

*PREFACE*

**A REFLECTION ON THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF PRAYER**

In the pages which follow, I offer a short history of the first two decades of the House of Prayer. Full transcripts of the interviews I conducted will form a permanent archive housed at Saint John's University. For those who look into these archives later, these twenty years will represent the founding period of the House of Prayer: from Bishop Bob Anderson's vision, to the lay leadership of people like Joyce McFarland and Bill Franklin, through David Keller's stewardship and the construction of the Oratory. There is so much passion and integrity in this archive. It is full of inspiring stories and insights. I would not characterize this report as a summary so much as an outline and a glimpse into some of your collective wisdom. By way of introduction and background, I would offer some personal reflections on how this story has surprised and enlightened me in the process of listening.

The history of the House of Prayer is a remarkable story, full of drama and the evident movement of the Spirit. It is the legacy of a collection of faithful people who, in the late 1970's and early 1980's, became aware of a spiritual hunger in themselves and in the world around them. They were lay and ordained, academic and monastic; in other words, they represented a broad sweep of the experience of the life of the Church. By the close of the Twentieth Century, "spirituality" would be everywhere in our culture. But back in 1980, mostly communities of the Roman Catholic tradition had notably sustained and nurtured the contemplative dimension of Christianity. Those rare Episcopalians who had ventured on retreat usually did so at Catholic centers.

Historically, the Diocese of Minnesota was a "low-church" Diocese, not especially Catholic in its outlook, more liberal, even evangelical. And there was no great emotion within this Diocese – as there is in England, for example -- around relations with the Roman church. Bishop Bob Anderson, who came here as a young bishop in 1978, was

not a very orthodox bishop. He was theologically quite liberal. But at the same time, he was an unusually spiritual person. And within two years of arriving in Minnesota -- feeling stretched thin as a man and priest by the huge responsibilities of being a bishop -- his personal sense of need for complementary sources of spiritual renewal within the life of the Church grew urgent.

Through a series of coincidences -- and I subscribe to the definition of "coincidence" that sees "God working anonymously"-- Bob Anderson was pointed in the direction of Saint John's Abbey. And for the rest of his Episcopate he led the Diocese of Minnesota in what was essentially a journey of rediscovery of its own deepest spiritual moorings. Early British Christianity was Celtic, semi-monastic, and abbey-based. The Romans who were sent by Pope Gregory the Great to integrate the British Isles into the Catholic Church were Benedictine. And the Book of Common Prayer -- which may be Anglicanism's greatest contribution to Christianity as a whole -- was modeled after the monastic cycle of daily prayer, as epitomized in the Benedictine tradition.

And so a vision arose, and became embodied in a network of people and advanced by all of their gifts -- a vision that would link the Diocese to the spiritual strengths of Saint John's Abbey and University and become a center of renewal for the church.

There is a great beauty and a faithful paradox, running throughout this story, in how ancient traditions resurface to meet modern hungers; and also in how modern insights can enliven and continually renew ancient practices. The House of Prayer movement was visionary, ahead of its time, on several levels. It not only predicted and named the spiritual longing that would gain momentum in our society, but it grounded its response to that longing in a "sense of place" with depth and integrity and a long view of time. Modern seekers are less organically connected and loyal to institutions, including religious institutions, than any generation before them in American life -- indeed to a degree which would have been shocking to previous generations. Yet the initial burst of free-floating spirituality in our society, the New Age of the 1980's, is largely maturing

into a rediscovery of the beauty of ritual and the necessity of tradition – insights which the founders of the House of Prayer grasped 20 years ago.

The wisdom of Bill Franklin is helpful in bringing the House of Prayer's other accomplishments into perspective. At the time of the founding of House of Prayer, he was a faculty member at Saint John's University; at the time of this writing, he is Dean of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale and a leading authority on international Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. A great thinker and scholar, Bill Franklin became passionate about the fitting notion of an Anglican spirituality center connected to a university, infused with the life of the mind. He appreciated the "monastic" demeanor of the House of Prayer as a reminder of Anglicanism's own monastic roots and thus a chance for Episcopalians in this Diocese to reclaim some of their own spiritual heritage. At the same time, he believed that an Anglican presence on the grounds of the Abbey would support the Abbey in living into a piece of its own heritage as a beacon of liberal Catholic tradition. The House of Prayer came into being during a time of ecumenical energy and openness between Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism, especially within the community of Saint John's Abbey. As that has waned, Bill Franklin insists, the House of Prayer stands as a witness for the whole Church as a place in which common prayer, and living relationship between our two churches, is institutionalized.

The oral history conversations gave expression to a number of creative, holy tensions into which the House of Prayer lives and grows. Some of these are explored in the pages which follow. The House of Prayer is a "ministry" of the Diocese yet independent of the Diocese. It is supportive of parish churches, and yet it offers a distinct experience, complementary to parish life. It is an Anglican place with an Anglican foundation, and yet like the larger Church itself, it grows inwardly more ecumenical as time passes, in its program and its governance and its guests. There is affirmation to be found for this, as well as guidance, in the earliest statements of values and goals of the earliest leadership of the House of Prayer – a sense that within itself, Anglicanism embraces many questions and many answers, and offers deep soil in which to ground and explore these by way of common prayer, faith, liturgy, and learning. Now as in the beginning, those who love

and lead the House of Prayer desire it to become known by a greater number of people and parishes. This impulse towards outreach resides in holy tension with the “grace of smallness,” as David Keller puts it: the realization, which has evolved over time, that part of the House of Prayer’s power resides in its intimate size. In this regard as well, the wisdom of the founders may be instructive in the present.

