

LISTENING HEARTS MINISTRIES

EXPLORATIONS

VOLUME 19 NUMBER 2

Spring 2009



Phone: 410-366-1851
Fax: 410-243-7062
listening@verizon.net
www.listeninghearts.org



Board of Trustees

Patricia Brown
Anne Clewell
Alice Dorrance
Suzanne Farnham
The Rev. Tim Grayson
DeAnn Gruber
Irene Jackson-Brown
R. Taylor McLean
The Rev. Bruce McPherson
Lee Owen
Maryellen Polvino-Bodnar
Frances Sullinger
Susan Ward



Founder

Suzanne Farnham

Executive Director

Meg Kimble

Office Manager

Doris Walker



Inside this Issue

The Desert Time
Suzanne Farnham

Paying Attention to God's Signs
Meg Kimble

A Path to Spiritual Discernment
Alice Ann Robertson

The Desert Time

Suzanne Farnham
Founder

Economic uncertainty has come upon us, and life as we knew it has slipped away. Our unthinking pursuit of material well-being has proved incapable of producing the security we crave, and we are, together, wandering in an arid land—the pleasures of leeks and pomegranates a mere memory.

In this desert we now inhabit lies a hidden path to a place of enduring security, but only the God of unity and compassion can show us the way to it. Implicit in our predicament is a command to stay close to the divine presence. Throughout forty years in the wilderness, the people of Israel experienced that presence, shrouded in a pillar of cloud in the daytime, manifested as a pillar of fire by night. Only as the cloud led them onward were they able to move in safety from one place to the next, and ultimately to what they had been promised.

We have seen the gap between the affluent and the poor increasingly widen among us and around us. Americans, who consume an inordinate portion of the world's resources, have come to expect ever more abundant lifestyles, while turning their eyes from the full implications of the horrendous poverty that afflicts so many both here and abroad.

All who inhabit the earth are brothers and sisters in the family of God. If we take a reverent posture near the pillar of cloud that envelops the divine presence, God's compassion for the entire human family, always radiating outward, can penetrate our being. If we linger with open hearts near the pillar of fire through times of darkness, the living flame of love can cast its light on the true nature and condition of the global community.

This time of crisis is an invitation for us to cultivate a space of inner quiet where we can establish a sense of communion with God—and with all who are created in God's image, whether they live nearby or far away. We need to stay close to the Holy One,

(Continued on page 4)

Paying Attention to God's Signs

Meg Kimble
Executive Director

I was the oldest of four growing up. When we prepared to escape the city during the stifling month of August, we were allowed only half a suitcase for clothes, but my parents encouraged us to bring along as many books as we wanted. It was during one of these escapes that I discovered C. S. Lewis's kingdom of Narnia. These supposedly children's fantasies begin with, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, a tale centered on Aslan the lion, a Christ figure who creates and rules the supernatural land of Narnia, and the improbable adventures of four British schoolchildren who stumble into Narnia through a clothes closet. The adventures continue through six more books in which, as Lewis himself wrote to some Maryland school children in 1954, "I did not say to myself 'Let us represent Jesus as He really is in our world by a Lion in Narnia'; I said 'Let us suppose that there were a land like Narnia and that the Son of God, as he became a Man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen.'"

In *The Silver Chair* Aslan calls a bullied, unhappy girl out of our world into Narnia. The lion gives her a task to fulfill and four signs to guide her in her quest. Aslan tells Jill Pole to "remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters" (chap. 2). She almost immediately discovers that this is much harder to do than she thought, but soon she is joined in her quest by a boy, Eustace Scrubb, and the wise, solemn Marsh-wiggle, Puddleglum. Her companions help Jill to remember and to recognize the signs. At a crucial point, having wandered off course and with their lives in danger, they recognize after having literally stumbled into it, that one of Aslan's signs is spread out in front of them as clearly as a map. They admit that they were all so eager to go in one direction that they ignored Aslan's clear guidance to go in another. Finally, aware that they had "muffed" three of the four signs, they recognize the fourth sign in the unlikeliest of circumstances. They hesitate, questioning, until Puddleglum reminds the children that "Aslan didn't tell Pole what would happen. He only told her what to do" (chap. 11).

*As in the Narnia story, we can all too easily fail to notice the signs
God gives to show us the way.*

Spiritual discernment in a deliberative group can sometimes echo the experience of Jill and her companions. In the fifth chapter of *Grounded in God*, the authors write that "we have to know some of the signs that God uses and how to interpret them" (p. 27). They list some of the signs: God's peace, joy, energy, persistence, convergence, and fruitfulness. As in the Narnia story, we can all too easily fail to notice the signs God gives to show us the way. Traveling together as a discerning community held together in Christ, each one of us may at times become the one who catches sight of the sign and calls attention to it, providing guidance to the entire group. "The presence of its members, one to another, becomes a source of incomparable joy and strength as together they become ever more securely grounded in God" (p. 52).

