



# Turning Point

## *St. Francis of Assisi Peace Prayer (Amended)*

Lord, you make me a means of your peace.  
 Where there is hatred, through me you bring love.  
 Where there is injury, pardon;  
 Where there is discord, union;  
 Where there is doubt, faith;  
 Where there is despair, hope;  
 Where there is darkness, light;  
 Where there is sadness, joy.  
 O Divine One,  
 You grant me to console, and accept being consoled;  
 To understand and accept being understood;  
 To love and accept being loved;  
 For it is in giving that we receive;  
 In receiving that we give;  
 In pardoning that we are pardoned;  
 And in dying to self that we are born to momentous new life.

*The Rev. Ken Kinnett, Dec. 2005*



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# Turning Point

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## *Interview with* **Bill Jamieson**

**W**hen Bennett Sims retired as President and Founder of the Institute for Servant Leadership in 1995, Bill Jamieson succeeded him as President until his own retirement in 2004. Bill's extraordinary gifts lay in the emerging field of spiritual formation and, riding the crest of that cultural wave, he led the Institute deep into a whole new arena. We all have much to be grateful for in his inspired leadership and Turning Point thought you would enjoy reading his reflections on his ministry with ISL.

**Turning Point:** Tell us a little bit about your life prior to ISL

**Bill:** My work prior to ISL included leadership opportunities in government, church and business. I served two governors in three cabinet-level appointments in Arizona, and was part of the Carter administrations in Georgia and Washington, DC. In the business world, I founded, built, managed and sold a public affairs company (Jamieson/Gutierrez) in Phoenix, Arizona. While in Arizona I also served on five corporate boards, two of which were public companies and two of which were companies that I owned in Northern California. I served the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona as the Archdeacon just prior to moving to North Carolina, and taught courses in church leadership at the

Claremont School of Theology.

**T.P.:** When and how did you become acquainted with the Servant Leadership community?

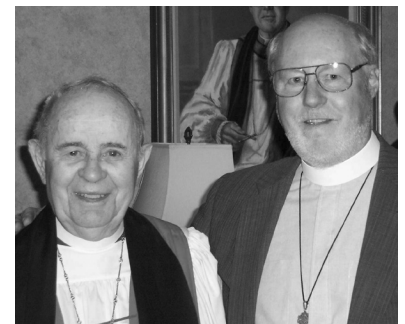
**Bill:** Bennett and I met in the early 1970s, and stayed in touch over the years, so I watched with great interest as he built ISL from a concept into a premier center for leadership development and spiritual formation. I attended an ISL retreat in 1986 when the Institute was part of Emory University.

**T.P.:** What led to your Presidency?

**Bill:** Kennon and I decided that we were ready to leave Arizona in 1995, but we hadn't decided where we would go. In March of that year I visited my daughter in Raleigh and drove to Hendersonville to see Bennett and Mary Page. During that visit Bennett and Mary Page offered me the opportunity to join them as a volunteer full-time program assistant, and we moved to Asheville in October. After 18 months on the job ISL received a grant from the Lilly Foundation that paid my salary, and the board called me to the presidency when Bennett retired.

**T.P.:** What became your vision for ISL.

**Bill:** My vision for ISL is found in my conviction that servant leadership is not a management theory or leadership technique. Rather, it is a spiritual discipline



that is formed in the soul, nurtured by prayer, informed by the ministry of Jesus and lived out in community. It is not learned from books, lectures or seminars, but emerges from our Spirit center to guide our thoughts and activities. It is spawned by an inward change (a transformed heart) that is manifested outwardly in our lives by servant leadership, the essence of which is compassionate action.

**T.P.:** How did that play out in terms of programs?

**Bill:** Under Bennett's leadership the annual ISL conference was the Institute's primary program. It brought together people from across the USA to hear outstanding speakers and to discuss the application of servant leadership in their communities and workplaces. The annual conference continued during my tenure, but my emphasis was on small retreats and pilgrimages that focused on prayerful listening, reflection and community formation.

**T.P.:** Which programs were your favorites and why?

**Bill:** The pilgrimages, the Annual

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 and leadership  
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 who feel called to be  
 servant leaders.*

Desert Retreat and the Integration of the Spirit Life were my favorite programs. The pilgrimages lasted 14 days, the desert retreat was four days, and the Integration of the Spirit Life consisted of four four-day retreats during a two-year period. These were my favorites because they were small enough for participants to develop relationships, and long enough for those relationships to form. They all combined times of contemplative silence, learning and community conversation. Some of my most enduring relationships were formed with people who were regulars in those programs, and the participants were usually servant leader activists who had a burning passion to help make the world a more equitable and peaceful place.