Twenty years after its inception as a dream and a decade after its construction, the House of Prayer is an essential, organic part of the life of faith in this Diocese. Bob Anderson’s successor, Jim Jelinek, calls it the greatest gift of his predecessor, and he himself was consecrated bishop at Saint John’s Abbey. Lives have been changed here, and God’s voice has been heard. By its very existence, the House of Prayer adds depth to our common life as Episcopalians and increasingly to other Christians in Minnesota. It nourishes and instructs the wider contemplative movement and stands as a spiritual and ecumenical witness in the life of the larger Church. The founders of this place, as well as all of its leaders past and present, have much to celebrate. I am struck by the integrity of this place in prayer, discernment, and practice from its inception to the present day, and by how the original vision and purpose statements have come to be so profoundly validated in experience. The process of listening to this story, and helping to draw it out, has been an inspiration and a delight.

Krista Weedman Tippet

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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## IN THE BEGINNING

In the early letters and planning documents for what eventually became the House of Prayer, it was often referred to simply as “the Dream.” The dream was for a place apart to explore and satisfy a deep spiritual longing – a longing which had surely always been present, but which seemed to be rising to the surface as life in the late 20th Century became ever more fraught. Robert Anderson, the Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota who shepherded the House of Prayer into being, would write: “In recent years I sensed within me and within the institutional church a priority need for basic spiritual nourishment. Not a spiritual need that calls us away from all the complexities but rather helps us to truly understand the great rhythm of life – the breathing in of the Holy Spirit and the breathing out of the Holy Spirit – the dynamic relationship between our prayer life and social justice.”

The House of Prayer began to take shape first as a vision in the mind of Bob Anderson. It was planted there indirectly by a non-Minnesotan, Loren Mead, the founder of the ecumenical Alban Institute, a national think tank for the church. Bob Anderson had a problem, not a spiritual problem so much as a practical and an ecclesiastical one. He had arrived in Minnesota in 1978 as one of the youngest bishops ever in the Episcopal church, and found that his episcopate was a little bit larger – as he would once quip to an English bishop – than England and Wales. He needed help; he needed an assistant bishop to serve parishes in regions beyond the Twin Cities. Loren Mead, whose counsel the bishop sought during a clergy gathering in Virginia, arrived at a restaurant to meet him bearing a map of Minnesota. “I have never been to your state and literally know nothing about it,” Mead said, “but I have studied a map and I have a challenge for you! Do you realize that Collegeville is almost dead center geographically in Minnesota and that it holds a treasure – the most

“I was one of many people feeling the same thing -- but I think I felt it in spades because my job was so fractured and I was spread so thin. It was sort of a desperate need to be in touch with God in a different way. And in the prayer book there are two prayers that sit on page 833 that have enormously influenced my life. One of them is probably the most contemplative prayer in the book: “Oh, God of peace, you have taught us that in returning and rest, we shall be saved, and in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength.” That prayer alongside of the one that came from Cardinal Henry Newman, when he was an Anglican: “Oh, Lord, you support us all the day long until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over...” Those two prayers – their sheer presence in the book-- made me think there’s another world that I’m not in touch with, that I need to tap into, there are roots there, there is nourishment there, that I’m not getting.”

- Bishop Bob Anderson

exciting Roman Catholic Benedictine community in the world? Why don't you place your assistant bishop there?"

"I knew that the inner life, the inner core of liturgy, the inner core of doctrine, the inner core of the Church, was crying out for some kind of wellspring that was not being seen everywhere. And I wasn't alone, because all over the country these movements were going on, and all over the world. And I just felt it was a gift (to begin to understand this) and I'm sure the Abbot felt the same way."

- Bishop Bob Anderson

Bishop Dimmick living here (at Saint John's)... was quite marvelous. First of all, it seemed such a daring thing for him to do. And I think it got us a little more accustomed to the notion of some kind of real relationship – not just to the project, but to the Episcopal Church, really feeling comfortable. I suspect that without ever saying a word about it, he did that with his presence."

- Hilary Thimmesh, OSB

When Bishop Anderson returned to Minnesota, he contacted Abbot Jerome Theisen of Saint John's, who would later become Abbot Primate of all Benedictines in Rome. The two men met for lunch at the Minneapolis Club, and within an hour of his first lunch with Abbot Jerome, Bishop Anderson later wrote, "a spiritual door was opened for both of us." From that moment, the two men began to probe common spiritual groundings and questions and to ponder together a deeper bond between their communities.

That bond was indeed initially made incarnate in the shape of an Episcopal bishop in residence at Saint John's, an event which planted a first piece of the Diocese of Minnesota in Collegeville and, just as significantly, expanded the Abbey imagination with an Anglican presence. Bill Dimmick was a charming, eccentric southerner who had been serving in the "Siberian" climate of northern Michigan. Aging and in declining health, he was ready to retire as a full-time bishop. He had a strong interest in monasticism and had even worked closely with an Episcopal Benedictine community in Three Rivers, Michigan. In 1981, he moved into an apartment at the Ecumenical Institute, down the road from where the House of Prayer now stands, and stayed in residence in Collegeville for two years. This was the first time a non-Catholic bishop had been in residence and in on-going common prayer with the Saint John's community.

Although Bill Dimmick had no direct role in the founding of the House of Prayer, he does in hindsight appear as of those "incidental" figures through which God moves purposefully behind the scenes and between the lines. As Bob Anderson became interested in Saint John's Abbey, the

priest at the local Episcopal parish, George Richmond, introduced him to Bill Franklin, a Harvard-educated Episcopal historian on the faculty at Saint John's University. Bishop Anderson asked Bill Franklin to help him interview fellow southerner Bill Dimmick. Soon Bill Franklin became an impassioned advocate for the vision of an Episcopal "spirituality center" based at Saint John's.

