



Deep is the Well from which we drink

**Silver Reflections in Celebration of the
25th Anniversary
of
Oasis Ministries for Spiritual Development**
Camp Hill, PA
www.oasismin.org

Oasis gathers
people with many beliefs
into one circle.

~ Sara Jane Munshower
2013 Board Chair

Something's stirring. What?
Oasis!--he said, no blink.
Birth to twenty-five!

--Kent Ira Groff
Founding Mentor

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*Dedicated to
The Great Director/ Creative God
Amazing Grace/ Wondrous Love/ Holy Spirit
that brought us this far
and leads us on.*

For Celebration

Now is the time to free the heart,
Let all intentions and worries stop,
Free the joy inside the self,
Awaken to the wonder of your life.

Open your eyes and see the friends
Whose hearts recognize your face as kin,
Those whose kindness watchful and near,
Encourages you to live everything here.

See the gifts the years have given,
Things your effort could never earn,
The health to enjoy who you want to be
And the mind to mirror mystery.

~ John O'Donohue
To Bless the Space Between Us

What You Will Find Inside

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Acknowledgements

It is with deep gratitude and great humility that we thank all from the Oasis community who have helped to make the celebration of our 25th Anniversary such a wonderful, successful year.

We thank Rev. Richard Gordon for sifting through boxes and meeting with individuals for over a year to gather and collate the information and reflections found in these pages.

A special thank you is extended to Betsy Keller, Glenn Mitchell, and Kent Groff for not only their reflections, but also for their tireless hours put towards seeing the Oasis community flourish.

We are blessed to have reflections from previous and current members of the Board of Directors, our greatest volunteers, and program participants from over the years.

A word of gratitude for you the reader, for your continued support and prayer for Oasis over our 25 years... and for those yet to come.

I am sure there are many that go unnamed here, but on whose shoulders we stand. I thank God for you.

Enjoy learning more about Oasis from the following pages.

Rev. Cynthia F. Garis
Executive Director

*For all who have come before...
For all who are present...
For all who are yet to come...
We remain faithful and grateful.*

Thank You!
25
years
2013

The Oasis Alphabet
with gratitude for our teaching staff over the years
(Staff listed beneath each)

SDSG—Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides

Kent Groff, Sanford Alwine, Roger Gench, Lee Butler, Jr., Glenn Mitchell, Nancy Bieber, Rosalind Powell, Prue Yelinek, Emily Wallace, Linda Helmus, Tracey Marx, Laura Howell, Marc Oehler, Bonita Rose Collins-Hobbs, Jo Ann Kunz, Ruth Zeiders, Hugh Smith, Mike Allwein, Melissa Stock

GSD—Group Spiritual Direction

Kent Groff, Glenn Mitchell, Steve Robertson, Kim Dalton, Ed Poling, Don Evason, Mary Pinto, Nancy Allen, Linda Helmus, Tracey Marx, Roger and Carol Steffy, Sharon Bitner, Alicia Conklin-Wood, Cindy Garis

TSOTCH—The Soul of Tomorrow’s Church

Kent Groff, Belva Brown Jordan, Wendy M. Wright, Kang Yup Na

RTW—Returning to the Well

Glenn Mitchell

DYDM—Deepening Year for Direction Ministries

Jo Ann Kunz, Hugh Smith, Ruth Workman

CLSDL—Contemplative Living: the Spirituality of Daily Life

Nancy Bieber, Marc Oehler, Ruth Roemer

Book Days—Souls on the Journey; Oasis Reads

Linda Klopp and Kathleen Roney; Sara Jane Munshower

M4D—Men4Directions

Joel Blunk

NWSE—Nurturing Women in the Sanctuary of the Earth

Vicki Kensinger

JIS—Journey Into Silence

Melissa and Roland Stock

B&P—Breath and Prayer

Ruth Zeiders

S&S—Spirit and Seeds

Jackie Naginey Hook and Kim Hunziker

Additionally, we are very grateful to the many, many people who have led single days of retreats or workshops as well as overnight retreats. Often these are participants’ entry-points into Oasis, as well as opportunities for reuniting with friends. Learn more about all of the programs that Oasis offers at www.oasismin.org.

Oasis Board of Directors over 25 years

We acknowledge that we would not be where we are today if it were not for the generous support, encouragement and dedication of these amazing volunteers.

('Chair' identifies Board President/Chairperson)

Current (2013-2014)

Michael Allwein
 Michael Carr
 Kim Denyes
 Fern Gaffey
 René Colson Hudson
 Peg Knapich
 Sally Mathews
 Frank Miller
 Sara Jane Munshower
 (Chair)
 Gary Ostwald
 Mary Ann Prior
 Cheri Roth
 Ann Schoonover

Carol Gedid
 Francis Taylor Gench
 Paul Gennett, Jr.
 Jenna Goggins
 Richard Gordon (Chair)
 Sandy Gordon
 Fredrika Groff (Ex. Officio)
 Margaret Hardy
 David Harris
 A. Bryer Helmer
 Deb Helt
 Jane Hoover (Chair)
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 Karen Hugo
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 Donrico Colden
 Bonita Rose Collins-Hobbs
 Graham Cyster
 Lynne Diehl
 Don Evason
 Nathaniel Gadsden, Sr.
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 Kathy Spitzer
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 Jake Toews
 Wayne Walker
 Emily Wallace
 Betty Wright-Riggins
 Brenda Young



OASIS HIGHLIGHTS TIMELINE 1988-1993

1988	Oasis Ministries for Spiritual Development was incorporated on December 28, 1988
1989	The first rental agreement for office space was entered into in January, 1989, with Christ Presbyterian Church By-Laws were adopted on March 16, 1989 at first organizational meeting The first Meeting of the Board of Directors was held on September 23, 1989 Kent Groff begins leading seminars at Princeton Seminary, Fall 1989
1990	Final 501(c)(3) status was granted in 1990 (provisional application in December 1988)
1991	In the Fall of 1991, the very first SDSG group, led by Kent Groff and Sandy Alwine, was launched, with about fourteen participants Kent Groff begins teaching at Lancaster Theological Seminary
1992	a second SDSG year is added Oasis offers Group Spiritual Direction for the first time in 1992-93, and continued until 2005-06
1993	the Alban Institute's publication of Kent's first book, <i>Active Spirituality: A Guide for Seekers and Ministers</i>

Oasis Ministries: Silver Reflections



Oasis Ministries for Spiritual Development was the realization of a dream birthed from the heart and mind and womb of Rev. Dr. Kent Ira Groff. Here are some of Kent's recollections.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE FOUNDING MENTOR: KENT IRA GROFF

It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon in January of 1988 - a liminal month and a liminal time of day, during a year of full-time chaplain training at Penn State's Hershey Medical Center. I was putting my coat on to go home, when Mike Ebersole, my supervisor, turned and asked, "How would you like to spend a week at Shalem Institute with Tilden Edwards, Gerald May, Rosemary Dougherty on the theme of 'The Spiritual Life of Spiritual Leaders?'" I thought, *Well, if my supervisor's inviting me I don't have to ask permission!* I said, "Sure." When I got to Shalem, I knew that was home. I've told this over and over. What did I mean, "that was home?"

Later that year I was having lunch with another chaplain, Russell Hobbs—eating creates another liminal space. I began describing my dream of starting a non-profit organization for retreats and spiritual direction. My chaplain colleague asked, "What would you call it?" I paused, and heard myself say, "Oasis!" But I knew in that moment I would never do this alone. I vowed to create a board, for accountability, for creativity, to balance my dreams with reality.

Still later, I shared the idea of that name with John Killian, a charter board member, who, with a practical attorney's mind, said, 'Oasis... *what!?* Oasis Bar? Oasis Spa?' It set me thinking; we needed to be grounded. I made a quick check of the 800-numbers back then (there was no Internet!), and found most Oasis businesses were bars or swimming pools or spas! So, it became Oasis *Ministries* - plural -

retreats, spiritual direction, and training programs - for '*spiritual development.*' It could have been for "spiritual formation," but development seemed less formal, more friendly. Just as we have stages of human development, it occurred to us that there are stages of spiritual development. We would welcome people of varied stages and stations of life.

Oasis was incorporated on December 28, 1988, the first rental agreement for office space with Christ Presbyterian Church was entered into in January, 1989, and By-Laws were adopted on March 16, 1989.

The six Charter Board Members were: Carol Burkey Snell (president; Episcopal deacon); John D. Killian (vice-president; a Harrisburg attorney); Georgia S. Mazzolla (secretary); Donrico Colden (Spiritual Care Coordinator for Pinnacle Health's Spiritual Care Services); John Oliver Nelson (founder of Kirkridge retreat center, Bangor, PA, and close colleague of George McLeod, the re-builder of Iona in Scotland [died in 1990]); and Frances Taylor Gench (professor at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary). Fredrika S. Groff (Freddy) and I (Kent Ira Groff) served as ex officio members of the Board, myself as Director, and Freddy as Treasurer. (See more under Board Highlights.)

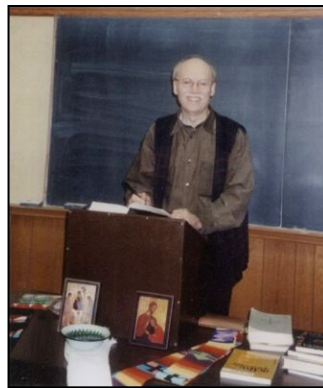
A FEW KEY TURNING POINTS

Here I will share some key turning points in our life together. After incorporating, the first turning point was the gigantic leap of partnering with Sanford Alwine in 1989 as my co-leader of our first major two-year program, "Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides"--a title Sandy suggested. I had learned of Sandy while at Hershey (see Sandy's reflections below). He and I would meet twice monthly at Bob Evans in Carlisle over breakfast to plan each monthly session of the two year program for many years, until about 2000.