LISTENING HEARTS MINISTRIES

CONTRIBUTORS



*Thank you to the many friends who share in the work of
Listening Hearts Ministries through their financial support.*

2008 CONTRIBUTORS

Robert & Eleanor Abarno,
Johnstown, PA
The Acer Family, Pittsburgh, PA
R.L. & June Austin, Chesapeake, VA
The Rt. Rev. Harry B. Bainbridge,
Boise, ID
Robert Bair, Towson, MD
Jessica Barnes, Pauline, SC
The Rev. Patti Barrett, Falmouth, MA
Bruce & Polly Behrens, Ruxton, MD
The Rev. Cynthia Bell, Fairhaven, MA
The Rev. Barb E. Bishop,
Crystal Lake, IL
The Rt. Rev. Fred Borsch,
Los Angeles, CA
The Rev. Lyn G. Brakeman,
Gloucester, MA
Erv & Tish Brown, Baltimore, MD
J. Michael Brown, Colerain, NC
Patricia M.C. Brown & Joseph P. Gill,
Severna Park, MD
Mary Gwen Brummitt, Coronado, CA
Nancy A.L. Burch, Warrenton, VA
Galen & Birch Burghardt, Evanston, IL
Sally Campbell, Cold Spring Harbor, NY
Barbara Cates & Matthew Stremba,
Baltimore, MD
Anne Coyle Clewell, Baltimore, MD
Sara M. Condon, Myersville, MD
Robert M. Coulbourn III, Towson, MD

Annette Cox, North Kingstown, RI
Emily N. Cox, Baltimore, MD
Shelia L. Creswell, Vienna, VA
Sandra Criscimagna, Annapolis, MD
The Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry,
Raleigh, NC
Anne & Robert Daly, Baltimore, MD
Rosemary Dickerson, Washington, DC
Joan M. Diver, Portland, OR
Alice Cross Dorrance, Spartanburg, SC
Beulah Downing, Bainbridge Island, WA
Ted & Sarah Eastman, Falls Church, VA
Mrs. J. Bruce Edemy, Baltimore, MD
James & Wendy Emrich,
Swarthmore, PA
Judith Esmay, Hanover, NH
Austin & Renée Farnham,
Severna Park, MD
Mrs. John H. Farnham, DeWitt, NY
Suzanne Farnham, Baltimore, MD
Connie & Randall Fegley,
Sinking Spring, PA
Eileen Flanagan, Philadelphia, PA
Pamela Fleming, Baltimore, MD
Adele B. Free, Baltimore, MD
Jim & Anita Gabler, Palm Beach, FL
Eloise Gift, Albuquerque, NM
Diane Gipson, Boston, MA
Nellie & Robert Gipson, Unadilla, NY
Pat & Tom Gipson, Raleigh, NC

Douglas Giradeau, Salisbury, MD
Jan Gockerman, Grand Rapids, MI
Anita L. Gruber, Madison, WI
DeAnn Gruber, Mandeville, LA
Mardi Hack, Raleigh, NC
J. Alex Haller, Jr., Glencoe, MD
The Rev. Albert Halverstadt
& Susan Weeks, Denver, CO
The Rev. Linda Wofford Hawkins,
Annandale, VA
Shay & Ray Herman, Baltimore, MD
The Rev. & Mrs. William H. Hethcock,
Sewanee, TN
The Rev. Melford Holland, New York, NY
Richard S. Holmes, Baltimore, MD
Cynthia A. Hoover, Bethesda, MD
Charles & Jo-An Howe, Coronado, CA
Alice C. Immler, Sykesville, MD
The Rt. Rev. Carolyn T. Irish,
Salt Lake City, UT
The Rt. Rev. David Colin Jones,
Alexandria, VA
Gregory Jones, Baltimore, MD
John & Lauranne Keester,
Claremont, CA
Terrance D. Kelly, San Diego, CA
Dene & Anita Kimball, Midlothian, VA
The Rev. Allan Knight, Chester, NH
William M. Krulakl, Baltimore, MD
Margie Lance, Frederick, MD
The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee,
Richmond, VA
Greg & Susan Lewis, Chevy Chase, MD
Gus & Mary Ann Lewis, Baltimore, MD
Constance Lieder, Baltimore, MD
Al & Katharine Lowe, Schenectady, NY
Margie Mack, Riva, MD
Therese A. Maloney, Quincy, MA
Craig Martens, Pickerington, OH
Rich McAllister, Bainbridge Island, WA
Patricia S. McClure, Santa Barbara, CA
R. Taylor McLean, Baltimore, MD
Bruce McPherson, Annapolis, MD
The Rt. Rev. Rodney R. Michell,
Lancaster, PA
Carolyn Austin Miller, Austin, TX
Louise E. Miller, Baltimore, MD