Bill Franklin was a historian and chair of an innovative project at Saint John's, the Christian Humanism Project. A beloved member of the Saint John's faculty, his charismatic Anglican intellect was highly valued. Among Bill Franklin's contemporaries were Dietrich Reinhart, who would later become the president of Saint John's University, and who had focused in his studies on 17th Century Anglicanism and was instrumental in placing the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal in the Abbey pews. Columba Stewart, a monk of the abbey, had studied the founder of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, an Episcopal Benedictine monastic order. "In terms of leaders of the Saint John's community," Bill Franklin reflects now, "you had a more positive attitude towards Anglicanism than any other in our nation."

Columba Stewart says that as rare kind of "intimate outsider," Bill Franklin contributed immeasurably to the life of Saint John's. "He was able to see things in us and articulate things about us which were harder for us to do but were terribly important." For Bill Franklin, Saint John's Abbey embodied important elements of "liberal Catholicism" which had been affirmed by Vatican II and then called into question by some of the turmoil of the post-Vatican II years. And Anglicanism, he believed, also embodied important dimensions both of its Benedictine heritage and of the potential for a liberal Catholic Church. In those early days of "the dream" of an Episcopal Center, the late Michael Marx, a professor in the School of Theology and managing editor of *Worship Magazine*, would link

I think that the Anglican-Roman Catholic relationship has cooled very much the longer John Paul II has been pope. And intellectually and emotionally -- there's just not this movement towards the reconciliation of our churches that there was at that period. (The House of Prayer) happened because an emotional, spiritual, heart community was built up between the monastery and the diocese. I'm not sure you have the environment today that would allow that to happen. It's a sort of miracle that this happened at that moment -- and now that you have the institutional link, those relationships will not be broken.

- Bill Franklin

visiting Episcopalians to people in the Abbey community by hosting “famous lunches” in the Abbey Guest Room. “He would set the topic,” Bill Franklin remembers, “and it would always be something like, *Should a Woman be Pope?* That was a symbol, and relationships were built out of these lunches.”

“Bill Franklin was so beloved and so competent. He loved his place where he was teaching so much that he would give us tours and take us through the halls of the university as well as the monastic community and show us the bricks and mortar. The wonderful use of old materials that they had recycled and put into that place was absolutely enchanting. And the love that Bill had for Saint John’s was translated for the rest of us and we all became absolute disciples of whatever was going to be, at that point. I’m not even sure that we knew where the piece of land was, nor was that terribly important. We were just getting familiar with Saint John’s and the possibilities.”

- Joyce McFarland

Bill Franklin, who was not only a parishioner but the organist at St. John’s, St. Cloud, came to serve as a bridge also between Collegeville and the Diocese. Bill Franklin’s love of Saint John’s – and his ability to communicate the theological and historical import of a link between the Benedictines and Episcopalians – in turn began to set a few lay people on fire.

One of those people was Joyce McFarland. In her own life she was becoming aware of a “spiritual yearning” in herself and those around her which could not be completely satisfied by the institutional church. Following this yearning, she had begun training as one of the pioneering lay (and non-Catholic) Christians to become a certified spiritual director. Her passion, which would translate the vision of the House of Prayer to the widest possible audience, was for claiming the necessity of the fullness of spiritual growth not just for religious professionals but for the laity. “The last part of the century when we were trying to see how practically we could realize the House of Prayer,” she says, “was also a time we were beginning to recognize that we couldn’t separate life, business, politics over here and spirituality over there, but indeed needed a cohesion of them all.” Joyce McFarland was a deeply rooted Episcopalian and at the same time, like many Episcopalians, she possessed a strong intuitive ecumenical bent. She was also becoming involved in Collegeville as a new board member of the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research. But she was only beginning to learn about the Benedictines. She accepted an invitation from Bishop Anderson to be part of a delegation to have a look



at Saint John's, with a mind to possibly establishing an Episcopal link there. And she was captured by one of Bill Franklin's famous tours of the place.

Knowing a bit about retreat work, as Joyce did from her spiritual direction training, she believed that the Diocese could never run and sustain a retreat center over the long haul without a larger, stable tradition of prayer and hospitality undergirding it. And she, like many others, became fascinated by the leading role Saint John's Abbey and University played in so many areas of the life of the Church, from liturgy to ecumenism. In the 1980's, several remarkable institutions, pioneered on the same grounds the House of Prayer would inhabit, were just coming into maturity: the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, the Jay Phillips Center for Jewish-Christian Studies, Minnesota Public Radio. "So that whole monastic tradition, that whole Benedictine piece," Joyce McFarland says, "became critically important to me...It was a place apart, and yet vitally alive."

And so the early leadership of the dream -- which first named itself the Spirituality Center, and later the "Episcopal Center/Collegeville" -- was shared leadership, and the power of this early "communion of saints" lay not only in the personal integrity of those involved, but also in the way they spanned the layers of the life of the church: Bob Anderson, a Bishop developing and embodying the vision at the head of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota and also through his friendship with Abbot Jerome Theisen; George Richmond, the priest at St. John's Episcopal Church, St. Cloud, who championed the dream from the beginning and who would work steadily to develop the program and draw other clergy into the project; Bill Franklin, keeping both Saint John's and his fellow Episcopalians mindful of the importance and possibilities of this new relationship; and Joyce McFarland, a committed layperson and skilled organizer on the ground,

"The whole liturgical structure of the Episcopal Church -- outside of the Eucharist -- comes from the monastic or the Benedictine tradition. And so we became aware of that, or reminded of it, and we could see in some respects a church tradition that was more in tune with us than the Catholic church... Evensong, which is not celebrated in any Catholic cathedral in the United States, is celebrated in Benedictine monasteries and Episcopal churches. So we discovered a real kinship, that's been there, that you inherited from us."

- Eric Hollas, OSB

attending to the practical details of making the vision a reality, while profoundly honoring the spiritual dimension of the task at hand.

These four of the founding generation are repeatedly singled out in the oral history conversations, but there were many other visionary figures and leaders as the dream burgeoned into a grassroots movement. This was truly a project in which the “gifts for ministry” of all found a place. The list of people interviewed for the oral history project is but a partial list of the communion of saints of the life, thus far, of the House of Prayer.