**T.P.:** What was your happiest moment at ISL?

**Bill:** I had many happy moments, such as celebrating my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday with my spiritual community during the 2003 Desert Retreat; watching the formation of community during the first few days of a pilgrimage; sleeping under the stars in the Sinai Desert, and watching the desert sun rinse from the Red Sea; and being invited

to share in the transformational journeys of some special servant leaders.

**T.P.:** What was your most challenging moment at ISL?

**Bill:** My most challenging work involved trying to model servanthood as a way of leading ISL. All of my training in politics and business was aimed at managing a hierarchical organization that had a concentration of power and recognition at the top. A hierarchy, however, does not foster servanthood. I came to believe that for servant leadership to move from our mission statement to a way of organizational life, we needed to move from a structure that focused leadership on one person to a circle in which leadership was shared. I still hear criticism from some long-time ISL supporters that I should have put myself on center stage, but to do that would have violated my understanding of the basic principles of servant leadership.

**T.P.:** Where has the ISL experience led you in your life?

**Bill:** It transformed my views about leadership, fostered a deeper prayer life,

and gave me some lasting friendships.

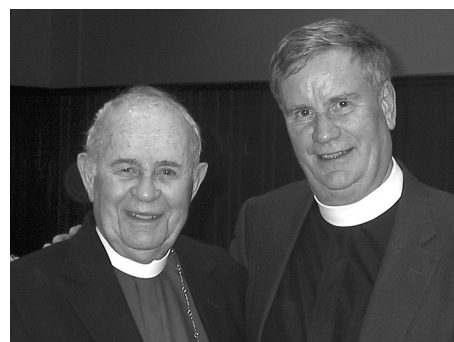
**T.P.:** Tell us about becoming a grandfather.

**Bill:** Being a granddaddy to three extraordinary children is a joy beyond words. But it has also had a major effect on my worldview. When I sit with one of those little ones in my lap I can't help but wonder about the world that my generation is leaving to them and their children. From national policies that bring us environmental degradation, to a declining commitment to public school excellence; from embracing violence as the first tool for solving international differences, to economic policies that are destroying the fabric of our nation. From sea to shining sea we are creating a legacy of decline that will dominate their life times. Being a granddaddy has given me a deep sense of urgency as I sense that my time and spheres of influence are declining.

**T.P.:** Thanks Bill for your reflections. Your contribution to the life and spiritual growth of the ISL community has been tremendous. I know many of our readers will be prompted to recall the special times they had with you over the years.

experience at the "Compassion" conference, so I won't go into detail here.

I am interested in whether you have ever had a comparable experience. In your memoirs there is a chapter entitled "The March on Washington." In the opening sentences of that chapter you write: "A single moment can be pivotal in a person's life. Such a moment can cancel an old way of seeing and start an inner pilgrimage that moves life in a new direction." That's exactly what happened to me at ground zero. In a split second I was liberated from fear of death and launched into a whole new way of being. As I have reflected on that experience, I have broken it down into a five-step process: liberation from self-concern, opening up to the "other," awakening to compassion, a concomitant sense of clarity about right and wrong, and a determination to act upon it. For me that sequence of internal shifts in my "way of seeing the world" led me to



volunteer as a night superintendent for the relief ministry with emergency workers that evolved at St. Paul's Chapel inside ground zero. That decision led me into the life-changing arena of servanthood.

Was your pilgrimage in Washington anything like that?

**BJS:** Well, your story is a very programmed sequence of insights that seem quite valid. I didn't have anything like that clarity of progression, but I can see that those are some of the ingredients of my experience.

**FBB:** They weren't that clear to me at the time either. It's all a matter of hindsight.

**BJS:** Let me tell you my story. It all started on August 28, 1963, when I was asked by the Diocese of Maryland to allow two bus loads of pilgrims to gather at my parish (Redeemer) in Baltimore prior to their departure to Washington, D.C. as participants in a mass protest against racial injustice under the leadership of The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. I wasn't deaf to the civil rights movement by any means. But on that pivotal day in Washington I was totally changed by the welling up of a personal compassion that I did not know was inside me.

By the time we entered the city from the northeast the buses had clustered four abreast, using both the inbound and outbound lanes. Police preparation had cleared New York Avenue of all traffic. The buses were a tidal wave of thundering vehicles, churning bumper to bumper through a black residential area. Scattered in clusters along the curbs were hosts of black children, all of them waving a welcome. Some of them even danced, the white flounces of the little girls dresses bouncing in the sun. Their faces were aglow, transfigured by joy.