The Rev. Charles J. Minifie,
Hilton Head Island, SC
The Rev. Jennifer Montgomery,
Clinton, NY
Carolyn H. Morse, San Diego, CA
Frederick O. Musser, Towson, MD
Sherry Niermann, Centennial, CO
Maureen O'Ferrall, Baltimore, MD
Frederick Osborne III, Garrison, NY
Lee & Jenny Owen, Gibson Island, MD
The Rt. Rev. George E. Packard,
New York, NY
Darrel Parke, Vienna, VA
Mr. & Mrs. Richard M. Patterson,
Phoenix, MD
John R. Potts, Pt. Richmond, CA
Craig J. Price, Spartanburg, SC
Edward C. Price II, Prairie Village, KS
The Rt. Rev. John L. Rabb,
Baltimore, MD
Walter D. Ramberg, Sparks, MD
Joyce Ramelmeier, Ellicott City, MD
Beth Ratrie, Baltimore, MD
Mary Hope Rhodes, Spartanburg, SC
Marjorie B. Richmond, Upperco, MD
LCDR Dan Rodriguez, Winthrop, IL
Adela N. Rose, Annapolis, MD
Janice Nixon Roshong, Acworth, GA
Miguel & Olga Schön, Baltimore, MD
The Rt. Rev. Gordon Scruton,
Springfield, MA
John M. Seeley, Baltimore, MD
Nellie & Truman T. Semans,
Brooklandville, MD
Butler & Yvonne Sharpe, Riverwoods, IL
The Shivers Family, Baltimore, MD
The Rev. Canon & Mrs. David I.
Shoulders, Indianapolis, IN
Judith L. Singer, Glen Mills, PA
Rosemay Snapp, Hereford, AZ
Susan O. Smeragliuolo, Gibson Island,
MD
The Rt. Rev. Andrew D. Smith,
Hartford, CT
Betsey Spragins, Cockeysville, MD
Claire M. Stahler, Queensbury, NY
Thomas F. Stallman, Alexandria, VA

Laurel G. Stewart, Longmeadow, MA
Barbara Swain & Fred Demers,
Baltimore, MD
Peggy Taliaferro, Cockeysville, MD
Janet & Lee Taylor, Baltimore, MD
Louise S. Thompson, Philadelphia, PA
Helen S. Thomsen, Baltimore, MD
Lee Ann & David Tolzmann,
Riverside, CT
Juli Towell, Short Hills, NJ
Larry & Sally Tully, Syracuse, NY
Nancy Tunnessen, Chapel Hill, NC
Doris Turner, Spartanburg, SC
The Rev. Arthur H. Underwood,
Cockeysville, MD
David Vaughn, Northville, MI
Barbara Vosburgh, Cockeysville, MD

Mark Wall, Washington, DC
Ellen & David Wallack, Baltimore, MD
Carol Walsh, San Diego, CA
George P. Ward, Jr., Annapolis, MD
Susan & Sam Ward, Coronado, CA
Mr. & Mrs. William D. Waxter, III,
Cockeysville, MD
Jill A. Weaver, Shipshewana, IN
Jeff Webber, Bellevue, WA
Dick & Tish Weise, Catonsville, MD
The Rev. Jennifer & Mr. Benjamin West,
Cranston, RI
Ellen Williams, Cockeysville, MD
Eleanor Winsor, Scottsville, VA
Graham G. Yearley, Baltimore, MD
Julie & Jake Young, Coronado, CA
Suzanne Zoole, Spartanburg, SC

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

Christ Church Cathedral,
Springfield, MA
Church of the Holy Comforter,
Vienna, VA
Diocese of Maryland, Baltimore, MD
Diocese of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC
Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA
The Domestic & Foreign Missionary
Soc., New York, NY
Episcopal Church in Idaho, Boise, ID

The Gipson Family Foundation,
Raleigh, NC
Owen Charitable Foundation,
Gibson Island, MD
St. James Episcopal Church,
Lancaster, PA
St. James Episcopal Church, Clinton, NY
Society of the Transfiguration,
Cincinnati, OH
Tianaderrah Foundation, Unadilla, NY

GIFTS TO HONOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Charles & Jo-An Howe, Coronado, CA
Ann Tarbell, Baltimore, MD

Susan Page Tillett, Lake Bluff, IL
Benjamin West, Cranston, RI

MEMORIALS

Becky Clark, Baltimore, MD
Joanne & David Corey, Brattleboro, VT

Gertrude Gipson, Carmel, NY
Donna Rewalt & Jeff Pitts, Durham, NC

LISTENING HEARTS MINISTRIES

VOLUNTEERS



*We are grateful for the people who volunteer their services
and for those who make in-kind contributions.*