“It really was a team effort... So I think when people sat down to write mission statements and draw up specific plans, they had lived the idea for so long that it just flowed. It just sort of bubbled up out of people. It had really become enfleshed in community.

– Bill Franklin

And even in its inception as a vision – before it was an institution or a building or really a place – the House of Prayer set ripples in motion in the wider world of Anglican life, ecumenism and the contemplative movement, which continue to have implications today. Englishwoman Esther de Waal, the wife of the dean of Canterbury Cathedral, was in these same years developing her own sense of the spiritual yearning of the times and writing her first book, *Seeking God*. Fascinated by Bishop Bill Dimmick’s residence in Collegeville and an acquaintance of his, she came to visit and became enthralled by Saint John’s. Consequently many of her books – which have been formative for millions of people seeking a contemplative spirituality - were published by Collegeville’s Liturgical Press. Saint John’s Abbey came to figure largely in Esther de Waal’s personal passion for the rich connections between Anglican and Benedictine traditions, and she spearheaded what is now an international movement to recover Benedictine spirituality among Anglicans and other Christians, the Friends of St. Benedict.

There were other “pilgrims” to the dream of the House of Prayer in those early days. Nicholas Darby, assistant dean at Canterbury Cathedral came from England to be resident at Saint John’s for an academic year simply because he was excited by the special relationship developing between the

Abbey community and the Diocese. The wise and celebrated A.M. Allchin, an Anglican priest/scholar of Celtic Christianity, conducted an early “day of reflection” for the House of Prayer project together with Robert Wright of General Seminary in New York, and later wrote in the Church Times of England of this “wonderful plan in Collegeville, Minnesota,” to reunite Anglicans with the Benedictine source of Anglican spirituality.

In Rome in the mid-80’s for a meeting of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogues, Bob Anderson was introduced to a prominent Vatican cleric, who exclaimed: “Ah, the Bishop of Minnesota – where the House of Prayer is to be.”

Bill Franklin’s involvement in the House of Prayer project drew him into leadership in international Anglican-Roman Catholic relations and dialogue. As he later assumed other leadership roles, and became the Dean of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale – only the second lay person to become dean of an Episcopal seminary -- he would continue to point to the House of Prayer as a witness to the rest of the Church. “I learned from Bob Anderson and Jerome Theisen, from the way they saw leadership as collaborative. Power is something that you share with people – and Bob did that...The House of Prayer is a case study, I think, of a kind of model of Anglican leadership working well...which also matched the way the Benedictines do things...And for me the project was a training ground for a lay person to exert leadership – which in the Church’s thought is an important thing to happen.”

“Books and reference, talk and ideas, but above all a feeling of being made to feel utterly at home, a place where the barriers went down, the divides dissolved – this was what Saint John’s meant to me on that first visit. I gave thanks...for the vision of a community which lived by a Rule which came from the undivided church of the past and pointed us forward to the undivided church of the future...  
- Esther de Waal

## THE PACE OF PRAYER

"Listen with the ears of your heart."

- The Rule of Saint Benedict

*The gradual way in which the House of Prayer came into being is like the gradual movement of prayer itself. There was no big hype. It was thought through very carefully, prayed through carefully. There was a great deal of mutual trust on the part of Bishop Anderson and Abbot Jerome. We were not in the end meeting with strangers. We had prayed together.*

- Father Kilian McDonnell, OSB, who drafted the first case statement within the Abbey for creating the House of Prayer

"For a long time we were a program without a house. And I remember so vividly my sense of the hospitality of the community up at Collegeville, because we used this wonderful room...and it had been all sanded and polished. And they used all the old elements, the old brick and the woodwork but they added things that needed to be done. And then for a long time there was an oil painting of a calligraphy of the first phrase of the Rule of Benedict: 'Listen with the ears of your heart.' So there we sat, having these wonderful days of prayer, and we saw this beautiful calligraphy that opened hearts, I'm sure, to listen and pray."

- Ollie Rose Olson

*This Episcopal Church, this little tiny institution, doesn't have to pretend that somehow God's going to land on this place and say to people that it's a holy place. It's already hallowed ground. We're joining a community that's deep, one of the oldest if not the oldest in Minnesota, a long history that goes back over a thousand years. It's got this deep grounding, and not only that: The Book of Common Prayer grew out of it.*

Bishop Bob Anderson

On All Saints Day in 1983, two years after Bishop Bob Anderson and Abbot Jerome Theisen first discussed the possibility of an Episcopal center in Collegeville, the monastic community of Saint John's Abbey formally voted to invite the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota to "come on our land and build." Five acres of wooded land near the lakeshore at Saint John's were made available with an initial 75 year lease at \$1 per year.

The Episcopalians had not been privy to the Abbey's internal and somewhat mysterious process of prayer and discernment. As they were learning, the pace of that discernment was classically Benedictine. Two years had felt like a long time to wait for an answer. But now that answer had come, in the form of an outrageously gracious offer, it was their turn to make real the seriousness of their own intention. The "Episcopal

Center/Collegeville” had its core group of advocates and prophets, but within the larger diocese reactions to the plan ranged from disinterest (“We already have too many buildings to keep up.”) to skepticism (“Why are we even thinking about doing this at a Roman Catholic monastery?”) and hostility (“If we are raising money and organizing, it should be towards feeding the poor, not indulging our own spirituality.”) Early presentations about the vision at Diocesan Convention met with a lukewarm response. When the project was first proposed for inclusion in the upcoming diocesan capital campaign, the Challenge Campaign, it was turned down. George Richmond remembers an early introductory meeting on a summer day at the Lane House, then Diocesan headquarters. He and Bill Franklin had invited 15-20 people. When they arrived at Lane House to prepare it was locked, and Bill Franklin climbed a ladder and crawled in through a window. But after all this trouble, they were the only two who showed up. “So the great Lane House break-in was sort of the first formal meeting for people to look at the possibility of this Center for Spirituality. We ate a little bit of food, packed it up, and both drove back to St. Cloud. But we persisted.”

