A Crossings Point of View by Michael G. Cartwright

Many of us yearn for opportunities to go on an adventure. Of course, not everything we experience in our daily lives gives us a thrill like ‘white water’ rafting can. Nor do all adventures take the same shape in space and time. Our desire for adventure is sometimes expressed in the way we wonder about our personal identity and/or vocation self-understanding. We live in anticipation that the mystery of who we are and what we are to do with our lives will be disclosed. We express that wonder in stories we tell about where we (or others) have gone and what we (or others) did along the way. In turn, our stories inspire others in journeys near and far.

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to re-read one of those classic adventure stories that I first read more than 35 years ago. Jules Verne’s book *Around the World in Eighty Days* was published in the 1870s. This novel tells the story about how the ordered daily routines of an English gentleman named Phileas Fogg were dramatically altered when he accepted a challenge to travel -- with his servant Passepartout -- around the world in a life-changing adventure. Although not explicitly about vocation, this adventure story narrates how each character in the novel discovers something important about his or her identity in the course of the journey. At the time that it was published, Verne’s tale caused a bit of a stir. In addition to its favorable portrayal of non-European cultures and peoples, Verne’s novel inspired the imaginations of many people in Europe and America about where their own journeys might take them.

I suspect that reading adventure stories like *Around the World in Eighty Days* may have sparked my lifelong interest in travel. It may even have contributed to my decision to take a semester off during my junior year in college to travel to Europe. Regardless, the two-and-a-half months that I traveled around Great Britain and the European Continent played an important role in my own vocational journey. Ironically, the trip began in Dec. 1977 with me declaring to a close friend that I was *not* going to “go into the ministry.” Less than three months later when I returned to the United States, I found that I had to acknowledge to myself and others that my resolve not to affirm a calling to ordained ministry had been premature. That recognition did not come, however, until after a (somewhat unconscious) “pilgrimage” that took me to Canterbury and London, Belfast and Londonderry, Paris and Berlin, Rome and Barcelona. Looking back on that particular adventure from the distance of more than 25 years, I can hardly believe that I was able to do it. Fortunately, I had friends and advisers who encouraged and inspired me as I pursued my quest for vocational self-understanding in the context of an eighty-day long adventure.

Making “Greyhound Adventures” funding available to full-time undergraduate students (see below) is but one of the ways that *The Crossings Project* is encouraging students to embrace the adventure of exploring their vocations. In the coming months, with the Crossings financial
assistance, students will journey to Taize France, Austria, and Guatemala for international travel and study. Meanwhile, others are exploring their vocations closer to home in the context of internships. For example, this semester, Laura Davies '07 is doing an internship with the Director of Outreach Ministries at Plainfield United Methodist Church. With financial assistance provided by a supplemental stipend from _The Crossings Project_, Laura will be exploring ways that her interests in business and marketing might converge with her vocation as a Christian. As students like Laura return to campus, they will have opportunities to share with one another about what they discovered about themselves and the world during their individual Greyhound Adventures. As you will see in the following pages, students are not the only folks at U Indy who are embarking on adventures. In some cases, these ventures are taking place with the assistance of Crossings Project funds. In other cases, faculty, staff, and students are pursuing their hopes and dreams in ways that go beyond the scope of _The Crossings Project_.

**PROJECT UPDATES**

**Meetings and Consultations:** Advisory Board met on Sept. 24th to review the changes in the Christian Vocations curriculum as well as to discuss plans for Crossings mentoring initiatives. . . . That same week, the Executive Director and the staff of the Office of Ecumenical & Interfaith Programs participated in a consultation with David Wood to discuss the Residency-in-Ministry program. . . . The Steering Committee met for lunch on four occasions (2nd Friday of each month at lunchtime) during the fall semester. Much of our time was spent discussing prospects for raising funds to extend and/or sustain the Crossings Project.

**Guest Speakers:** On Dec. 6, _The Crossings Project_ and the Office of Ecumenical & Interfaith Programs hosted Dr. Vanessa Ochs from the University of Virginia for a two-day visit. She read from her book _Sarah Laughed_ and reflected about her sense of vocation as a Jewish woman who is drawn to Torah study, and the ways that she has been affirmed and encouraged as she has taken on non-traditional roles within Conservative Jewish synagogues and communities. . . . While visiting Indianapolis, Dr. Ochs met with the Women’s Triadogue group, a gathering of Christian, Muslim and Jewish women from the Indianapolis area who meet regularly to discuss their lives and commitments. . . . Ochs also met with a group of faculty and staff who read her work during the fall semester. OT Interim Dean Candy Beitman and Nursing instructor Cheryl Larson led discussions of Ochs’ books _Words on Fire_ and _Sarah Laughed_. Earlier in the fall, we were pleased to host a visit to our campus by Dr. Renita Weems who discussed her own vocational journey with faculty, staff, and students in conjunction with the 2004 Spirit & Place Festival theme of “Building & Belonging.”

