MARCH 2022

THE NEWSLEFFLER

SEATTLE SERVICE CORPS 2021-2022 | LENTEN EDITION

Thank you!

WRITTEN BY TALLEY BREEDLOVE

Welcome to the first newsletter for the 21'-22' Seattle Service Corps! Thank you so much for donating to support this program. We are just over halfway through our year and I believe I can speak for all of us when I say your support in this program makes a world of difference. We have already grown in our faith, interpersonal skills, vocation discernment, and our work towards justice.

So far this year, we have grown in so many ways. In each of our workplaces, we have had the opportunity to learn skills and build confidence in our abilities to accomplish projects and tasks. For instance, Sophia has become trained in various legal processes and court filings in her work with Northwest Immigrants Rights Project which will help her with internships and classwork in her coming years at law school. Through our workplaces and our time on Fridays in formation, we have grown stronger in our understanding and ability of how we can work towards justice. We have had training sessions on the use of nonviolent communication and discussions on inclusive language in creating a welcoming church setting. We have also grown spiritually, getting to practice many spiritual practices like Sabbath, prayer beads, and contemplative prayer. We have loved diving deep on theology topics like the Apostle Paul and liberation theology. And we have grown in our interpersonal relationships with each other. We have bonded during our weekly "mandatory fun," partaking in adventures like going to a pumpkin patch and watching Ru Paul's Drag Race. And we have navigated hardships like dealing with family conflicts back home and supported each other through seasonal depression, chronic mental illness, and navigating a small fridge with 6 people.

I wasn't able to attend the Blossom Abundantly fundraiser in December so I am going to take a second to introduce myself. My name is Talley, I'm from North Carolina. My placement is split between Edible Hope Kitchen and Kids4Peace. I decided to come to Seattle as a way to develop my skills and a place to discern my vocation. Before Covid, I was in the Episcopal Church's Young Adult Service Corps (YASC) program. If ESC is like Americorps, YASC is like the Peace Corps. I was living in the Philippines, working with the Episcopal Church in the Philippine's outreach and development organization E-CARE. I was just starting to feel like I was settling into my new country and finding confidence in the skills I was learning when I had to come home. Through 2020, I spent much time trying to figure out what was next and I am so glad I landed on doing Episcopal Service Corps. I have honed many skills that will be useful for me as I continue working in the non-profit sector. I have also loved getting to grow in my faith through work with the group and conversations with people at St. Marks. I look forward to spring and summer here in Seattle as we all continue to live, laugh, and love each other in community.

SEATTLE SERVICE CORPS

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PHOTOS BY LAURA MUTHER

Contemplative Photography

WRITTEN BY LAURA MUTHER

During the course of the service year this far, I have experienced what the Diocese of Olympia has to offer. I attended a 3-session virtual class on contemplative photography in October-December and a Holy Hike in February. These events allowed me to connect with others through art and nature. Contemplative photography focuses on being present in the moment and tearing attention away from trying to get everything just right and frame the perfect photo.

Integrating contemplative practices can allow us to connect to others through developing a better sense of what is going on in our own lives. It can allow us to see something we may have passed by before, even if it is unpleasant. The same can be said for justice work. When we take a moment to look around, God's honest truth can show up through being attuned to what is not right with the world and the needs of our neighbors.

Prayer for Contemplative Rest:

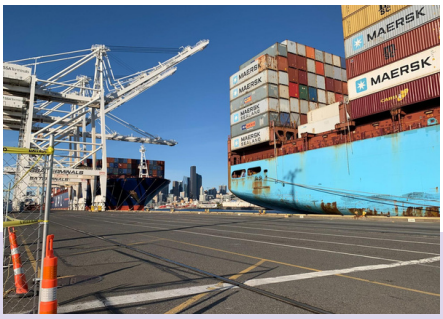
As earth requires rest and the seas need time to be replenished, so in resting may I be made more alive, so in stillness may my creativity be born anew. Bless me in my rest, O God, that I may return refreshed. With your ministering messangers of rest, bless me in this time. May I be still and aware of your presence, O God, within and all around.

PRAYER BY JOHN PHILIP NEWELL, ADAPTED

Workplace Feature: Seattle Seafarers' Center

WRITTEN BY JULIA COOPER

My work site placement this year is at the Seattle Seafarers' Center, a non-profit which serves the international crews of cargo ships visiting the Puget Sound. My primary job responsibility is ship visiting - every day, I don my hard hat, steel-toed boots, and safety vest, drive over to the port and climb up the gangways of huge container ships, and then get to meet with seafarers from all around the world. Seafarers live and work in conditions that are difficult, dangerous, and isolating. Covid has been an especially hard time for seafarers - many are on board their ship and away from their family for a 10 month-long contract, and have not been allowed to step foot on shore during that whole time due to company Covid precautions. Our services to seafarers this year have included coordinating onboard Covid vaccinations, running shopping errands for crews who can't leave their ships, leading memorial services for seafarers who have passed while at sea, and simply providing a ministry of presence and a listening ear to the people we meet. I want to share with you a few photos from my experiences this year, which tell a bigger story than words can on their own.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JULIA COOPER

Top left: Jan 13, 2022 – The crewmembers of the GSL MYNY proudly show off their bandaids and new vax cards.

Bottom left: Two container ships at the Port of Seattle.