Indeed the immense challenge of rallying the Diocese around the dream was met with striking persistence, industry, and accomplishment. Within the next two years, by the end of 1985, the ad hoc committees which had governed the project from the beginning had transformed themselves into an incorporated board, met with funding consultants and commissioned a feasibility study, distributed a survey to Diocesan clergy, and produced a compelling slide show about Saint John’s and the project to take on the road to parishes across the state. Board and committee members also fanned out across the state and across the country visiting existing retreat centers and researching possible structures and programs. And Joyce McFarland recruited John Cowan, of Control Data Business Advisers, to conduct focus groups to learn how a balanced cross-section of Minnesota

“... You are fantastic!”  
 “... We are the Church!”  
 “... The McFarland dining room table has been once again transformed – from Christmas wrap station, to family eating station, back to Episcopal Center /Collegeville Central Office. It’s time to reconnect, get caught up, and once again continue our journey as committee toward our vision.”  
 - excerpts from Joyce McFarland letters to boards and committees

Episcopalians would imagine a holy place apart to deepen the spiritual dimension of their faith.

“Planning this – like doing a painting or any kind of work of art, or writing – you know, you try writing something and you don’t really know where it’s going. You’ve got this initial vision, but you begin writing – and something else begins emerging and it takes on a life of its own. I think that’s what happened here. It was a creative process and somehow there were people who were able to listen and respond.”

- Charles Preble

John Cowan was a former Roman Catholic priest who had become Episcopalian and a corporate consultant, a specialist in organizational development. He initially responded to Joyce McFarland’s inquiry with professional interest but quickly became one of the most impassioned early movers of the project. It felt important to him, and emerged as important in the focus groups, to flesh out the distinctly “Anglican ethos” which this “retreat center” might contribute to the universal spiritual quest. He crafted an imaginative report to the board in the form of a narrative of a visit to the center, based upon the focus groups’ consensus of what the center would be like. “It was like coming home,” he wrote. “I mean we do make jokes about ‘the Anglican ethos’, whatever that is. But most of us do know what the Anglican Ethos is, even if we have difficulty putting it into words. This place was our kind of place. Simple, comfortable in its surroundings, a quality building, and quiet.”

The focus groups addressed essential practicalities such as whether there would be sinks in the rooms and a fireplace in the center. Participants repeatedly stressed their desire for intellectual substance in the center’s program – apparently a key expression of their “Anglican ethos.” And they produced the following composite “mission statement” which would guide the board and its various committees:

- ❖ “To create a holy place apart, where people can explore and experience God’s presence”
- ❖ “To provide a quiet place encouraging spiritual growth equipping us to go in peace and love and serve the Lord!”

- ❖ “To provide at Saint John’s, Collegeville, a place with Episcopal church identity for spiritual renewal, growth and ecumenical interaction.”
- ❖ “To provide a holy place for spiritual direction and enrichment.”
- ❖ “To provide a quiet center for spiritual growth and connection with a monastic community, equipping us to walk compassionately in a hurting world.”
- ❖ “To provide a holy place where, within the Anglican tradition, all people may be renewed.”
- ❖ “To be a Christ-centered place serving those who are searching.”

“What made this project was really a deep commitment of people. The project really grew out of a deeply warm community of people working together. And I think ultimately the founding spirit of the project lives on in it. It is a warm, welcoming place, and that still grows out of the fact of these early relationships.”  
- Bill Franklin

The Board’s activities were supported principally by volunteer labor and ad hoc fundraising, but they were buoyed through the mid-80’s by the potential and promise of as much as \$250,000 which was allotted to the Episcopal Center/Collegeville in the “Challenge” capital campaign. The Challenge Campaign was a strategic and administrative burden which Bob Anderson carried heavily. In some sense it only intensified his desire for a locus for spiritual renewal within the Diocese. After some struggle, he and the board succeeded in landing the House of Prayer among the chief priorities of the Diocese and the Challenge monies, and for years they essentially counted on those monies in their planning.

In the end, the Challenge campaign presented the Dream with its greatest setback yet. The campaign over-stretched its goals, and finally abruptly announced that it had reached only a fraction of its financial target. The limited monies raised were distributed with preference to organizations already carrying paid staff “and showing momentum.” This came as a

shock and a bitter disappointment to the House of Prayer board, which fought to receive a one-time payment of \$50,000, and so found themselves after years of planning with no financial momentum and nothing like the minimum amount they had counted on to construct the first section of their building – a few guest rooms and an apartment for a director -- and endow its maintenance.

"I love to tell the story that back when this idea surfaced I was approached if I would play a role in it. And I said, 'Lord, no. I think it's a crazy idea and the bishop's budget is in disarray and the Diocese needs to finish its campaign. I can't imagine starting another project like this. And the last thing we need is a retreat house!' So God works in funny ways, obviously, because here I am in it up to my eyebrows.  
- Doug Baker

But they did not give up. They dug in with vigor and went out to raise the money themselves. New saints entered the picture – people whose gift was giving of their wealth and encouraging others to do the same. Bob Anderson recalls with special fondness the Presbyterian spouse of an Episcopal laywoman, Atherton Bean, who gave a large gift and then “went out and embarrassed people. He would go around with Dick McFarland and others and he would say, ‘I’m not even Episcopalian, and I can see the importance of this work! The Bishop doesn’t want to start his own little thing off in the trees! This is right at the heart of the monastic community. It’s practical, it’s international, it’s inter-faith, it’s got it all right there, and it’s an hour and a quarter from the center of the cities – and you need that to get your spirit ready to land somewhere. It’s perfect – and you folks won’t even support it!’”