**Sailing Our Vessel Conversations:** In his September convocation address, President Israel told his own kind of adventure story as he called upon the faculty, staff and students at U Indy to engage in a year-long conversation about the present and future of the University of Indianapolis. Using his own recent experience of whitewater rafting as an example, Jerry challenged the U Indy community of learning to prepare to “take out” in order to reflect on the “ride” that we have taken together during the past five years as we have executed the strategic plan.

President Israel asked Dean Michael Cartwright to lead this effort. The Steering Committee of The Crossings Project agreed that this venture converges with our own efforts to enrich the culture of Education for Service on this campus through fostering conversations about vocation. The Sailing Our Vessel Conversations are partially supported by funds from the Lilly Grant. Cartwright and several members of the Steering Committee of _The Crossings Project_ have been very involved in the planning process.
During the fall semester, three conversations took place. The International Division has sponsored a conversation about “The Present and Future of U Indy as an International University” (Oct. 8). The School for Adult Learning led a conversation about “Learning with Non-Traditional Students” (Nov. 18). The Student Affairs Division hosted a student leadership conference on “Cruising Our Waters” for traditional age students (Dec. 4).

Our most recent conversation occurred on the afternoon of January 27 when a group of 65-70 faculty, staff and students gathered in Recital Hall of Good Hall to discuss “Learning & Teaching I: The Future of the Liberal Arts” at the University of Indianapolis. On that occasion, a panel offered several different perspectives before the company divided into smaller groups for further discussion. Later, these “breakout sessions” reported the results of their discussions before everyone enjoyed a Victorian tea.

Participants in SOV Conversation #4 also encountered a guest from the past. President J. T. Roberts (played by U Indy faculty member Jim Ream) entered the room and talked about what he and his colleagues were doing and thinking in 1906 at Indiana Central College. This “living history” demonstration also displayed the work that Dr. Samantha Meigs and Dr. Jim Fuller are doing in a project funded by the Institute for Emerging Careers do develop applied history internships in museums.

Like the three preceding conversations, SOV Conversation #4 opened up issues for further discussion. What is the relationship between the liberal arts curriculum and the pre-professional programs? How does this tradition of inquiry enable students to engage the world in which they live? That gathering also revealed that there is more faculty consensus about these matters than some might think.

Three more conversations are planned. “Learning & Teaching II: The Future of the Professional Schools” will take place on the afternoon of Wednesday March 2nd. “Learning & Teaching III: The Challenges and Opportunities of the Twenty-First Century” is scheduled for Monday afternoon April 4th. The seventh conversation, to occur on Thursday April 28th, will revisit the university’s missional motto of “Education for Service.”

U Indy students are participating as well. An undergraduate seminar this semester on “The Present and Future of U Indy” led by Micah Weedman and Dan Stoker is providing an opportunity for students to put together a proposal that will be presented at SOV Conversation #7.

The Closing Symposium for the Sailing Our Vessel Conversations is scheduled for the afternoon of May 13, 2005. At that time, the results of the yearlong conversation will be presented to outgoing President Jerry Israel and another set will be presented to his successor (if it is possible for that person to be present for the occasion).

Crossing Thresholds: Through its Theological Explorations Initiative, The Crossings Project has provided funding for several student internships during the 2004-2005 academic year. Anthony Stone completed a one-semester Christian Ministries Internship in the Office of Ecumenical & Interfaith Programs during the fall semester. . . . Three students are serving as Chapel Stewards during second semester: Heather Foltz is the Chapel Steward for Worship, Laurel Curts is Chapel Steward for Justice. Hannah Corbin is Chapel Steward for Devotion. . . .

After receiving approval from the Religion Division of Lilly Endowment for changes in the budget, the Executive Director and Steering Committee announced the availability of $20,000 in funding for (full-time undergraduate) student ventures in vocation exploration and service
learning for the 2004-2005 academic year. Like the Vocare funds, which are available to faculty and staff of the university for personal vocational exploration, the “Greyhound Adventures” funds are available on a rolling basis until the money allocated for each year has been spent. During the first three months that this program has been in operation, we have received 21 applications for funds. Thus far, 17 requests have been approved for funding and more than $12,000 has been awarded to students for endeavors related to their vocational exploration.

Crossing Intersections for Service: Another way that we encourage faculty and staff to take action in the context of their own vocational journeys is the EduServ Faculty and Staff Mini-grant program. During Semester I, Toni Peabody completed the project for which she received an EduServ mini-grant. The students who took the course that Toni offered in the School for Adult Learning on the topic of Faith-Based Social Service Agencies had rave reviews. The School for Adult Learning is already making plans to offer the course again. Toni is on sabbatical this semester (her first ever). Shortly, she will be departing for Costa Rica where she will spend the semester in service as well as learning about the language and culture of that Central American country. We also look forward to hearing about Toni’s adventures when she returns to campus next fall.

Two more Faculty & Staff Mini-grants were awarded this fall. Assistant Prof. Jeff Bryant and Admissions Counselor Marylynne Winslow will be leading a work project to Upper Sand Mountain in Alabama during Spring Break where they and a group of students will repair homes. A group of faculty and staff from the School of Nursing led by Cheryl Larson was also awarded $15,000 to carry out a year-long project that will emphasize giving and receiving hospitality with nursing students in Martin Hall. This is the largest grant that has been awarded. At its December meeting, the Steering Committee decided to extend funding for the EduServ Mini-Grants through Semester II. Beyond that we are not sure whether funds will be available for projects to be undertaken in 2006.