Then, at a board meeting in 1989, I asked, "How would you like it if I told you we had *free* publicity for Oasis Ministries that would go around the world to over 100,000 people and institutions?" Someone questioned what I meant. I reported that I had been invited to lead a seminar for the Center of Continuing Education at Princeton

Theological Seminary: Princeton's catalog would say, "Presenter: Kent Ira Groff, director of Oasis Ministries, Camp Hill, Pa," thus announcing our ministries to the world! I would continue to present two or three seminars yearly from that Fall of 1989 through the Spring of 2006 (when I moved to Denver and a change took place in the seminary administration). I am forever indebted to the Center's director Dr. Geddes Hanson for this first opportunity (and to four successive directors of the Center at Princeton Seminary). It was one of many turning points that began to link us with presbyteries, dioceses and denominational leaders who in turn invited my leadership, and which fed directly into Oasis's programs, such as *Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides*.

A third key turning point was my being invited to teach at Lancaster Theological Seminary (LTS) in the fall of 1991, and then serve as an adjunct faculty member there from 1992-2006. This, too, gave grounding to Oasis Ministries and created visibility and networking opportunities. I am grateful to my former spiritual director, Fr. Edwin Sanders, SJ, (who had been teaching spiritual formation courses at LTS for 12 years) for suggesting me to then dean David Greenhaw.



A fourth turning point was the Alban Institute's publication of my first book, *Active Spirituality: A Guide for Seekers and Ministers* in 1993. The connection with the Alban Institute, unlike other publishers, immediately gave visibility for congregations, nationwide church leaders and judicatories to become aware of Oasis Ministries. All these are ways of living out my life mission "to be a link between the Word and the world..." to serve as a link between contemplation and action and between persons and institutions. My second book (published by Upper Room Books in 2000), *Journeymen: A Spiritual Guide for Men (and for Women Who Want to Understand Them)* was also important in creating a niche market for men's retreats and highlighted the role of men in

the field of spirituality events, often widely frequented by women. In the summer of 1993, Glenn Mitchell, a Church of the Brethren pastor from State College contacted me. He'd been given my name by Shalem Institute. He was entering their Spiritual Guidance program and needed a spiritual director and a peer group. There were no directors in State College at that time. I became Glenn's first director and Glenn entered our SDSG program in Year II to have the peer group he needed. Glenn graduated from Shalem's program in 1995 and when he returned from a sabbatical year in Nigeria, he joined the Oasis SDSG staff in the Year I program - a turning point that would bear fruit long into the future!

A sixth turning point was the board granting me my first and only sabbatical in January 1999, through a process of two Quaker-style Clearness Committees for discernment. It spawned our first office assistant. For ten years up until the Fall of 1998, we had no administrative or secretarial help. Thanks to my early Mac laptop computer, a "modern" phone with voice mail and call-forward--and thanks to my wife Freddy's treasurer and phone work and trips to the Post Office, we managed to get newsletters out and to confirm registrations for SDSG and Oasis sponsored retreats. All that would change with the coming of the first Assistant to the Director, Mary Pinto, in September, 1998 -- just in time for my sabbatical to Europe and India (January 1-May 31, 1999). I said to the board, "It was a radical trust in God!" Much of the movement of Oasis from its "shoestring" beginnings to a well-planned non-profit organization with efficient, computerized records, mailing lists and program files can be credited to Mary's quiet but professional initiative."

By the way, we can thank Mary for getting my hand-doodled Oasis logo redesigned one summer when I was away. The logo conveys water hidden beneath the desert ground, three wavy lines representing baptism and three branches of a palm tree representing a subliminal cross and a subliminal trinity--body, mind, spirit; Creator, Christ, Comforter--but also the trinity of experience: times when we're emptied, times when we're filled, and times when we dance back and forth. All is enveloped in an arc--representing the world and the sun--but open, incomplete, inviting you too as part of the light of the world.

A seventh major turning point occurred when in early May, 1999, in the final month of my sabbatical, I had returned from three months in India and two months researching creative churches to write *The Soul of Tomorrow's Church*, to attend the final SDSG Retreat at Kenbrook. Sitting in the back of the room, still on sabbatical, as I watched Glenn Mitchell, Sandy Alwine, Nancy Bieber and other staff lead the retreat, it became clear to me that I was dispensable! In that moment I knew inwardly that I would resign from being director of the SDSG program. All this became reality in Fall of 2001, when the Board commissioned Glenn Mitchell as the Director of Training, including SDSG. This was a major shift, which led to me to resign as Director, to take the title of Founding Mentor--and the board choosing an interim director for Oasis Ministries in 2004--followed by many bumps in the road until choosing Cindy Garis.



BALANCING PROGRAMS, RETREATS, WRITING WITH CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

Along the way many people would say to me, "I don't see how you do all you do." My reply would be, "I don't!" By this I meant some things don't get done! And I don't do it all--others on the team of board, staff, my wife--and the Spirit working amazingly do more than "I" can ever do. My definition of a miracle: Just say, "God, this impossible!" (whatever the issue of the day may be). Then when it comes to pass and you survive and even thrive, you've witnessed a miracle! This surely worked for SDSG in lean August periods when we might have only three enrolled and I needed to notify staff they were not needed come September. We saw a miracle each time!

I knew that leading retreats and seminars and writing were ways of getting the word out and drawing persons into Oasis programs. For example, *The Soul of Tomorrow's Church*, the title of my third book (published by Upper Room Books in 2000) also became the title of a program which met at Kirkridge Retreat Center, Bangor, PA, beginning with a fall retreat and ending with a spring retreat. "The Soul of Tomorrow's Church" was also the theme of numerous retreats and seminars that I led for Princeton, Pittsburgh, Toronto and other

theological seminaries and for numerous denominational judicatories, clergy groups and congregational retreats over many years. Always, there was a dividend of new participants in SDSG etc. We began to see folks from Maryland, New Jersey, and New York. My writings spawned retreats, and retreats were necessary to publish. But how could I take care of my own soul?

Reading Annie Dillard's little book *The Writing Life*, I followed her model of taking periodic praying-writing retreats at Pendle Hill (Quaker), Wernersville (Jesuit) and retreat centers across the US or at our cottage at Chautauqua, NY. First I would pray. My writing mantra became:

Merton-like I hide away to pray to write and pray
in this my hermitage to birth my heritage:
the gift of the burden, the burden of the gift.

So I would come away refreshed and renewed by "writing my way home," a class that I still teach at Chautauqua and in Denver prisons as "writing your way into life."

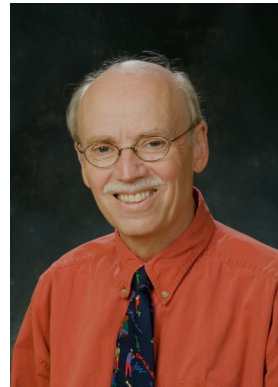
FUTURE PRESENT TENSE

It was always my prayer that a director would come along with highly developed tech skills for website etc., financial expertise, and yet also would be committed to prayer and the Oasis vision:

Drawing from the well of Christ
contemplatively
actively.

But where would you find such a person?
Cindy Garis, as she works with Glenn Mitchell and Betsy Keller and the board, represents that remarkable combination.

It is my prayer and trust that, in the words of Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well."





REFLECTIONS FROM FRED MILLER

Fred is a 1993-1994 Graduate of SDSG.

I remember one of our retreats held at Sandy Alwine's residence on the Conodoguinet Creek. It was during a very heavy rainstorm and the water was rising to the edge of the banks. The house is built high up on pylons as I recall so they live on the second story of the structure near the water's edge. That day we had come for a spiritual retreat. It was amazing to see the downpour, the raging, rising waters while we attempted to listen to the still small voice inside and beyond ourselves. How life-like that image is as we attempt to reach beyond ourselves to that still small voice while the world passes at increasing speeds, rising waters and threatening dangers. We are to build our spiritual homes above the raging waters. And should we get caught in the midst of a "downpour" we are to keep our perspective, to hold onto our spiritual connection and know the calm will bring us through to the "other side" we call life-giving.

**Contemplative groups
Candles flicker, people pray
Listening deeply**

~Anonymous

**OASIS BEGINNINGS:
A PERSONAL MEMOIR
SANFORD ALWINE**

Sandy was a lead teacher in the SDSG program for 15 years. He has also taught day retreats and assisted in leading our first pilgrimage to the American Southwest.



The year 1989. My connection with OASIS began with a phone call from Kent Groff. He invited me for lunch to talk about an idea he was working on. He was not someone known to me. I don't recall how he knew of me. Little did I know that day would lead to working with him and OASIS for the next fifteen years. He was in the process of forming a board to oversee the development of this organization. I joined him on staff assisting in program formation, facilitating and teaching. My work continued with OASIS until 2004.

Both of us had recently graduated from Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation located in Washington, DC., founded by Tilden Edwards in the mid-seventies. Because we were a year apart, we had not met while in the two-year Spiritual Guidance Program. The mission of that program was to train persons in the art of spiritual direction, to assist in deepening the spiritual practice of prayer, and to assist moment-by-moment willingness for God in everything.

Prior to my studies at Shalem Institute, I had a practice of counseling and psychotherapy in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. During those years, I enjoyed my work immensely, and yet, slowly, a deep-dark nagging emptiness was rising in me, a sense of something missing. At the same time, several of my clients were expressing similar feelings. Through therapy, their lives had become more manageable; coping with family, work, and daily life. Coping was not enough. A deep emptiness prevailed. As we explored deeper, we discovered a lose of meaning, and a lack of an "alive" spiritual life. Bingo! Thank God! This discovery led me on a search for a deeper life of prayer.

I will forever be grateful for Kent's invitation to join his organization. The timing was providential! Following completion of the Shalem Institute program, I had been offering individual spiritual direction as

well as leading contemplative prayer retreats for a year or more. The love of the work was increasing a desire in me to assist others in their call to offer spiritual direction. I was floundering in a pool of uncertainty, dreaming of a myriad of ways to go. Nothing seemed right until conversations began with Kent. The call became clear. The rest is history.