Bob Anderson also recalls the struggle which he waged together with George Richmond -- for both theological and practical reasons -- to cut into clergy resistance to the project. That struggle underscored the fact that even among ordained ministers, the concept of “spirituality” was relatively undeveloped. And it forced the bishop and the project’s other leaders to continue to define and articulate the complementary “ministry” which the House of Prayer would add to the life of the parish church. “When we first started talking about this,” Bishop Anderson recalls, “I said to the clergy, ‘We’re not trying to create an institution that you’re going to have to pay for. You’re never going to be taxed for the House of



Prayer. And the second thing is, this is another house of prayer; your place is also a house of prayer. That's what we do! We're Anglicans. We don't have doctrinal sharp edges, what we've really got is prayer, this is our gift to the world and it basically is important to keep that in mind. So this is just one house of prayer alongside of all the other houses of prayer and it's not going to rival your parish and so forth. And it's going to be a resource. You don't have to come up to the House of Prayer if you don't want to, but you may find some people who would like to come. But we want to help make your house of prayer wherever you live and work more vital. Archbishop Ramsey - the hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury - once said that a few people are called to be mystics, but all of us are called to be more contemplative. And the big ingredient missing in the church today is the contemplative life. There's a deep need for it.”

“The need for prayer, reading, studying, and times of silence for Episcopalians has not waited for expression in a building dedicated specifically for these purposes.”  
 From *Come on our Land and Build: Case Statement for the Episcopal Center/Collegeville*, 1986

Meanwhile, the lay leaders of the project kept their own contemplative and pragmatic spirits vital by “praying through” their endeavor - and freely inviting all of the Episcopalians of the Diocese to join them in learning and prayer. As early as 1982, a program committee had been organizing “Days of Reflection,” and “Schools of Prayer” - mornings and days (usually Saturdays) of study, prayer, and silence. Joyce McFarland remained a spiritual and organizational powerhouse in this work. Linda Shelin and Ollie Rose Olson also became primary saints of this effort. A majority of events were held at St. Mark's Cathedral or in Abbey and University spaces at Collegeville, though they did reach into parishes across the state. These events covered a breadth of topics, drawing on the passions and gifts of a wide variety of members of the Diocese: clergy people, lay people, resident bishops, as well as monks from Saint John's and sometimes visiting scholars.

The following sample of program topics displays this breadth:

Forgive us as we Forgive

A Day of Prayer and Personal Reflection, Community and Acquaintance

Prayer and Temperament

Murder in the Kitchen: The Spirituality of Food

'Tis a Gift to Live Simply

Healing Diseases of the Soul

The Other Side of Lent: Growth

Images of the Sacred: Passion Images (Palm Saturday)

Centering Prayer

Spiritual Friendship

Into Holy Week: Three Poets Lead the Way

Follow Your Bliss – The Stewardship of Self

Soul and Money: A Theological Reflection on Stewardship

Native American Theology: An Old Vision, A New Voice

An Introduction to Journaling

Music and Mystery

"It was an all-day event at St. Mark's, and it was a gorgeous September day. I came to the doors of the church and I thought, What am I doing here? Do I really want to spend this day doing this day of prayer when I could be home raking my leaves? And I decided, well, I'm here going in... So I did, and it was a fabulous day."

- Linda Schelin

These events helped keep the holiest impulses of the dream alive in the project administration. Just as importantly, they invited ever wider circles of people into the experience – not just the idea – of the dream.

Participation in the Days of Reflection was vigorous, ranging from 14-150, and often in the 30-50 range. Whether or not Minnesota Episcopalians could immediately endorse a call for a new building, their response to the Days of Reflection uncovered their shared sense of longing for spiritual nurture and renewal.

This experience of taking the vision out into the Diocese was vitalizing and necessary, and the Days of Reflection are remembered with great

poignancy by organizers and participants alike. Yet they served also to strengthen a sense of need for a place apart, a center for on-going prayer and renewal. And as more and more Episcopalians attended these events at Saint John's, they came to understand it as a uniquely rich and blessed environment.

A "Case Statement" drafted and distributed by the board in 1986 described this growing certainty: "While there are advantages to "borrowing" the retreat locations, the emphasis on such retreats upon stability of being, place, and spirit, or anchoring and centering again in God's love to be touched and renewed again in our direction, has led to the realization that what is needed is a place, a spiritual home for every Episcopalian in the Diocese. An Anglican place, set apart from our stream of activity in a noisy, busy world, where our business shifts to the awareness that can come to us of God's greatness, goodness, gracious action in our lives and God's purpose for us...But an Anglican place should not mean a one-denomination-welcome-only place. No Christian tradition exists today in isolation from all people of faith. Each exists in relation to all the others, and we are clearly called to associate with each other, to come to know each other, to pray together, to take part in combined efforts for the nurturing of the community of believers, both in local settings and across the wider Church."

The daunting final process of raising money to build the House of Prayer also played a critical role in defining and deepening the vision. It forced the bishop and all of the others who were out pounding the pavement for funding to confront and articulate a theological tension which had always been at the heart of the project and remains into the present and the future. Potential funders - people used to giving their money towards action, social justice, projects with demonstrable results - would pose the question this way: How can you justify this expense towards something that will

"The Center will be built in the physical setting of this Benedictine environment, and this points to a relationship which we hope will continue to grow between the Saint John's community and Episcopalians in Minnesota and across the wider church. This setting does not so much draw attention to a goal of Church unity as it does to our hope of sharing a spiritual journey as Episcopalians and Benedictines as we make our way, sharing what we already have in common...above all the belief that Christ is to be found in the circumstances, the people, and the things of daily life."  
- Case Statement, 1986

benefit a relatively small number of people, who are not demonstrably “needy” and then only internally? And why when we already have church buildings?

