deepen our relationships and fellowship with the neighborhood in which we live.
- We are called to ensure that Seekers Church is a welcoming space.

Our disciplines will include regular prayer for new people in the community and for our group, regular attendance at our meetings, a commitment to individual spiritual practices, weekly spiritual reports, and personal sharing.

### **Living Out Our Call**

A mission group’s vision and call may evolve as the mission group’s understanding of its mission grows and changes beyond what was originally envisioned. Circumstances in the community may change or dictate what a mission group needs to be about in holding up its call. The living out of a mission group’s call depends on the gifts and skills of its members and their own emerging sense of individual call to the mission group’s goals.

After careful and prayerful consideration we have listed below the things that this initial group of four members is planning to take on in carrying out our call. We believe that as others join us, this list may change based on their skills, gifts and emerging sense of call to the work of building *Koinonia* within our community and the world.

Jesus often found opportunities for *Koinonia* in “table fellowship.” We are called to create and sustain table fellowship opportunities in our life together.

- We will facilitate our traditional community meals (Easter breakfast and Christmas Eve dinner) and evoke and support new ways that we can share table fellowship together in large and small configurations.
- We will facilitate our traditional community Overnights (in March and October) and seek to create ways in which our conversations and times together can build our life together, and deepen our understandings of each other as individuals created in the image of God.
- We will facilitate celebrations within our community!
- We will facilitate Coffee Hour every Sunday.

Because of our unique structures and the freewheeling nature of our community, it is often very difficult for people to find their way into our community life. Often Circle Time and Coffee Hour are a blur of information and friendly faces, but it is difficult to make deeper connections.

- We will, with the help of the rest of the community, greet and welcome new people as they come towards us and make an effort to discover what longings of the soul they bring and help them make those connections within Seekers which may meet their needs.
- We will maintain contact and follow up with people as they explore the life of our community and discern whether God is calling them to “this small part of the body of Christ.”
- We will encourage those who are exploring Seekers to deepen their fellowship with Seekers by taking advantage of the Sunday morning classes, especially the “Intro to Seekers Class,” classes in the School of Christian Living, special events, silent retreats, and when appropriate, mission group membership.
- We will seek to find ways that new people can share their gifts with the larger church community.
- We will continually look for and hold up ways that we as a church can improve our hospitality, and our fellowship with others.

Since our membership is scattered and not all of us live in the neighborhood, we can feel disconnected from what is going on around us.

- We will listen for and announce ways that Seekers can join with others to make a difference in our neighborhood.
- Often making a space welcoming entails making sure that the details are covered.
- We will ensure that there are enough paper supplies on hand for the bathrooms, kitchen and kitchenettes, and cleaning supplies for the cleaning people. We will also make sure that there are First Aid supplies and other necessities available.
- We will ensure that there are the supplies necessary for Coffee Hour each Sunday.
- We will work with others to ensure that people who rent our building or use our space have the necessary and adequate instructions to use the kitchen and other features of the building.

Affirmed by the Stewards of Seekers Church June 2005

Members of the group in January 2010 included Brenda Seat, Debbie Barwick, Margreta Silverstone and Mary Carol Dragoo.

## **Learners and Teachers**

The Learners and Teachers Mission Group is called to invite and enable people to take part in learning and sharing opportunities that help inform and support a life of faith. Learners and Teachers lives out this call through its sponsorship of the Seekers Church School of Christian Living and through sharing its approach to Christian education with other congregations.

As Christians in the tradition of the Church of the Saviour, we believe a life of faith includes an inner journey of spiritual development; an outer journey of compassionate response to God's call to mission in the world; and a commitment to a community that can offer loving support and accountability.

Through the School of Christian Living at Seekers Church, Learners and Teachers introduces newcomers into the life and faith of this community; supports the structures of Seekers Church that move individuals into deeper levels of intentional commitment; and enriches and deepens the understanding and spiritual development of participants at all stages of their faith journeys

Revised February 17, 2004

Members of the group in January 2010 included Marjory Bankson, Jill Joseph, David Lloyd, David Novello and Jacqie Wallen.

## **Living Water: A Retreat Mission Group of Seekers Church**

In John 4:10, Jesus said to the Woman at the Well, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked and he would have given you living water.” We want to claim both our thirst and God’s promise of living water to those who ask.