David Stiehl-Rast, a Benedictine monk in Elmira, New York says, "The first language of all mystics is poetry. Theologians camp way down stream from the source. [Mystics] guide us upstream past the camps of theological schools to the valley of springs." This may seem a bit harsh on theology. The Psalmist writes, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." Following the heart, listening for the voice of Love leading to compassionate living, this became the core mission of OASIS.

Some years ago, a man came to me offering to take me to a place he goes when in need of solace. Life had battered him in an extremely bitter divorce. He turned to the spirits of alcohol to tranquilize the pain of his wounds, which only compounded his troubles. I had met him sometime before, but really did not know him. His invitation was insistent. My feelings were mixed, apprehension, yet feeling allurement. As my seven year old grandson describing himself recently said, "I was born to be wild." Maybe it was the wildness, the longing for adventure that drew me to say, "Yes," to his invitation. Only God knows. That afternoon he drove me in his battered pick-up to a spring that bubbles forth in Blue Mountain. It is in a grassy clearing surrounded by deep forest, miles from anywhere. With a gentile wave of his hand he invited me to sit with him by the pool. After a long silence, he said, "This is the headwaters of the Conodoguinet!" I had lived along this stream for many years! This headwaters spring becomes a river and flows to the Sea. This is the nature of OASIS as it has flowed through the twenty-five years. Each person who was touched by its living waters became part of the river.

In my first year, I remember offering a series of evening gatherings introducing various contemplative prayer forms. This group came together at Christ Presbyterian Church in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, the same building where the offices of OASIS have been located since its

beginning. That first group was composed of about eight participants, most of them pastors. In 1991, Kent and I launched the very first Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides group. With about fourteen participants, we began in the Fall and met monthly through May of the next year.

In 1992, a second SDSG year was added. This evolved into a two year program simply known as Year 1 and Year 11. Year I program focused on spiritual formation through contemplative prayer, meditation, and spiritual reading. Year II continued with spiritual formation, but with a greater emphasis on spiritual direction, the art of offering spiritual guidance to others. Together, they formed a two-year package of formation and spiritual direction. From that time to the present, SDSG without interruption, has been a source of guidance to hundreds.

Beginning the third year of operation, as our numbers increased, it became necessary to move to a new location. The SDSG programs were moved to Trinity Center, a Catholic retreat facility just a mile or two from Christ Presbyterian. During those years our overnight retreats were held at the Jesuit Spiritual Center, Wernersville, Pennsylvania. By the fourth year, both day gatherings and overnight retreats were moved to Kenbrook, near Lebanon, Pennsylvania, where they remain to this day. All of these facilities have served us well. Kenbrook, with private rooms, spacious natural surroundings of woods, water, sky, and the changing seasons, invited us to prayers of wonder.

The OASIS river flowed onward swelling as it moved. This community, without walls, without a church building, is drawn and held together by the Spirit, by the longing of hearts for home. A recurring litany by newcomers has been the exclamation, "Coming here, I have found Home!"

Through intimate sharing of the journey with hundreds of participants and staff, I have been stretched, awakened to live more consciously in an expanding cosmic universe. I truly have come to believe that the greatest invitation of Life is to experience living in two realms of Reality, simultaneously. That is, the realm of our humanness, people of

the earth, and the realm of Spirit. Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit scientist and mystic who died in 1955 says, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience." Contemplative prayer leading to expanding consciousness is a uniquely viable pathway, which by its very nature, embraces both realms. To experience this way of living, Jesus admonishes us to "Become as little children."

For me, the journey with OASIS is an ongoing love affair. It is a place, a community, a stream where the waters run deep. Even though I am no longer at the core of ongoing gatherings, I am in touch with many of those who come and go. There is a continuing communal embrace that nurtures the life of Spirit in me. Contemplative prayer awakens me daily to a new way to see the world. In that awakening, in that seeing, an expanding Love is born, and flows into deepening compassion for the world.

In my youth, two years before contracting polio, resulting in paralysis, I was drawn to the ridges and forests surrounding my Western Pennsylvania home. Taking long hikes, mostly bush-whacking, would take me deep into the woods and over a ridge or two. My goal, if there was a goal, was to go until I thought I might be lost. Since there were no trails, this was not hard to do. I would then turn toward home. The angle of sunlight through the trees, the direction of the wind, the lay of the land, and by sheer instinct; I'd try to sense my way back home. On finding home again, my heart would overflow with ecstatic delight! Our spiritual journey is like that. We may not try to get lost, but getting lost seems to be the nature of the journey.



Even though I have lived in my body-spirit-house for many years now, I am regularly discovering new frontiers. Frontiers that have always been there, but were left unexplored. Left unlived. It is Mystery that draws me onward to the treasures that are awaiting. Although wonder may sometimes draw my heart through stumbling and pain, I have come to know it is the pathway Home.

An oasis, a spring bubbling forth, under the vast heavens.

**REFLECTIONS/MEMORIES
FROM A. BRYER HELMER**

Bryer served on Oasis Board of Directors and was a peer group leader for the SDSG program.



My relationship with Oasis Ministries for Spiritual Development really evolved from meeting Kent Groff during the time we were classmates in the Shalem Institute's : Christian Spiritual Guidance Program. We were the last local class, which meant that we traveled to the Washington Theological Union for our instruction. Kent and I carpoled, and it was at that time that I learned of his desire to establish a non-profit organization for retreats and Spiritual Direction.

I believe it was during 1992 that I was invited to join the first staff of Oasis. What a thrill it was for me to be given this opportunity and what a perfect environment for me to keep learning and developing my own spiritual life and practice.

I have very fond memories of helping facilitate during our times in small group gatherings. Watching participants awaken to new ways of opening to the Holy One; growing into the practice of contemplative silence; delighting in being with others who were also hungering and thirsting for "something more"; and the joy which grew out of following the Holy Spirit's creative guidance into a deeper knowing and loving of God—PRICELESS!

One unique experience that I was able to offer was Body Prayer. I had been a part of a Sacred Dance Group for a number of years and experienced the wonder of bringing the body into worship. So, we learned movement and gesture which brought meaning and depth and lifted up both body and spirit.

My serving on the Board of Director's for 6 years was another source of grace and growth for me. I looked forward to our meetings although they could grow quite long! Kent and Freddie were tireless

in their giving on so many fronts and all the folks who were invited to serve were so wonderful and gifted in their own ways. As we prayed, discussed, and struggled through many difficulties, we experienced the presence and action of the Spirit and now, 25 years hence, look what God has wrought! AMAZING!

Truly, one of the greatest experiences of my life and some of the dearest and finest people whom I know have come from my association with Oasis Ministries for Spiritual Development. I am so grateful and pray that this Ministry will keep Growing, “creating community as we educate and resource people in contemplation and spiritual direction.”

Solitude, meditation

Living the questions

Ahhhh, Oasis

~ Marie Rodichok

REFLECTIONS FROM FRANCES TAYLOR GENCH

Frances was a Charter member on the Oasis Board of Directors

Though my service on the Board of Oasis was for only a short period of time, it was an honor to be a part of the ground-breaking venture that Kent Groff, with boundless enthusiasm, initiated in 1989! I can personally attest to the significant impact it has had, enriching the lives and ministries of so many people. My husband, Rev. Roger J. Gench, continues to be deeply grateful for the formative time in which he was enrolled in the SDSG program with two of his ministry colleagues in Baltimore Presbytery. He credits it with setting him on the path of spiritual practice that has proved to be an integral aspect of his urban ministry – and essential to his mental and spiritual health as he engages urban challenges! Both of us salute Kent and Sandy and so many others who nurtured Kent’s dream into existence, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary!

OASIS HIGHLIGHTS TIMELINE 1994-2002

- 1996** Glenn Mitchell and Nancy Bieber join the Oasis Ministries' SDSG teaching team
- 1998** Mary Pinto hired as first Assistant to the Director
- The Vision Statement, "Drawing from the well of Christ, contemplatively, actively," was adopted in March 1998 in a process led by Ken Byerly, searching scripture, and searching both personal and communal call. Other members of this process group were John Norman (president), Bill Millen, Bob Burns, Barb Shade, Bryer Helmer, Tom Speers, and Nancy Allen.
- 10th-Year Alumni Retreat, Kenbrook, December 3-4, 1998
- 1999** Kent Groff takes sabbatical to Europe and India
- 2000** Kent Groff publishes *Journeyman* and *The Soul of Tomorrow's Church*
- 2001** Kent Groff resigns from SDSG leadership; Glenn Mitchell identified as Director of Training
- The Soul of Tomorrow's Church* program is run for two years thanks to a \$15,000 grant from the Louisville Institute.
- "Multiplying the Ministries" Campaign introduced with matching challenge from anonymous donor to see Oasis into the future
- 2002** Glenn Mitchell introduces first program for spiritual directors: *Returning to the Well*
- Mary Pinto resigns, various Assistants over next two years included Jackie Hamill, Ann Hossler, and Christy Lerch



REFLECTIONS FROM GLENN MITCHELL

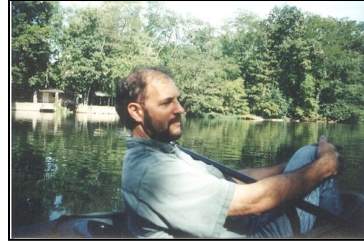
Glenn is Oasis' Director of Training and Program. He served as peer group leader then lead teacher for the SDSG program, introduced the Returning to the Well program and has taught various days of retreat.

On a Spring day in 2001, after an SDSG meeting day, Kent Groff and I shared supper at The Wetlands Restaurant near Kenbrook. I had grilled salmon—I don't remember what Kent had. We both were eager to share recent discernments in our life. Little did we know how aligned our sharing would be. I had just come off my annual 8-day retreat at the Jesuit Center where it had become clear that now was the time to transition my ministry from pastoral work to one of spiritual direction. I had been teaching with Oasis since the fall of 1996 and the question on my heart as I sat with Kent was, "Might there be more for me with Oasis?" Kent, I quickly learned, had been busy with his own discernment, and his mouth dropped open as he listened to my pondering about future possibilities with Oasis for me as he was feeling the nudge to step back from the programmatic work of Oasis. As the Quakers say, "Way opened" and I stepped through with gratitude. Kent took our conversation to the Oasis Board and by early summer of that year they had worked out a part-time position for me as Director of Training beginning September 2001.