As the bus rounded the corner of Fourth Street NW it grazed the curb and there, not ten feet from the bus window, against which I was pressed, stood a large black woman of middle years. The picture she made remains as vivid in my memory to this day as it was in 1963. She had her feet planted wide, her arms raised up and out in an expansive gesture of welcome, her head thrown back, her cheeks awash in tears, her face radiant in the noon sun. In that instant I knew that all the noble words we use in religion and in the defining documents of American freedom -- all the words about the equality and worth of every human person - in that instant I knew they were TRUE.

**FBB:** Those are precisely the sentiments that I had seconds after being released from fear of death. Instantly, I bonded with my colleagues in a circle of love and equality that will never be broken. Did you have any sense of liberation in that moment?

**BJS:** Yes, come to think of it, I was thrilled to be on that bus and transported by the joy of deliverance from a smothering prejudice that had imprisoned and stunted my soul for forty-three years. The secret of my release from prejudicial bondage, it now seems to me, lay in the unbidden moment of seeing deeply into another's soul.

**FBB:** As I was freed to see deeply into my colleagues souls.

**BJS:** I would have to say that turning that corner and seeing that woman in all the beauty of her black humanity, in exaltation, just transported by the joy of experiencing support and affirmation of her cause, because that's what it was, - those buses coming in - to affirm the rightness of the black crusade. I'm putting words to this experience now that I didn't think of at the time, but that was what it was. It was the recognition that here was an authentic person that I no longer could think of as black - and I remember thinking this - I could no longer think of blacks as my entertainers, my household servants, as babysitters for my little children, as old Matty who called our three children her 'pancake' kids [laughter]. In other words: an inferiority of station and purpose. That was all gone in a flash. In that black woman was the prophetic, liberated equivalent to myself, a real human being. And all the marks of suffering replaced by joy. Her own liberation was being acted out in her expressions and her tears and even her stance. Which was like this: Glory Alleluia! [arms thrown up in the air] She wasn't at church, she was at the curb, at the intersection of 4th Street NW and New York Avenue. God, that was a moment!

**FBB:** What was the phrase that you used earlier, that you were she and she was you? It was something like that.

**BJS:** Well, we were equally human and maybe I did say that. We were certainly color blind and I was as much liberated as she was. Ahhh, deeply moved. Will never be the same again. Never.

**FBB:** Yes.

**BJS:** I saw the radiance of her complete humanity, nothing subservient or inferior.

To me, she was my sister. I had full knowledge of her suffering and her joy. That's compassion

**FBB:** And out of that did a clear sense of purpose emerge?

**BJS:** Yes. Yes. It may have been that experience more than any other ingredient in that event, which was all day long, upon which I drew for the courage to make a stand: That we must honor the black person as having an equivalent value with us.

**FBB:** A few moments ago, when talking about the black woman's experience of liberation, you mentioned her exaltation. I think you said that her exaltation was part of what attracted you to her.

**BJS:** Yes.

**FBB:** And, then, I think you implied that the experience of liberation brings with it a sense of exaltation.

**BJS:** Yes, yes! That was certainly true of her. She was expressing freedom, you see. She was no longer a slave; she was no longer just an ordinary contemptible black woman. She was free. And this set of gestures was expressive in that dramatic way and her fear also seemed to be purged in the way she wept. Tears just streamed down her face. There was no holding back anything. Her insides were just pouring out and she was just so, so free! I sense that that is another expression of liberation, isn't it? I hadn't made that connection.

**FBB:** Yes, I think your right. So, there does seem to have been a striking resemblance between our two stories, our respective moments of liberation. You too experienced a liberation from an old way of seeing, an opening up to the "other," an awakening to compassion, a concomitant sense of clarity about right and wrong, and a determination to act upon it.

**BJS:** How true. I'm so glad that we've had this conversation and that I've gotten back in touch with that memory because that was a moment of spectacular liberation. I need to write this out because that was a life changing, value changing, and liberating moment.

## Exploring Liberation: A Dialogue with Bennett Sims

*On occasion Bennett Sims and I sit down to explore a topic of mutual concern. In the Fall 2005 issue, we discussed compassion. In this dialogue, we discussed a related issue: Liberation. As you will see in each of our stories, our experiences of liberation were accompanied by a deepening sense of compassion. With the author's permission portions of this text have been quoted directly from Bishop Sims' memoirs, **The Time of My Life**, to be published in May.*

**FBB:** Bennett, you will recall that during my near-death experience at ground zero on 9/11, I discovered that I was not afraid to die. That realization liberated me from fear and changed my life. It liberated me from an all-consuming preoccupation with my own welfare and opened me up to a whole new sense of compassion for and solidarity with my fellow human beings. I'm going to be talking about that