As a second-generation Church of the Saviour community, Seekers Church has drawn many people who are consciously engaged in ministry where they live and work. And from our tradition, we know that this outward journey of service must be grounded in prayer and intentional reflection to sustain the Call which God has given to each person.

Therefore, LIVING WATER intends to support the inner life of all Seekers by:

- Developing in Seekers the capacity for group spiritual guidance and other forms of spiritual companionship;
- Sponsoring retreats (silent and other designed experiences);
- Supporting current offerings at Dayspring, Wellspring and Rolling Ridge that focus on the “inward journey”; Presenting disciplines to nourish the inner life (e.g. sponsoring a Covenant group as one way to introduce accountability or teaching a class on daily disciplines);
- Offering a book group to focus group study;
- Hallowing our diminishment (age or illness) and creating rituals for end of life and other endings as well.

In the tradition of Church of the Saviour, Stewards issuing the call to LIVING WATER are Marjory Bankson, Emily Gilbert and Muriel Lipp. It is our intention to meet weekly at Goodwin House in Alexandria. Please contact Emily Gilbert (703/671-6111) for specific time and place of the meeting. We welcome any Seeker who responds to this call and has completed two classes in the Seekers School of Christian Living.

Call issued: Jan 26, 2002; revised March 10, 2003

Members of the group in January 2010 included Marjory Bankson, Cynthia Dahlin, EmmyLu Daly, Emily Gilbert, Sue Johnson, Nancy Lawrence and Muriel Lipp.

## **Mission Support Group**

Members of the Mission Support Group (MSG) are called to individual mission, or are in the process of discerning mission. The group provides a place of support and accountability for these individual calls. The calls of MSG members have included: concrete work for peacemaking and justice; mediation; psychotherapy; photography; and engagement with issues of poverty and equity. While MSG does not have a corporate mission, it is seeking ways to increase awareness among all Seekers both of the calls of members of the church and of the central place that call has for Seekers.

MSG meets every other week to support each member in his or her call. The group is flexible and willing to accommodate the needs and concerns of its members. Meetings begin with a period of prayer and worship and include sharing by all members about their call and other issues affecting the members’ spiritual lives. The group generally devotes a block of time to other activities in each meeting, such as

focusing in depth on the particular call of one member and ways to deepen that call, or analyzing issues of particular concern to Seekers or the larger church. MSG encourages members to engage in disciplines and prepare spiritual reports that are given to the spiritual director.

Revised September 2003

Members of the group in January 2010 included Lewise Busch, Judy Lantz, Richard Lawrence, Trish Nemore and Will Ramsey.

## **Time & Space**

We are called to fill Seekers Church building with bountiful life, and invite the gracious use of time and space.

We are called to love our building in the service of ministries and missions of Seekers Church and other groups.

We are called to be a bridge between Seekers and other users of our building, fostering communication with them and with the wider community.

We are called to welcome other groups and individuals and invite them to explore a deeper relationship with Seekers Church.

We believe that God is calling each person to be engaged in service to others in a particular way, and that the community can help individuals respond to that call through prayerful discernment and compassionate support.

To carry out our call, the Mission Group will:

- Encourage use of our space by Seekers for our current and emerging missions and ministries;
- Facilitate use of our space by others, especially those whose calls and visions are in harmony with our own, sharing Seekers' life with them and encouraging relationships between them and members of Seekers Church; and
- Care for our building, practicing good maintenance while keeping our focus on missions and ministry.

To deal with time and space, the Mission Group may hire, supervise and support a coordinator, contractors, and others, following the guidance of Stewards.

We commit to continually discern God's leading for the use and care of our building.

Members of the Mission Group commit to regular meetings, mutual support, spiritual practices, and accountability.

Affirmed by the Stewards of Seekers Church December 2006

Members of the Group in January 2010 included Peter Bankson, Paul Crumrine, Katie Fisher, John Morris, Keith Seat, Deborah Sokolove, and Glen Yakushiji.

**A MISSION GROUP IS AN OPPORTUNITY –**

**† TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN SERVICE**

**† TO LISTEN AND BE HEARD**

**† TO DISCOVER AND USE GOD’S GIFTS**

**† TO GROW IN LOVE**