SDSG has continued with basically the same model I inherited. We soon moved the program meeting days back to back each month, which simplified our logistics and we have tweaked various elements through the years but the heart of the program has remained from the visioning days of Kent and Sandy. What changed more dramatically with Oasis under my leadership has been the offering of additional year-long programs. In the winter of 2002 I launched *Returning to the Well*, a retreat based program for practicing spiritual directors, our first



program to provide a next step for graduates of spiritual direction training programs. This was followed in 2005 with our *Deepening Year for Direction Ministries* designed by Jo Ann Kunz and co-taught by Jo Ann and Hugh Smith III. DYDM was also designed with graduates in mind but with more of an academic approach. Together these programs offered two different modalities for deepening the practice of directors. Our next expansion was to split apart our joining of contemplation and direction in our SDSG training program and make an offering that was focused singularly on training in contemplation. Our *Contemplative Living: Spirituality in Daily Life* program designed by Nancy Bieber and team taught by Nancy and Marc Oehler was started in the fall of 2008.



SDSG, DYDM, and CLSDL constitute the trinity of our training programs. Oasis was begun with a heart for training in contemplation and spiritual direction and these programs have continued that passion. Over time it became clear that in addition to training there is a great longing for the continuing experience of contemplative community. We have offered a number of year long programs that seek to address this need: *Journey into Silence, Breath and Prayer*, and gender related offerings, *Men4Directions*, and *Nurturing Women in the Sanctuary of the Earth*.

Part of the journey of Oasis beyond the giftedness of our founding mentor, Kent Groff, has been to build programs that have a great amount of independence in terms of design and leadership. The common core is a commitment to community and contemplation as the context for learning while each program is anchored on its own leadership team.



We've taken a similar approach with our offering of pilgrimages. We wanted to move beyond trips for tourists, to offering opportunities for

contemplation and community in a variety of wondrous settings. Our first pilgrimage was to Iona and Scotland in the fall of 2007. Since that launch we have done seven pilgrimages—three times on an immersion into the Algonquin wilderness via canoes, three times for retreat in the high desert of Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, and a return pilgrimage to Iona in 2011.

As I sit with my ministry with Oasis I easily cherish the way in which my time has called forward in me the offerings that were mine to make. I think of the way RTW reflected the combination of my passions: for the mystics, for direction, for artistic expression as an outpouring of the Spirit's movement and for taking a group deeper into retreat. I think of how every year in early June for over ten years I have been able to come together with Sandy Alwine at Still Waters to break open a fresh glimpse into the Thomas Merton we both love. I think of the string of Poetry as Prayer days where the poems I cherish have come alive for others. I think of the glow on the faces around the fire in the courtyard of Casa del Sol at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, as transformation in the week moves from the prayer of our hearts into the depths of our lives. And, year in and year out, I think of what happens in SDSG.

I write these reflections just days after completing the opening retreats for SDSG. Never do I feel clearer about this work than I do during meeting days. Nancy Bieber and I sat shoulder to shoulder as we opened our 17th year of teaching together. We watched the power of contemplative community as the Year II group celebrated coming back together again and as we saw the way a brand new group of participants formed community amidst contemplation in just two short days together. This is good work to do. This is important work to do. I'm thankful to be able to be a part of continuing the grace that is Oasis.





REFLECTIONS FROM NANCY BIEBER

Nancy has been a lead teacher for Oasis since 1996. She teaches in the SDSG program and the CLSDL program.

This is a challenge. Because Oasis Ministries has so profoundly shaped my spiritual journey, it is difficult to write anything specific and concrete for this reflection piece. I could simply state my gratitude for the journey and for the opportunity to work and pray, learn and love, laugh and weep with all the participants and leaders through my years on the Oasis staff.

Perhaps I can summon up a few memories. I was asked to be part of the Oasis staff in the autumn of 1996 as a replacement for Emily Wallace who would be away for half the year. For many years I'd been a psychologist in private practice but eventually I had felt called to another form of ministry. I wasn't sure what this would be but I attended Shalem Institute 1994-96, training as a spiritual director. The invitation from Kent to be a peer group leader for SDSG I --- when he had never met me --- seemed like a clear nudge from God to serve in a new way. I said yes.

This coming Oasis year (2013-14) will mark my 17th year on the Oasis staff. I began as a peer group leader but through the years Kent invited me to become more involved with teaching. I loved the challenge of developing themes and offering them to participants. When Sandy Alwine retired, I began to participate in both Year I and II of SDSG programs, joining Glenn Mitchell in doing much of the teaching.

It has been a joy to work with other staff members as a team. We have given each other support and love that has deepened through the years. One of the richest



experiences in my spiritual life is the hour before each SDSG day when the team of leaders gathers to share about our lives and pray together. This grounding for the day by the leaders is an essential part of the Oasis Ministries' experience for both leaders and participants.

Here is one story about how Oasis ripples out in unexpected ways. At the final retreat of my first year on staff, I struck up a casual lunch table conversation with Dodd Lamberton, a participant I hadn't spoken with before. We spoke of his organizing a hiking trip through the Himalayas in Nepal and I rather diffidently said that it sounded like an adventure I'd really like to do. He made me an offer I couldn't refuse - inviting me to come along as spiritual guide. So in the spring of 1998, I was hiking through Nepal, awed by the splendor of the mountains, leading brief morning and evening worship every day, and writing poems celebrating the experience. For the trip I bought my first, but not last, pair of hiking boots! Inspired by that trek, my husband and I organized our own trip through the Himalayas two years later, and Glenn Mitchell was among the participants.

Here is a story about my spiritual growth through Oasis work. While I have been stretched by Oasis Ministries in many ways, probably the biggest stretch and one of the most rewarding experiences has been creating the year-long *Contemplative Living: The Spirituality of Daily Life* program. I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Marc Oehler



to shape the program and then to share leadership of it. Our first meeting to explore contemplative living in daily life was a whole day at my house with Marc, Glenn, Hugh Smith and Melissa Stock. We spent the first hours in a Quaker type of meeting for worship. We spoke out of silence addressing what contemplation

meant to us and how a program could unfold. This was a powerful experience, and I still treasure the notes a friend made as we spoke. Later Marc and I developed curriculum, shaped the experience

we hoped to create, and decided how the program would unfold. The years of guiding the Contemplative Living program have deepened me spiritually. I cannot offer teachings and experiences to others without being changed by them myself. And participants' stories and their lived wisdom have helped me to grow more open to the Spirit, more alive to God's presence in my own life.

For all this and much more, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity I've been given to develop and use my gifts, to follow a deeply felt calling, and to give and receive in the Oasis community.

Oasis is Love
Movement of Spirit in me
Reaching out beyond
~ Anonymous

REFLECTIONS FROM REV. HARRY G. ROYER

Harry is a 1994-1995 Graduate of SDSG and served on the Oasis Board of Directors, including serving as Board President from 1998-2001.

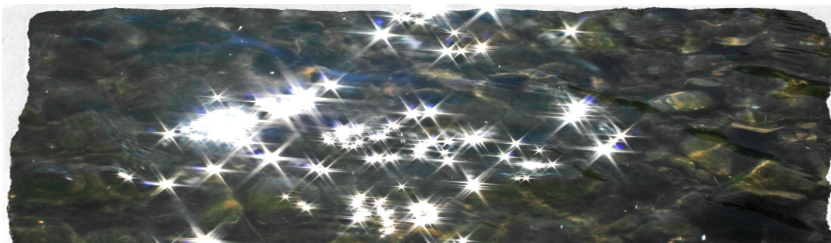
Nurtured in the Mercersburg tradition of the United Church of Christ, from the time of my birth, I was drawn to the writings of Brother Roger and others of the Taize Community while a student at Franklin and Marshall College and Lancaster Seminary. Taize's spirituality, liturgical/sacramental life and call for reconciliation of Christians seemed to be an expression of the evangelical catholicism that had formed and shaped me and in which I minister as a parish pastor. A brief visit with the Ecumenical Sisters of Mary in Darmstadt, Germany, the development of Vatican Council II, COCU, and the ecumenical vision of the UCC also formed a context for the ministry in which I lived.

When I moved to my second parish in the inner city of Reading, PA,

all of this continued to form and shape who and what we were and are. A deep spirituality undergirded ecumenical day camps, drop in centers for street kids, involvement with Roman Catholic sisters experimenting with renewal of religious community, weekly Eucharist, spiritual retreats for the congregation, strengthening traditional parish ministry, developing concerned citizens in the neighborhood and my congregation's deepening involvement with Taize, (in the days prior to email, we would sit on the floor of my apartment and paste poorly duplicated address labels received from Taize on envelopes so that we could mail "The Letter From Taize" to various parts of the U.S.A. At the same time we received visits from youths and brothers from Taize in preparation for the Council of Youth. We sent two of our members to the opening of the Council in Mexico.) A young woman we called to coordinate our ministry to inner city youths and families, felt called to a Ministry of Prayer and Presence in the inner city and her house in a ghetto neighborhood became a House of Prayer. We encouraged her to enroll in Shalem and to take classes at Lancaster Seminary. In later years she was ordained and founded a religious order, The Advent Community of Emmaus Pilgrims.

At the same time I joined my conference minister and 8 other pastors in praying the daily office and gathering monthly for prayer, discussion and Word and Sacrament. As a pastor I was celebrating the Eucharist at least once every Lord's Day in my congregation. In time this led our discerning God's calling us to form the Order of Corpus Christi of which I became the first prior.

Called to my third parish in East Petersburg, PA in 1990 I felt the need for some formal training and accountability since I was engaged in direction and formation. I asked Fr. Ed Sanders, S.J. for permission to audit his spirituality classes at Lancaster Seminary.