Patricia Brown

Judith Bowers

Anne Clewell

Wayne Dornbirer

Alice Dorrance

Chris Dorrance

Austin Farnham

Brent Farnham

Kendall Farnham

Peggy Farnham

Renee Farnham

Suzanne Farnham

Whitney Farnham

Pam Fleming

Mark Frazier

Joe Gill

The Rev. Tim Grayson

DeAnn Gruber

Irene V. Jackson-Brown

Ken Kimble

Ned Kimble

Steve Kirchner

Gus & Mary Ann Lewis

The Rev. David Malone

John McIntyre

Taylor McLean

The Rev. Bruce McPherson

Carolyn Miller

Louise E. Miller

The Rev. Charles Minifie

Lee Owen

Maryellen Polvino-Bodner

Joyce Ramelmeier

Alice Ann Robertson

Mary Ann Ryan

Wendy Schön

John Seeley

Frances Sullinger

Curtis Tammany

Sam Ward

Susan Ward

Anne Whitmore

Thomas Wilson

Marilyn Cornejo Wiseman

A Path to Spiritual Discernment

Alice Ann Robertson
Glyndon, MD

Most of us long for “more than a routine walk around the religious block,” Ken Gire comments in his book, *Windows of the Soul*. I agree. Gire continues, “We’ve all had moments when we’ve experienced something of that intimacy. Moments we can’t quite explain, yet can’t explain away. Moments when God has touched our lives like a soft hand of morning sun reaching through our bedroom window, brushing over our eyes, and waking us to something eternal” (Intro. p.11).

That’s what we long for when we set aside moments in our day to spend with the Lord. Some of the moments with him are that routine walk around the religious block. Some are electric and alive. At times we cling to God’s Word as to a life raft. Other moments with the Lord free and redirect our lives in a way we would never have dreamed of.

Discernment in the midst of personal chaos is rooted in small disciplines over many years. Daily quiet time that includes Scripture and prayer builds a foundation of faith that can’t be destroyed—shaken, yes; destroyed, no. Things of the world that pound at us fall into the proper perspective when our eyes and heart are turned toward our Lord. Oswald Chambers said, “In our natural life our ambitions change as we grow, but in the Christian life the goal is given at the very beginning. The beginning and the end are exactly the same – namely the Lord Himself” (My Utmost For His Highest).

Discernment in the midst of personal chaos is rooted in small disciplines over many years.

Why this works is easy to see. Best friends take time to be together. Best friends make each other a priority. Best friends know what is pleasing to each other. “What a friend we have in Jesus,” go the words of the familiar hymn, “All our sins and griefs to bear!” Joseph Scriven, who penned these words, knew the pain of personal tragedy. His fiancée drowned the evening before they were to marry. When his mother faced a crisis some years later, he wrote the words of this hymn as a poem to comfort her. And the words comfort us.

Jesus can be our best friend, counselor, and guide if we spend time with him. We learn over time to distinguish his voice. I hear him in Scripture almost as if he is speaking between the lines. I hear him in hymns, in the words of friends, and sometimes in that still small voice that is so different from all others. But hearing his voice often requires waiting.

Waiting is hard. Patience is hard. A word study on “waiting” yielded some results that encourage me:

Psalm 27:5 *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.*

Isaiah 8:17 *I will wait for the Lord . . . I will put my trust in Him.*

Isaiah 30:18 *The Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are those who wait for Him.*

Hebrews 12:6 . . . *return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.*

(continued on page 4)

LISTENING HEARTS MINISTRIES
MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1407 BOLTON STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21217-4202

Non-Profit Org.
U S Postage
PAID
Baltimore, MD
Permit no. 2961

MISSION STATEMENT

Listening Hearts Ministries provides a range of programs, publications, and services that teach people the practice of spiritual discernment through prayerful listening in supportive communities.

No one can hear the gospel of Christ except through the events of one's own time, for the Holy Spirit is a living teacher who does not merely repeat a tradition of the past.

—Listening Hearts, p.45

The Desert Time . . . *(continued from page 1)*

pliable and willing to be informed, reformed, and transformed, to live more fully in accordance with God's vision for the world.

Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule your hearts (Col. 12:14-15).

Amen.

A Path to . . . *(continued from page 7)*

Quiet-time disciplines vary by personality, such as journaling or fasting, and the time of day and place you choose. In my own journey I have learned to spend time every day in the Lord's presence, read his Word, talk to him and listen for his voice, and be willing to wait.

For the vision is yet for an appointed time and it hastens to fulfillment; it will not disappoint. Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come and will not delay. —Hab. 2:3

Alice Ann Robertson is a trained discerner for Listening Hearts Ministries. She is a spiritual mentor, serves on a prayer team at the Anglican Church of the Resurrection in Stevenson, MD, and enjoys spiritual writing.