“We live at a moment when many despair in the face of the problems of our nation with drugs and other questions, of the problems of all the institutions large and small represented here today. Before such uncertainty the life of the Church often seems ‘superficial and unworthy, absorbed in trivialities and rivalries, neglecting the deepest fears and longings,’ as one observer wrote. This House at the heart of our diocese and of our state of Minnesota speaks of God’s unquenchable desire for the wholeness and restoration of each man and woman.”

- Bill Franklin, at the House of Prayer groundbreaking.

Bob Anderson recalls a classic conversation he had with an Episcopal woman who headed a large family foundation, and who simply could not see her way to supporting the luxury of a spirituality center. “I said to her, ‘I know you give to battered women’s shelters, you give to social justice issues, but you know what? All around the world, there is a much deeper hunger and there’s a much deeper need, like you have and I have, and that need I would describe is a thirst for God. That’s our final communion. We can love each other, be married and have nine children, but our real lover is God...God is our soul-lover. And because God loves us, we can love each other, and we’re searching for God all the time. That’s the hunger I’m talking about, and there’s so many people who hunger for that.”

This remains for some a difficult case to make. But intuitively it surfaces again and again and in unlikely places: this place apart, devoted to prayer, is mysteriously supremely important – not as a substitute for social action, but as a necessary human complement and foundation for it. When architect John Cuningham first began to draw up plans for the original House of Prayer building, he set aside a lunch hour to which each member of the firm was invited, a “design review” to introduce the project and solicit questions and suggestions. This was standard practice for every project Cuningham Architects took on; not standard was the response which the House of Prayer project received. “Everybody showed up, absolutely everybody, the secretaries, everybody,” he recalls. Gathered around him were many young faces, un-churched faces, non-Christian faces; he knew this about his people and he asked them, “Why do you care about this?” The answers they gave were inchoate, but resoundingly

similar: “This is a neat idea...a house of prayer. It is a good thing.” And John Cuningham recalls asking, “Wait a minute, how many of you pray?” “Well, I don’t pray,” somebody said, and another said, “I don’t know how to pray.” But they were sure that this House of Prayer was a very important thing. And they were just fascinated.

Virtually everyone who has been involved in the House of Prayer, or who has ever been at the House of Prayer, is grateful beyond words for the contribution of the architect, John Cuningham, and his colleagues. His contribution was not merely structural but a rare and unique example of how theological vision can be expressed and embedded and advanced in structure: every window and angle of light, every material, every room in the House of Prayer is designed as a fitting accompaniment and encouragement to prayer. And in some sense John Cuningham’s passion for this project was yet another grace-filled result of early difficulties. The loss of the Challenge monies forced the board to think small – even smaller than before. And although John Cuningham – as an Episcopalian, and member of St. Mark’s Cathedral – had been drafted into committees and discussions throughout the 1980’s, his architectural imagination was only really sparked when the conversation first took a “swerve” – as he describes it -- to envisioning something intimate rather than “a kind of Episcopal retreat house/resort.”

There was a great deal of backbreaking work to raise what felt initially like the impossible amount to get to the groundbreaking. But the slow process of that work meant that the founders of the House of Prayer listened very carefully ultimately to what the people of the Diocese felt and wanted, and the project insinuated itself with remarkable solidity into the living structure of the Diocese. There were some generous gifts which were foundational. And there were many “widow’s mite” gifts which made it all possible. Charles Preble, a priest who was very involved in

“We talked about a lot of important things, like how shall it be accomplished with the greatest economy of means, with the most straightforward materials, with almost design which conceals design, we don’t want anybody notice what we did, we want it to just be. People just walk in and feel comfortable and it’s unpretentious and it’s just so home. It would be a house in the best sense. It would be a place where you would come and you would immediately welcome and at home, even if you were alone. It would be a place of refuge, of shelter, of sanctuary, it would be a place of intimacy, intimate scale, and personal response.”

- John Cuningham

“We wanted it to be very simple, very approachable, and we wanted it to grow out of the earth. And that’s, of course, what our marvelous architect did for us.”

- Bishop Bob Anderson

the early years and who later created wooden furniture for the House of Prayer, remembers it this way: “The gifts just kind of started snowballing at some point. It really made it a House of Prayer for all kinds of people, where they could really in a sense own it. That was a happy time when that came about...It happened the way God sometimes works with us. And what a wonderful beginning for a place that would presume to call itself a House of Prayer, to have that kind of grounding.”

“The House of Prayer dedication was a moving occasion where nearly 280 people gathered on a deeply overcast morning that gradually lifted to a glorious noon and a warm sun-drenched afternoon. We sang greatly and prayed for God’s presence and blessing at the House of Prayer. We stood together in long silence. Once even the birds hushed their song and at last they broke into a wonderfully raucous chatter which joined our own excitement of the day. Even with such a great crowd of pilgrims, a noticeable sense of peaceful enthusiasm predicted that this will indeed be a place set apart where we might go to practice and experience the presence of God anew. The House of Prayer seems to have spirit and power of its own to nourish and to support us in our spiritual seeking even amidst all our energetic activity.”

- A letter from George Richmond

When ground was broken for the house’s construction, Bill Franklin helped those present at the ceremony grasp the largest possible context of their accomplishment. “Five minutes from now,” he said, “a period of 456 years in Church History will come to an end. When on May 11, 1533, the Benedictine Abbots of England repudiated their oaths of obedience to the Bishop of Rome which they had sworn at their election, a tie with the See of Rome was broken which had nurtured the Church of England, our distant Mother Church, for a thousand years. Today for the first time since 1533 a large Anglican Diocese and a large monastery in communion with the Roman See are pledging to live together in a new way, at least for 75 years!