Before this was possible, health issues led him to move to the Spiritual Center in Wernersville and Kent Groff began to lead the classes at Lancaster.

Instead of auditing the classes at Lancaster, I thought I would enroll in Shalem, but I received a brochure describing the SDSG program offered by OASIS. Driving to Camp Hill was easier than driving to Washington, D. C. I engaged in the program for the years 1993/94 and 1994/95. I joined Kent's peer group along with Bryer Helmer, Nancy Allen, John Norman, and others. At the same time I engaged in the Spiritual Exercises under the guidance of Fr. Ed. A surprise telephone call came from Kent in 1995 stating that Frank Stalfa had to resign from Oasis' Board and Kent asked if I would pray about filling Frank's unexpired term. I did so and was elected to two more terms.

John Norman moved to Lititz and asked if I would consider serving as President of the Board if he would help by serving as Vice President. I served as President until 2001 when my aged mother (who lived with me) entered into septic shock, had a major stroke, and had to enter skilled care nursing. I had to resign due to the fact that I had full responsibility for my congregation, was a ministerial guide in Lancaster's MS program, fed and medicated my mother in the nursing home every day, was an active spiritual director and field ed pastor, etc.

During the years that I shared in the Board and served as President, I witnessed growth in OASIS. A major change came as the Board transformed into a "working Board" with the board members assuming more responsibility. This resulted in the entire Board engaging in the process which produced the Vision Statement, strengthening the SDSG and other programs, calling Mary Pinto to serve as Assistant to the Director, beginning the process of moving Oasis' data onto computer files, providing support so that Kent could take the sabbatical in Europe and India, and starting the process which would eventually transition Kent into the role of "Founding Director" and calling another person to serve as Director.

The story of Oasis is the story of God's gifting many persons who draw from the well of Christ, contemplatively, actively. It is the story of dreaming dreams, paying attention to the surprising ways God works in us and through us and staying focused upon the One who feeds our hunger and satisfies our thirst.

Gateway to Heaven
Moon setting into red cliffs
Share our sacred space
~ Larry Cozzens

REFLECTION FROM NANCY AGNEBERG

Nancy is a 1998-1999 Graduate of the SDSG program.

I can still recall the feeling I had each time I approached the retreat center for a day long session in the Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides program--a feeling of relief and surrender as well as an openness to what would be offered and discovered and how Spirit would move during that time. Because I lived in Cleveland at the time, about six hours away, I would arrive the night before each session and would usually stay till the day after the session as well, giving me extra retreat time. Needless to say that was a real gift, but the best part of being there was the opening gathering time. In silence we would find a place in the circle perhaps quietly hugging a companion or two and greeting one another with soft eyes. I remember sitting there receiving one another's breath, a release of stress, and a tuning into one's inner voice at the same time opening into each other's hearts. The altar was in the center of the circle and we were encouraged to add something to it--a leaf, a rock, a poem, a picture--and that seemed to bridge our external life with the internal. We sat in silence, comfortable, welcome silence until Kent or one of the other facilitators led us into the day's dance. I can feel myself even now remember the release and restoration that accompanied that time.

REFLECTIONS FROM PRUE YELINEK
AN OASIS MEMORY OF AN
“AHA!” MOMENT

Prue served as SDSG peer group leader and presenter in 1998-2000, and has participated in RTW.



As part of my Oasis presentations on Celtic Spirituality I often ended with a Celtic Circling Prayer. Participants were invited to stand and form a circle in the middle of the large gathering room at Kenbrook. From the low table that served as the day's focus center I would take a candle or the “dancing flame” and then move outside the circle. Raising the light I slowly walked around behind the participants softly chanting an adapted ancient Irish prayer:

“My Christ, my Christ,
my shield, my encircler:
each day, each night
each dark, each light
be near me, uphold me
my treasure, my triumph
in waking, in sleeping
in laughing, in weeping.
My Christ, my Christ,
my shield, my encircler...”

Circling the group, praying these words of blessing and protection I experienced a graced sense of connection and affection for each person, some who I knew more intimately through shared leadership or small group exchanges and others who I knew less well. But even beyond any personal connections the prayer itself seemed to weave us together by naming those primal, universal elements of day and night, waking and sleeping, merriment and mourning that touch us all. Like a Celtic cross with its circle embracing the vertical and horizontal beams, the prayer and flame expressed the encircling Presence that unites and embraces all.

As powerful as this awareness was for me, my Circling Prayer experience was forever altered and deepened by an observation shared by one of our Oasis participants. Reflecting on her experience she said it was comforting to hear the words and watch the flame move around the group as it passed closely behind each person. But, she added, as the circling continued she realized that the only time she could not see the flame was when it was closest to her.

Space for the sacred
to re-center all seasons
of life and of love

~ Rich Gelson

Silence in Silence
Quiet peaceful communion
Christ walks among us

~ Jill Speelman

OASIS HIGHLIGHTS TIMELINE 2003-2008

2003

Kent Groff retires from Oasis, becoming our Founding Mentor

In June, 2003 action was taken to call Terry W. Culler to the position of Oasis Ministries Interim Director, with a two-year contract effective June 8, 2003. Unfortunately, after prayerful consideration, action was taken to terminate this relationship, effective November 4, 2004

2004

Betsy Keller hired as part-time Administrative Assistant

Cindy Garis is hired as part-time Interim Director, November 2004

2005

In 2005, Cindy Garis was named part-time, permanent Director

Deepening Year for Direction Ministries begins, led by Jo Ann Kunz and Hugh Smith III

2006

Kent and Freddy Groff move to Colorado

Glenn Mitchell expands to part-time Director of Training and Program

Souls on the Journey (Books Days) begin with Linda Klopp and Kathleen Roney

2007

The Spiritual Pilgrimages began in 2007 with the inaugural trip to Iona and other places of interest in Scotland, under the leadership of Glenn Mitchell and Kathleen Roney, with Iona leadership by J. Philip Newell

2008

Contemplative Living begins with Nancy Bieber and Marc Oehler

Oasis celebrates its 20th year with a celebration dinner at Kenbrook



Barbara and Hugh Smith greet Betsy at her first Oasis dinner.

REFLECTION FROM BETSY KELLER

Betsy is the Administrative Assistant for Oasis.

In the spring of 2004 I had been living in Camp Hill a little less than 3 years and was looking for a part-time job. Tired of the busy highways all around me, I said to

my husband, "I want to work at the Presbyterian Church at the bottom of our street." The very next day – yes, the very next day, my husband received a memo to be put in the Sunday worship bulletin about a temporary, part-time job at Christ Presbyterian Church – the church at the bottom of our street! Thus I began my job at Oasis Ministries: first as a 3-month substitute while the present Administrative Assistant was on maternity leave and then permanently beginning in September 2004 when she decided to look for a different job after returning to work for 2 months. Her husband was having a hard time watching their 3 young boys while she was at work!

I enjoy my job! It is part-time, flexible working hours and I get to work with some great people! Two of my spiritual gifts are hospitality and organization and I get to do both in my work with all these contemplatives! My husband has noticed what a great group "Oasis people" are just from attending the annual dinners each year where he has been made to feel welcomed. Having all those people out making relationships in their work and recreation surely has to make a difference in the world! I am blessed to have a small part in being one of the first "faces" when they email or dial-up Oasis Ministries.





REFLECTION FROM RICHARD GORDON

Richard served on the Oasis Board of Directors, including time as President/Chair. He is a graduate of SDSG, and has participated in numerous day retreats, 2010-2011 M4D program and 2013-2014 JIS program.

I clearly recall my first day at SDSG (October 4, 2007) – walking into Mountain View and being warmly welcomed and embraced by Glenn who said, “It’s about time!” I’m sure that neither one of us fully comprehended the full meaning of those words then. True, I

had had a *long* association with Oasis, including four years on the Board (part of that time as President), before this. At times it was *embarrassing* to be so *unfamiliar* with the contemplative way while serving in this key capacity. Indeed, *it was about time* I found out what this ‘contemplative stuff’ was all about! But that was only one of *several things* which brought me through that door... Eighteen months earlier (in the spring of 2006), as the result of a personal crisis which put my vocation, my financial livelihood, and my marriage in serious jeopardy, I found myself symbolically in the desert. I felt as though I had been *flung* there, stripped bare, without any of life’s familiar underpinnings. That desert felt like a place of death. In this barren wasteland I came face-to-face with my inner demons and dared to ride them deeper down until the painful emptiness was eventually infused with God’s compassionate and merciful embrace. It marked a decisive shift in my spiritual life – an unfolding journey of letting go – an unfolding journey from ego to essence – an unfolding journey into silence and solitude. I was faced with the enormity of recovery, *stripped* of all the supportive underpinnings which I had come to readily rely upon, *including* a ‘pastoral identity and spirituality’ (i.e. an identity and spirituality *integrally bound up with* my role of being pastor)... It was as though I had lost my very ‘self’ (the ‘false self,’ I later realized), and whereas the recovery regimen of individual and group therapy and 12-Step work, along with my wife, Sandy’s, loving support were all *invaluable* to my healing, there was still a missing piece – the piece (I was to eventually discover) *crucial* to virtually *every other aspect* of my life! The kairoic moment had come – the *time* had come – it was,

indeed, *about time!*

I came through that door on October 4, 2007 not primarily to learn how to become a Spiritual Director (in fact that wasn't much of a motivating factor at all!), but because the time was right – because I was needy and ready, because Sandy also wished to participate, and our schedules and finances made it possible for us to do it! In discovering and practicing the contemplative way, I became increasingly able to 'let go' of destructive behaviors and enter into an intimacy with God, with self, and with others. I began to engage in a movement from the false self to the True Self – from ego to essence.

In September, 2008 I continued this journey by *intentionally* going to the *external* desert in the pilgrimage to the American Southwest. It was an acknowledgement of my *need* for the desert – a recognition that the desert is in fact a place of *life!* By physically removing myself from the impingement of 'the world' and going into the desert's bare and expansive space with its invitation to silence and solitude, I was given an opportunity to reinforce the ongoing process of letting go: letting go of unhealthy distractions – letting go of destructive behaviors – letting go of the many attachments which in fact shut God out. During this time in the desert I was given an opportunity to nurture and strengthen my presence in the Presence through which I had *begun* to discover health and wholeness...