African-American Christian Spirituality: As noted in our last newsletter, another way that The Crossings Project is encouraging theological reflection about vocation is by funding an ongoing series of conversations about the African American tradition of Christian Spirituality that will be held on our campus over the next two years. This series of gatherings will begin with The Showers Lectures for 2005 (Feb. 22), which will be on the topic of “African-American Christian Spirituality: Claiming the Heritage, Exploring the Promise.”
On the following day, the university will host the inaugural Gathering of the African-American Sages. The guest sage for this Feb. 23rd event will be the Rev. Dr. Abena Safiya Fosua, Director of Invitational Preaching for the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church in Nashville. She will lead those gathered in a conversation about “Living with Contradiction: A Second Look at African American Spirituality.”

“Sankofa” is a West African concept that means in order to move forward you must look back. That way of thinking has informed our planning for the series of Gatherings of African-American Sages that the University will be hosting (twice a year) for the next few years. The University commissioned Ms. Elizabeth Freeman to create the Sankofa Banner (see enclosed poster) that will be used during the Gatherings of the African American Sages. The close juxtaposition of the continents of North America and Africa convey the focus of memory that lies at the heart of African-American Spirituality. The adinkra bird with its neck turned back images the spirit of Sankofa, and the circle of people holding hands provides an image of the diaspora. The banner will be unveiled at the dinner between the Showers Lectures on Feb. 22.

The Crossings Project will also be collaborating with two Indy-area congregations to help sponsor The Great Banquet, an interracial celebration that will take place at each of the subsequent Gatherings of African American Sages. The administrative council of Greenwood United Methodist Church agreed to provide one of the hospitality teams. More recently, the pastor of Barnes United Methodist Church met with Dean Cartwright and Chaplain Brownlee to discuss this matter, and his congregation has also agreed to participate in this venture.

Due to various scheduling conflicts, the African-American Christian Ministries Needs Assessment that was scheduled for Semester I had to be postponed to this semester. The findings will be presented at a Consultation that has been scheduled for Saturday April 2.

Update on Funding for Extension of The Crossings Project: In early January, President Jerry Israel and Executive Director Michael G. Cartwright received a letter from Christopher Coble at Lilly Endowment inviting the University of Indianapolis to apply for a supplemental grant from the Religion Division for up to $500,000 for as long as three years to extend the work of The Crossings Project. In addition to the requirement that applications for continued funding provide a plan for how the programs will be sustained following the end of the extension grant, the “request for proposals” stipulates that the University be able to match the amount of money that we would seek from Lilly Endowment for the period of the extension.

The Steering Committee has not yet had an opportunity to discuss this matter in a formal way, but in due course those discussions will take place. In the meantime, Dean Cartwright and Sr. Jennifer Horner, the Director of the Lantz Center for Christian Vocations, will be working together in the coming weeks to begin planning. This latest grant opportunity could result in more opportunities for “Greyhound Adventures” in theological exploration of vocation from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2009.
The Crossings Calendar

1/27  *Sailing Our Vessel Conversation #4: “Learning & Teaching I: The Future of the Liberal Arts at U Indy.”*

2/4-2/5  M. Cartwright leads vocation retreat for Georgetown College faculty
2/11  Monthly Crossings Project Steering Committee Meeting
2/18-2/19  M. Cartwright participates in Ekklesia Project Board Meeting
2/22  Showers Lectures on African-American Christian Spirituality
2/23  Inaugural Gathering of the African-American Sages

3/2  *Sailing Our Vessel Conversation #5, “Learning & Teaching II --The Future of the Professional Schools”*

3/11  Monthly Crossings Project Steering Committee Meeting
3/12  EduServ Retreat for University Staff to be led by M.Cartwright

3/18  **Deadline for applications: 6th round of Faculty/Staff Mini-grants**

4/2  African-American Christian Ministries Consultation at U Indy

4/4  *Sailing Our Vessel Conversation #6: “Learning & Teaching III: Challenges and Opportunities of the 21st Century.”*

4/9-4/10  M. Cartwright participates in National Network Board Meeting for the Lilly Fellows Network of Church-Related Colleges & Universities
4/15  Monthly Crossings Project Steering Committee Meeting

4/21  *Sailing Our Vessel Conversation. #7: “What Are We Here For? The Mission of ‘Education for Service’ Revisited”*

5/12-5/24  Taize Pilgrimage led by Lang Brownlee and Sr. Jennifer Horner

5/13  **Sailing Our Vessel Closing Symposium, 3-5 p. m. in SC-Atrium**

5/27  End of the Year Review and Assessment: Steering Committee Meeting

6/30  Deadline for applications to be submitted to the Religion Division of Lilly Endowment, Inc for Programs for Theological Exploration and Vocation Initiative Extension and Sustaining Grants.