Bottom middle: Dec 7, 2021 – Chocolate delivery to the MSC Monterey (a very commonly requested item).

Top right: Jan 13, 2022 – Deacon Joey and I drive crewmembers of the GSL MYNY to a health clinic in Puyallup, to receive their first Covid vaccinations. (Can you tell they're excited?)

Middle right: March 3, 2022 – Deacon Joey leads a belated Ash Wednesday and communion service for Catholic crewmembers on the Catalina.

Bottom right: Feb 3, 2022 – The whole crew of the Federal Iris gathers in their lounge room to receive holiday gift bags from our Seafarers' Center.

Lenten Reflection

WRITTEN BY EMILY MORGAN

As we move through Lent this year, I have been meditating on a quote attributed to Saint John of the Cross: "God's first language is silence." This quote has always struck me as a very honest expression of the way we know God—but hasn't always been what I've wanted to hear. It can be tempting, especially for me, to be always on the move, seeking God out in a new place, or a new practice, or a new person.

But sometimes, perhaps even most times, the easiest way for me to find God is to remember that He is always with me, and to stop searching. Like many aspects of faith, it is paradoxical. It is at once both difficult and simple to first acknowledge God's silence, and then to accept it. And like many aspects of faith, it is ultimately rewarding. The season of Lent provides an opportunity for me to put away some of the noise and distractions of everyday life, and to attempt to find contentment in the silence of God.

For my personal Lenten practice, I've taken up morning prayer from the daily office. It is a simple way for me to show up as myself every day, to fall into the repetition of familiar prayers, and to get used to the presence of God without necessarily expecting an answer. It also provides an opportunity for reflection on the many ways God silently shows up in my life—places I might never have seen God in had I not taken the chance to slow down.

I see God every day in the community we have built here at the Seattle Service Corps. I don't need to go looking for God, because He is right there in the communal meal the corps members cook and share together each week. I don't need to demand answers from God, because He is there in the work of justice the corps members do in our communities. God's first language is silence, and it is when I recognize the presence of God in that silence that I can truly value the foundation that Christ provides for the intentional community we have built this year, and in the love we give one another.

Seattle Service Corps and Justice

WRITTEN BY LINDSAY BELL

As I'm writing this, I just finished speaking at a panel on young adults and climate justice at the Diocese of Olympia's faith formation conference, Better Together. I get hyped up every time I get to talk about the church's role in environmental justice. I work at Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light (EM/WAIPL), helping people transform their faith values into action for the environment through advocacy and congregational life. My work at EM/WAIPL has shown me that there is a special power in the intersection of faith and environmental justice. Working for environmental justice can feel hopeless and I can get stuck in "the doom spiral" of fear and despair, but when I connect my work with my faith, I'm motivated by my sense of sacred responsibility to Creation rather than my fear.

I'm so thankful that this program gives me the space to explore the intersection of faith, service, and justice in a community of people who all believe in a just and loving God. Through my work at EM/WAIPL, readings on abolitionist philosophy and liberation theology, artwork about radical imaginations, and honest conversations with the rest of the corps, God has been weaving together an image of what hope could look like for me. I find hope in imagining radically different futures for our world, futures without systems of power governed by violence, greed, and oppression. I find hope in working towards that just future now, committing to the long-term work of transformative justice.

Life in intentional community has shown me just how important it is to do this work in community. In any long-term fight for justice, we have to be reminded that we're not alone in the work and surround ourselves with people that understand our "why." The church has brought me into those communities of deeply passionate and committed people who share in that sacred responsibility and find hope in our fights for justice. God calls us to live together, fight together, and hope together, in the most unexpected of places.

Breaking Bread Together

WRITTEN BY SOPHIA GREENBERG

Growing up in a tight-knit family, sitting down for family dinner with my mom, dad, and brother was a constant in my life for years. Even though we lived together and saw one another every day, gathering at the table served as an intentional touchstone when we stopped orbiting around one another and paused to gather all in one place.

I've found the same feelings of closeness and togetherness during our every-Thursday community dinners. Sitting around our table, breaking bread, and sharing a delicious homemade meal is a grounding, life-giving practice that we decided to commit to in August and have kept up through the present. No matter how busy our weeks are, we gather on Thursdays for dinner. It's a comfort to me knowing that we have this time together, committed to our community, regardless of the ever-changing landscapes of the rest of our lives.

Thursday dinner also serves as a consistent opportunity to be light and ridiculous with one another. Our Formation Fridays can be intense, including theological reflections on challenging Bible passages or explorations or injustices in the Church and in the world. But we have the opportunity to begin each Friday carrying our Thursday night fellowship, reminded of our deep love and respect for one another, reminded that each of us is human and carrying the week with us. From our careful choosing of a recipe accommodating our groups' multitude of dietary restrictions to our prep-cooking dance parties to our drawn-out conversations about utter nonsense long after the last bites have been taken, we end our Thursdays closer and more deeply in community with each other than we start them.

Some of my favorite meals that we have gathered over together have been: homemade pizza, Mediterranean rice bowls, Bibimbap, and butternut squash soup. Those dishes, delicious in their own right, are wrapped in memories of collaboration, laughter, and stories from childhood shared during our time together this year. These sacred shared meals have nourished my body, my spirit, my relationships with my five housemates, and my relationship with the Divine.