Of course the journey continues, but Oasis is what put me on the path – the path that saved my life!

Looking down the path
a God-lit invitation
and my resounding "yes"

~ Diana Barbera-Horwitz

**REFLECTION IN THE WATER
FROM VICKI KENSINGER**

Vicki is a 2002-2003 Graduate of SDSG, a 2007-2008 Graduate of DYDM and has led winter retreats, NWSE and contemplative canoe trips for Oasis. She also served on our Board of Directors.



Reflections in the water.

That I stumbled upon the well that is Oasis in the middle of the vast desert that was my life-and that was my family, church, and culture- is a mystery and a wonder, most definitely a grace. Hitting mid-life, perhaps earlier than some, I arrived at this well severely wounded, weary and starving. During those early days, I perhaps looked like a refuge – so very guarded and untrusting – but also very aware, in awe even, that this place was so unlike the places I had come from.

If I didn't at first, in those early years, entirely trust the temporary residents with which I shared this moist and lush environment, I knew that the water here was deep, was crystal clear, was abundant. I drank deeply of it. I bathed in it. I swam in it. I floated upon it. I dove into it. I watered my growing with it. I watered my food with it. I watered my blossoms with it. I rooted myself in soil saturated by it. I tossed pebbles into it, watched the rings expand. I tossed heavy rocks into it, watched them splash and disappear. I cried into it, felt the tears received as if these waters were made of the same stuff as me.

As the years passed, the nightmares of the starving years dimmed as love grew in my belly. Still I drank of whatever I could avail myself, an offering in a cup here, steeped into tea; a bowl there, simmered into broth; a glass of intoxicating wine here, a hearty nourishing stew there. Until one day I knew that I was made of such stuff as this. It was not only in my tears, it was in my very cells. I carried it within me!

And I could be extravagant with it.

I could pour it out, water dry land and withering plants, let puppies lap

it up. I could mist, or downpour, pool or flow, because the Source was within me. And now I knew how to tap into it, how to fill from those groundwaters within me, how to root my very being in it. I need only open to it, flow from it.

Now when I return to the Oasis, it is with celebration. It is for seeing, reflected in these waters and in the ones who also gather here from time to time, who I am, who we are, how wonder-full is the water. It is now with gratitude and joy that I come to the water to drink.

A circle of friends
joined in contemplative life,
walking, noticing
~ Melanie Taormina

REFLECTIONS FROM DONNA KULIK

Donna is a 2005-2006 Graduate of SDSG

The essence of Oasis, to me, was/is a reflection of how God is always speaking to us through people (especially children), nature, other living creatures, weather, dreams, music, art, prayer, silence, His Word, His Holy Spirit, His Healing Grace, His Love, His perfect timing, to name a few examples. We were surrounded and embraced by His love, and our love for each other.

Thank you, Oasis!

P.S. Whenever I see an eagle soar above me, I say a prayer for Marc.

**REFLECTION FROM
MARGARET HARDY**

Margaret is a 2005-2006 Graduate of SDSG, served on the Oasis Board of Directors, is the 2013-2014 Treasurer of Oasis and is participating in *Breath and Prayer*.



It was at an SDSG retreat, or maybe a day meeting. My prayer partner Diane Ross wore a lovely, soft prayer shawl. She told me about the prayer shawl ministry that she led at Mariawald Renewal Center, and said that she would make one for me. Later we all joined in a prayer practice led by Kent Groff, in which, as I remember it, we each visualized a person in our lives who had wronged us, and then touched that person in some way to offer forgiveness. The experience reached a deep wound in my heart, and I could not stop crying. As the circle ended, Diane led me aside as I continued to sob. Without probing at what was wrong, she simply took off her shawl, wrapped it and then her arms around me, and said, "Here, you wear this one until I get yours made." And I was wrapped in Love.

Green space in dry land
Water for journeying souls
Thanks to Oasis
~ Margaret Hardy



Snippets and Ponderings from our Executive Director
A Few Pieces You May Not Know
2004– Present

Technology

Technology moves so quickly. The past 25 years we have gone from very little computer use to being connected via the internet for much of our administrative work. In 2004 one of the greatest challenges in the office was staying connected to the internet. We were using dial-up and it was unreliable, tied up a phone line, and was slow. (Presently we have DSL, which in today's standards is slow.) In 2004, we used Microsoft Access for our database and had over 2000 records (now we use GiftWorks, a Donor Management System with over 3800 in our database). In 2004, we had a desktop Xerox copier that was a workhorse, but we paid a maintenance fee on every year... until we realized that, if we needed to, we could purchase a new multi-function printer every year for the same price as our maintenance agreement.

Space

We occupy the same space, a 16'x 20' room (at most) in Christ Presbyterian Church that we have since 1989. The desk of the Administrative Assistant is gazed upon by the "cloud of witnesses," a wall of icons, many of which were made by Kent Groff.

"Oasis should have a place, a retreat center!" Truth be told, this has been a recurring vision, and comes up regularly. In all honesty, to some extent, we could probably raise funds for a building or to purchase ground easier and more swiftly than we often can for programs and people; however, there are two great gifts for the structure we have presently... (1) the practical one: we do not have to keep up with the cost of maintaining buildings, (2) the philosophical one: this allows us to continue to grow into "Oasis is where you are!" It is not about coming to where we are, it is about how to meet you where you are... how to bring streams of water to your desert places.

People

While in the past 10 years we have increased the hours of our employees, we remain a staff of three employees (two part-time, one full-time), with the help of our many teaching staff (adjunct faculty), and our core volunteers, namely our Board of Directors. At our conference in July 2013, we heard and were reminded of the many, many talented people that are a part of the Oasis community. We were able to draw from our own well for leadership in a variety of workshops. It is a great pool from which to refresh.

OASIS HIGHLIGHTS TIMELINE 2009-2013

2010

The Men4Directions program began in 2010, under the leadership of Joel Blunk, and continues annually to the present

In June 2010, at a Board retreat that affirmed Glenn's call to ministry with Oasis and challenged the Board to "Come to the edge... and fly!" Cindy was invited to serve full-time (beginning in September, 2010)

2011

The Lancaster Chamber Singers perform the first concert to benefit Oasis

2012

The *Journey Into Silence* program begins, developed and led by Melissa and Roland Stock

The *Nurturing Women in Sanctuary of Earth* program was developed and led by Vicki Kensinger and ran for a year in 2012

2013

Oasis celebrates its 25th Anniversary through a series of events throughout the year

- A retreat at Kirkridge with Mathew Fox (Feb)
- A benefit concert by Silver, Wood and Ivory (Apr)
- Our first ever "Drawing from the Well" conference for spiritual companions in Moorestown, NJ (July)
- A special dinner celebration at GoggleWorks in Reading, PA (Nov)

Breath and Prayer begins, led by Ruth Zeiders

Oasis expands collaborative efforts working with Ministry Partners such as Kirkridge (Bangor, PA), the Wheelhouse (State College, PA), and Princeton Theological Seminary (Princeton, NJ)



**THE HOME AND THE HOPE:
MY RIVER JOURNEY MIRRORED
IN THE OASIS STORY.**

BY CINDY GARIS

Cindy serves as Executive Director for Oasis. She is a 1998-1999 Graduate of SDSG, served on Oasis' Board of Directors, and is a 2012-2013 Graduate of DYDM.

When asked to write a reflection on my experience with Oasis, I find myself both challenged on where to begin and how to organize it. There are so many feelings, images and metaphors. It really has been a bit like the Sufi story of the river meeting the sand... {I first came across this story in Belden C. Lane's *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes* but it is elsewhere, including used in our Contemplative Living class in the session on "yielding."}

Awad Afifi the Tunisian was a nineteenth-century dervish teacher who drew his wisdom from the wide expanse of desert North Africa. He once shared with his pupils a story that began with a gentle rain falling on a high mountain in a distant land. The rain was at first hushed and quiet, trickling down granite slopes. Gradually it increased in strength, as rivulets of water rolled over the rocks and down the gnarled, twisted trees that grew there. The rain fell, as water must, without calculation. The Sufi master understood that water never has time to practice falling.

Like the water flowing down the mountain, Oasis, thanks to the diligence of its Founding Mentor, Kent Ira Groff, its staff and many dedicated Board members (along with the uncalculated work of the Holy Spirit), was already beyond trickling when my sacred story encountered it.

I don't know if Kent remembers or not, but I first connected with him at Lancaster Theological Seminary (Lancaster, PA) when I was a seminarian (1995-1998). I had desired his mentorship for a summer directed study around spiritual retreats and spiritual direction. He was not available unless I could offset his time with payment, which I was unable to afford. I had then inquired about doing an internship with Oasis in their SDSG program, and he shared that I could take the

course, but they did not do internships.

Like the persistent women of Scripture (specifically, Luke 15:8-10 and Luke 18:1-8), I somehow knew that Oasis held something precious for me. So on faith, I enrolled in Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides (SDSG). I finished SDSG in 1998-1999, making it through with the assistance of scholarship (the grace of strangers!) It was a tremendous experience, and I recall how important the regular gatherings were to keeping me grounded in my faith. Additionally, I “lapped up” and celebrated the whole-being/whole-brain approach that I found with Oasis. Less focused on whether one ‘believed the right things,’ it recognized “multiple intelligences” and included right-brain, creative activities in its programming and spiritual development. How refreshing!

Like the water in the Sufi story, at Oasis we never have had much time to “practice falling” for the practice we practice we also teach, one of prayer, releasing, and gratitude. We are not a group of spiritual perfections or perfectionists. We are holy humans wholly human. We are not free from addictions, illness, suffering – quite the opposite; we have our failings, struggle with sickness, wrestle with the Ego/False Self, and perhaps are a stronger community because of it. We are healthy and healing people, who also continue to experience the curves, jolts and tragedies of life, and become like Henri Nouwen’s ‘the wounded healer.’ Including the joys and celebrations, we journey together through all of life, not always as a separate sanctuary, but in the continual discovery that you are not alone in them... that you are being held in prayer and that prayer makes a difference. The humanity of the struggle and the spirit of the work is what contemplation and spiritual direction are about; as Kent Groff puts it, “one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread.” The nature of the contemplative way is not the absence of struggle and suffering, but experiencing the Presence of God in the midst.

Soon it was pouring, as swift currents of dark water flowed together into the beginnings of a stream. The brook made its way down the mountainside, through small stands of cypress trees and fields of lavender-tipped purslane, down cascading falls. It moved without effort, splashing over stones-learning that the stream interrupted by rocks is the one that

sings most nobly. Finally, having left its heights in the distant mountain, the stream made its way to the edge of a great desert. Sand and rock stretched beyond seeing.

I cannot say that the movement over ‘rocks’ and obstacles has been effortless, but it certainly has been melodious. I remember dancing at dinners, splattering paint on banners, Board retreats where we celebrated ordinations and callings, also where we sat in silence and stillness as an intentional call not from anger or awkwardness. I recall the melody of being a discernment-driven place, focused on the importance of this work. I count among the joyous tunes of the river working along side of great people like Glenn Mitchell and Betsy Keller, and the Board of Directors, especially the Chairs I have had the chance to learn from (Richard Gordon, Jane Hoover, Michael Mumma, and Sara Jane Munshower). Among the splashes of rushing water, are the times when I am able to meet our program participants and leaders – I always come away saying, “Oasis people are the neatest people I have ever met.”

Taking this spacious step back reminds me that I am preserving and protecting the beautiful gift of the work that is here. I recently had someone ask, “Isn’t it like experiencing a beautiful vista? Won’t someone tell another person of their mountaintop experience and it is simply supported by sharing the experience?” My response, “Sure, but that image raises two thoughts for me. First, it assumes that people *are* sharing their experience and not keeping it to themselves... often in our society, these sacred times are very private and we somehow feel embarrassed to share them. And, second, the beautiful vista experience also does not prevent the nature preserve from putting a donation box at the nature center or on the mountain top.” She

responded, “True. And I suppose the time the hiker comes to the town meeting is when the mountain is threatened.”

I also remember the many conversations (the boulders that no one wants to have, yet all nonprofits do) about asking people for money



and that 'we should not ask people for money, because people do not like to be asked for money... We should not email people more than once a month because our Inboxes are too full already.' People get tired of being asked for money and people get tired of receiving emails. Agreed. Similarly, I remember the stress (even today) of deciding which bills get paid this week because we do not have enough money to pay them all ('sand and rock stretched beyond seeing'). [hmmm...What does it cost to keep flowing stream excellence?]

Having crossed every other barrier in its way, the stream fully expected to cross this as well. But as fast as its waves splashed into the desert, that fast did they disappear into the sand. Before long, the stream heard a voice whispering, as if coming from the desert itself, saying, "The wind crosses the desert, so can the stream." "Yes, but the wind can fly!" cried out the stream, still dashing itself into the desert sand.

"You'll never get across that way," the desert whispered. "You have to let the wind carry you." "But how?" shouted the stream. "You have to let the wind absorb you." The stream could not accept this, however, not wanting to lose its identity or abandon its own individuality. After all, if it gave itself to the winds, could it ever be sure of becoming a stream again?

The desert replied that the stream could continue its flowing, perhaps one day even producing a swamp there at the desert's edge. But it would never cross the desert so long as it remained a stream. "Why can't I remain the same stream that I am?" the water cried. And the desert answered, ever so wisely, "You never remain what you are. Either you become a swamp or you give yourself to the winds."

My sacred story intersects with the Oasis story around this type of resistance and yielding to the Wind. Oasis and I both, at times, resist the whisper of the Wind, and yet, have been transformed and carried by it for over two decades.

Sometimes we look back (longing to go back up the mountain where the flow is easy). When I look back over my experience with Oasis is it like seeing a reflection in the mirror in which all you see are the eyes of Love. This is my experience as an Oasis participant; it is my experience as a spiritual director; and, it is my experience as the

Executive Director of this beautiful organization. The Oasis community is unlike any other group I have met. There are amazing men and women in this world... and they participate in Oasis gatherings.



Sometimes we look to the future (longing for a place already across the hot, dry sand). How are we turning the mirror to reflect the Light outward? Are we invited to seeing beyond our own reflection, seeing where the Light is cast in a world that needs to know Peace, Love, and Hope? The contemplative way may be an inward glance, even an inward diving, but it is not to remain solely introspective. We are invited to light the way. This invitation to how we reflect Love and Light into the future is why I love what we do --- Oasis needs to be here. It makes a difference and saves the world. The contemplative work and way in the world is more crucial now than ever... we need to continue to approach spiritual/physical/mental/emotional health and wellness, violence and poverty, in our backyard and around the globe with a holy, prayerful response... less militant and more understanding of humans as creations of God, greeting the Spirit in one another, and shining the Light on a different way of being.

But we truly are invited to the Present (right now, discerning and holding who we are). As a spiritual director and an Executive Director, I find my story intersecting with Oasis around the image of midwifery. As spiritual companions, we have the joy of being present for what is being birthed in another. At Oasis, my experience is one of wonder at seeing this metaphorical 'beautiful newborn baby' arrive for a family... the joy, relief, celebration of welcoming home new life... only to, simultaneously, also be present when the family receives the 'termination of employment' notice, and the joy is coupled with fear and anxiety about how to provide, nurture and care for this tender soul. The almost palpable sorrow and fear over the potential for losing this loved one. This community is such a tender and vulnerable entity, as many contemplative, mysterious, holy "thin" places are. We do need to work diligently (determinedly and fiercely

too?) to protect it, preserve it, nurture it, listen to it, receive it.

My love for this organization is matched by my love for this work. I get the opportunity to help preserve it. To help share it. To help it to grow. Many times in my sacred story, I have been too scared to enjoy the gift of life that is offered here. So, in this present moment, I breathe.... And I breathe. And I breathe again. Silently.

The stream was silent for a long time, listening to distant echoes of memory, knowing parts of itself having been held before in the arms of the wind. From that long-forgotten place, it gradually recalled how water conquers only by yielding, by flowing around obstacles, by turning to steam when threatened by fire. From the depths of that silence, slowly the stream raised its vapors to the welcoming arms of the wind and was borne upward, carried easily on great white clouds over the wide desert waste.

Movement comes from the silence. When I served on the Board (including a stint as Treasurer and Secretary), we always had trouble naming what it is that we do, but we could all seem to identify its necessity. It is silence. It is Mystery. It is Presence and space. Oasis showed me that I LOVE silence in community. I enjoy hearing others' stories and asking questions, and talking so much, that I never would have imagined that I find I go deepest into silence when I am with others in silence. 'Holy Being' together. From the depths of silence, I and others have encountered the welcoming arms of the Wind and are carried upward.

Approaching distant mountains on the desert's far side, the stream then began once again to fall as a light rain. At first it was hushed and quiet, trickling down granite slopes. Gradually it increased in strength, as rivulets rolled over the rocks and down the gnarled, twisted trees that grew there. The rain fell, as water must, without calculation. And soon it was pouring, as swift currents of water flowed together - yet again - into the headwaters of a new stream.

The cycle continues anew with Oasis. Flowing from the vision of our Founding Mentor, toward a Board-led, mission-oriented organism, the rain has fallen again. Recently looking through our course packet for *Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides*, I have been reminded of where Oasis has been over the past 25 years. We continue to share readings

from Gerald May, Tilden Edwards and Rosemary Dougherty, who were 'shedding new light' in 1988, along with contemporary writings and authors as well. On the horizon, we are excited by new headwaters of new streams as well (see 'New Streams' on the next page)

Awad Afifi refused to say what the story "meant," how it should be interpreted. He simply pointed his students to the desert nearby and urged them to find out for themselves.

I have had people say to me over the years, "I can understand how Oasis is 'drawing from the well of Christ contemplatively,' but how is it 'actively?'" My response, from this safe, sacred space called Oasis, is "You cannot separate out the contemplative life from the rest of your life." It is not only making time apart; it is how you ARE in the world. It is how we notice the holy in the ordinary, the extraordinary in the everyday... God in the pain and sorrow and sickness and violence and justice and peace. It is the 444 people who have completed a year-long program or served as Board or staff member (along with the thousands who have experienced day retreats or workshops), who take this way of being back into their circles of influence.

As we reflect forward, what are we recalling and re-membering and re-discovering? For me, it is hope and home. A place that is welcoming, loving and forgiving, even while we are pondering and questioning what all of that means.

And so I point you to the desert place...
to discover your Oasis.

cat purring on lap
resonating in belly
cathedral of peace

~ Jet Schneider



Snippets and Ponderings: 'New Streams'

On the horizon, we are excited by new headwaters of new streams
(referred to in Cindy Garis' reflection):

Distance Learning

One new "flow" for Oasis is to see how we might use technology and distance learning to help bring resources, training and education to people who are not able to be present at our regular program offerings.

Collaborative efforts

- with seminaries (Princeton in specific), in many respects a full circle as this was where Kent taught as an adjunct and Oasis Ministries went to a larger audience.
- with Kirkridge Retreat and Study Center (Bangor, PA), another full circle experience as John Oliver Nelson, founder of Kirkridge, was one of the charter Board members for Oasis. Kirkridge and Oasis have worked together to bring Matthew Fox and John Bell to the area.
- with the Wheelhouse (State College, PA), where Joel Blunk, who leads our Men4Directions program, and State College Presbyterian Church have helped to strengthen connections in the contemplative community by helping to bring Oasis in touch with people like Richard Rohr and Edwina Gateley.

Wellsprings

This is another way in which we can share "Oasis where you are." By establishing Wellsprings (pockets for contemplative programs in communities/hubs where there is an existing energy), Oasis resources will not require a long drive or expensive commute, and will build and strengthen local contemplative communities. (Our 25th Anniversary campaign supports expanding access to Oasis programs and community by diminishing the obstacles of cost and distance by strengthening the use of technology, increasing scholarship assistance, and developing wellsprings in your local communities.)

**Space to grow and learn
By forming deep connections
Coming home to Joy
~ Pat Deeney**

Oasis' Spiritual Pilgrimages

- 2007 Iona, Scotland - Glenn Mitchell and Kathleen Roney
- 2008 American Southwest - Glenn Mitchell & Sandy Alwine
- 2009 Contemplative Canadian Canoe Trip - Vicki Kensinger
- 2010 Contemplative Canoe Trip (as above)
- 2011 Contemplative Canoe Trip (as above)
- 2011 Casa del Sol, Ghost Ranch, NM - Glenn Mitchell
- 2012 Iona and Lindisfarne - Kathleen Roney and Cindy Garis
- 2013 Casa del Sol Retreat - Glenn Mitchell
- 2014 Spain - Jo Ann Kunz and Tony Blair

Plans are being made for future pilgrimages to Italy, Germany, Turkey, and returning to Iona as well as Casa del Sol.
Learn more and see pictures at www.oasismin.org



REFLECTION FROM NADINE SMET-WEISS

Nadine is a 2011-2012 graduate of SDSG, after first participating in CLSDL in 2009-2010. She is a 2013-2014 participant in B&P.

Oasis changed my life in powerful and positive ways. A better word choice than "changed" would be to say that Oasis transformed my life. Of course, we can't give Oasis all the credit here, so maybe I should really be saying the very Spirit of Life transformed me through Oasis programming? . . . and it isn't done yet! That's one of the most exciting aspects. Oasis always has more to offer to continue the deepening of my growth and transformation. And Oasis is community for me. It is not my only source of community, but it is at the top of the list.

I have said more than once that there was something within me that knew somewhere in the world there were places (using that term loosely of course since Oasis is obviously not a place. . . which is a whole 'nother tangent I could go off on in response to your question) . . . I knew there were places like this in the world but somehow I never quite really imagined something like this could/would actually be part of my life experience. So, think about that. It is sort of like I lived the first 50 years of my life having a seed of a sense of this in my heart, and then I experienced it and kept on experiencing it again and again (as if just to make sure it was really real).

I came to Oasis and even before I physically arrived at my first retreat day at Mariawald I knew I had come home. After looking forward to contemplative living with great anticipation, I looked at my reading list a few weeks before the program began and thought, "what have I done to myself." The list seemed overwhelming. Then I sat down on the couch and began to read "lost in wonder" and I was. . . lost in wonder at the mystery that was leading me into a community of people who were open to embracing this way of being in the world.

With all humility, I have no doubt that the world is a better place because I have had the opportunity of Oasis.

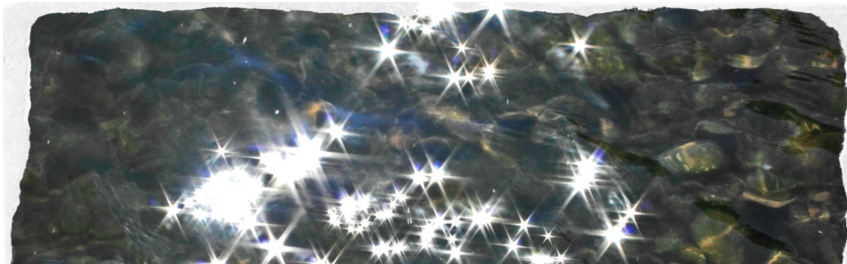
I believe, without a doubt, that the world is being quietly transformed through the work of Oasis.

**REFLECTION FROM
KELLY CHRIPCZUK**

Kelly participated in JIS in 2012-2013, and is a 2013-2014 participant in SDSG.

My Oasis story is from my participation in Journey into Silence. The evening before our third retreat day, I told my husband that, as a mother of four young children, each retreat feels about like one of those tiny paper cups of water that people hand out along the sides of a marathon. It doesn't seem like much in the face of the work and "race" of living that exists between each pit stop, but it's something and I'm grateful for it. Sometimes I gulp it down and other times I simply enjoy the refreshing feeling of spilling it on myself, either way it is SOMETHING to keep me going for the next leg of the journey. Maybe a time will come when I can sit and linger by cool streams, but for now I'm grateful for each and every sip.

Place of desert rest
Lush watering refreshment
Journey not alone
~ Jill Speelman



**REFLECTION WORDS FOR
OASIS' 25TH
FROM SARA JANE MUNSHOWER**

Sara Jane serves as the 2013-2014 Board Chair. She is a 2009-2010 graduate of SDSG and 2013-2014 participant in CLSDL.



It feels odd to be reflecting on what I am so immersed in, at this stage of life. As a 2010 graduate of SDSG, a present student of CLSDL, and an active spiritual companion in my home, as well as at a center in West Hartford, CT, I ought to be able to rattle off a string of thoughts without thought. The catch here is that I am also the current Chair of the Board of Directors....thus the deepest point of immersion. You might say, I am *way down there* in the well of Oasis waters. And sometimes those waters are not as clear as the *well of Christ* that we draw from. Sometimes they are as muddy as the ponds at Kenbrook and Mariawald on a rainy October day.

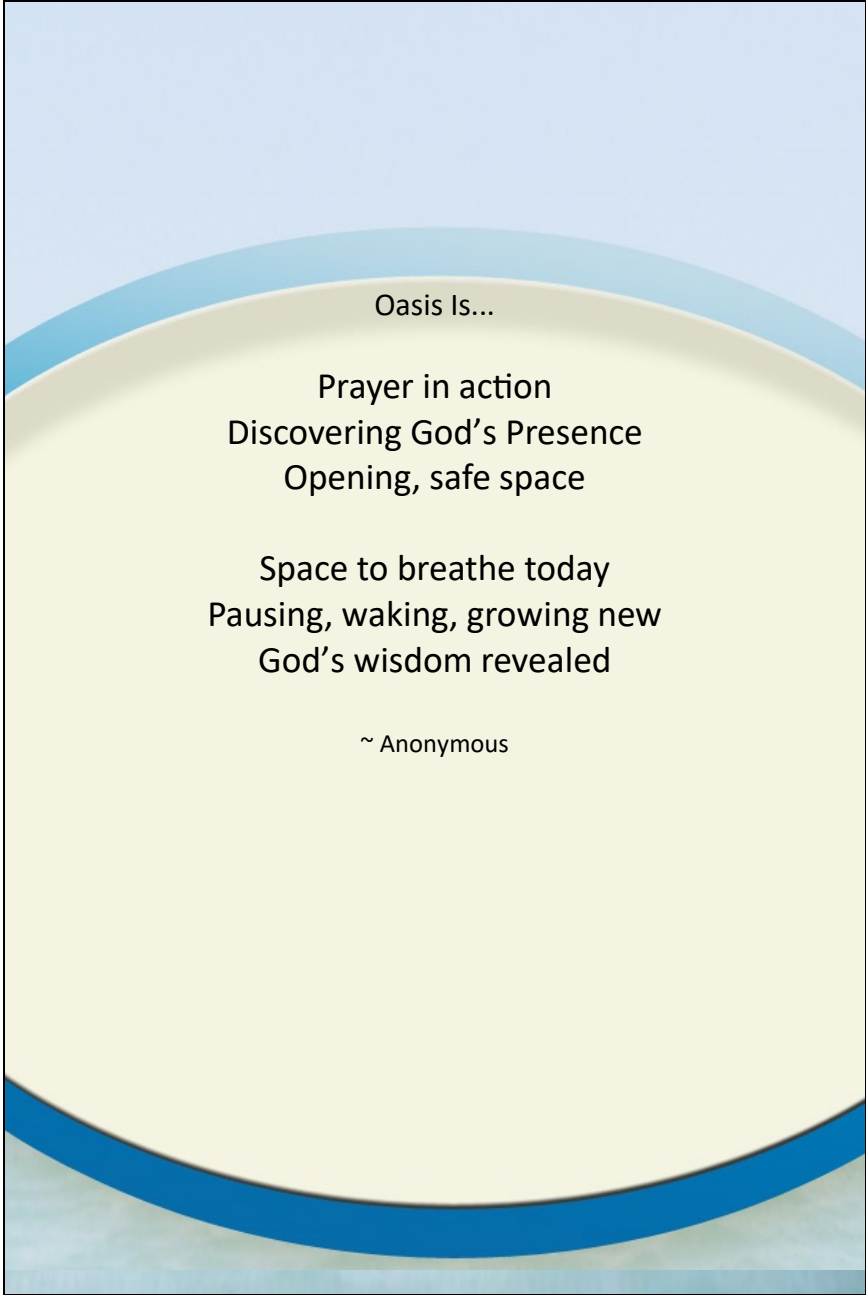
Still, there are those lights that shine even on the rainiest of days. I think, first of all, of the dedication and hard work of Cindy, Glenn, and Betsy under often difficult circumstances, physical, emotional, and financial. Still, they labor on, because there is so much satisfaction in the ministry that Oasis brings to the world. Next I think of all the people Oasis serves because they, you, are what keeps the work of the staff, and the adjunct staff, focused on its mission. Without you, and all your stories of *where in the world* you have taken your Oasis experience, the teachers surely would not keep coming back. And so, lastly, I think of the many teachers, some whom I have learned from, and some whom I have only heard of, and I remember how truly blessed I am to be immersed, no matter how deeply, in such a beautiful "place" of contemplation and companionship.

**Oasis answers
prayers of pilgrimming people
on God's holy path.**

~ Sara Jane Munshower

REFLECTION FROM YOU!
WHAT STORY, REMEMBRANCE OR HAIKU
DO YOU WANT TO ADD?





Oasis Is...

Prayer in action
Discovering God's Presence
Opening, safe space

Space to breathe today
Pausing, waking, growing new
God's wisdom revealed

~ Anonymous