On September 8, 1990, the House of Prayer building was dedicated. It was a gorgeous fall day filled with joy and wonder. During a moment of silence in the ceremony, thousands of birds suddenly flew in and landed in the trees above and began to sing. This was a remarkable moment for everyone present. Ollie Rose Olsen recalled a day of prayer in the previous year when, after the eucharist, a huge amount of consecrated leftover communion bread was scattered on the site to “return it to the earth, feed it to the birds. I don’t know what the connection was but in my mind there was a connection and I love thinking about that.”

Bob Anderson sums it up this way: “The House of Prayer was one of those occasions where after all of this struggle and all of this spirit conversation, it actually happened. It was like God chose to take on the spirit, took on flesh, it became an incarnation and there it was. And when it happened, I was sort of amazed...And the birds sort of said it for me that day.”

After the ceremony, each of the rooms of the House of Prayer received a special blessing by a small group. A month later – on All Saints Day, exactly seven years after the Abbey had extended its invitation to “come and build” -- the Native American community of the Diocese, with which Bishop Anderson had nurtured especially close ties, held their own ceremony to make the House “a dwelling of the Spirit.” This marked the official opening of the House of Prayer.

The name with which the one-time “Dream” was finally christened had evolved with the same prayerful grace as all of its practicalities. Indeed, none of the founders seems to recall a single moment or meeting at which the name was decreed. Bob Anderson comes closest with this memory: “I remember George Richmond sitting with me and we were so depleted from the opposition we were getting, but we were talking about this. We said, you know this really isn’t a retreat center. And one of us said, ‘I think it’s more like a house of prayer.’ And George said, ‘Let’s look in the prayer book.’ And of course there’s this prayer in the prayer book, when you dedicate a new church, and at the end calls it a ‘house of prayer.’ And we began to make this a house of prayer.”

Lord Jesus Christ, make this a temple of your presence and a house of prayer. Be always near us when we seek you in this place. Draw us to you, when we come alone and when we come with others, to find comfort and wisdom, to be supported and strengthened, to rejoice and give thanks. May it be here, Lord Christ, that we are made one with you and with one another, so that our lives are sustained and sanctified for your service.  
- The Book of Common Prayer

## THE SPACE BETWEEN THE WORDS

*I think it is providential that the Greek word for house is oikos, the root word for ecumenism. So, we have a small House of Prayer near a large House of Prayer, the Abbey Church. The small House is a place to take off our shoes, sit by a fire and tell stories. It is a place for reflection and contemplation. Here, like the disciples on their journey to Emmaus, we listen as the Holy One present in us and among us reveals the meaning of Scripture and breaks the bread of life.*

Bishop Bob Anderson

"I always go to the early morning service at the Abbey Church when I'm at the House of Prayer, and that's been very important. I've enjoyed the Psalms when the brothers, after saying part of the verse, always stop. They stop and they wait and it's that pausing... I can't say that I always in the pause am entirely focused on the phrase I've just heard or said, but that pausing, that waiting, that little bit of silence between the verses is... is again what I think the House of Prayer is all about."  
- John Gould

More than a decade passed between the time "the dream" was born and the house was actually built. Several more would pass before the house had a permanent, full-time. When David Keller came to be the first director in 1994, he too fulfilled a dream. But the intervening years were formative years in the life of the House of Prayer, full of inspiration, and necessary for that dream to ripen – again, at the pace of prayer.

Bishop Anderson had insisted from the beginning that the project should not rush to install a permanent director, because the spirituality of that person would to a great extent become the spirituality of the House of Prayer. In truth, in many ways Bob Anderson himself was the spiritual director, and a powerful force on the board. But because he was bishop, and increasingly consumed by the business of the Diocese, he could not administer or create programs.

The Rev. George Richmond had been an influential part of the grassroots movement that sustained the House of Prayer through the 1980's, leading fondly remembered Days of Reflection, serving on the board, and bringing lay people and clergy alike into the circle of activity around making this



dream a reality. By the time the building was constructed, he had moved from being rector of St. John's, St. Cloud, to serving a Twin Cities church part-time. Yet he agreed also to serve "one-quarter" time as director of the House of Prayer. He would share this duty with the Rev. Elaine Marshall, a locally resident priest who had been the first woman of any denomination to be ordained in the Abbey Church – a somewhat radical and controversial event which transpired directly from the friendship between Bob Anderson and Abbot Jerome Theisen. And the bishop liked the idea of having a male-female team in the inaugural leadership of the House of Prayer on the grounds of an all-male Abbey.

"Elaine (Marshall) lent a nice presence to the place. Elaine was as raucous as could be, a tremendous human being, such joy in her. She completely defied the stereotype of being *contemplative* and yet she was deeply spiritual."  
- Tom Darnall

George Richmond describes his own style as "quietly retiscent," and fondly recalls Elaine Marshall as his temperamental opposite. Until her untimely death, Elaine poured herself into collaborative ministry with George to keep the House of Prayer running. She made her very special mark on the grounds. "My visions of Elaine," George Richmond would recall a decade later, echoing many others, "are of her out there chopping wood for the fireplace. She was always out there chopping wood. And one day she found this wonderful maple tree sapling out in the back woods, filled with maples, and she dug it up and planted it right in the center of the parking circle. It was still there last time I looked, and I hope it always will be."

The intrinsic infrastructure and program of the house developed slowly, and it was made possible through the commitment of a growing network of faithful people, most of them lay people. A striking feature of the early history of the House of Prayer is the passion which that early network of leaders applied to every detail of the House of Prayer's life. In the years of planning, there would be long, painstaking, and sometimes heated discussion over details ranging from whether alcoholic beverages could be brought into the house to whether plaques might be installed to identify

"I was a parish priest for almost 35 years when I began doing more woodworking. (And) it was the woodworking that began to teach me -- in terms of my parish practice -- about not rushing so much from one thing to the other but allowing the space, in a sense, for rest. The way I work with design on chairs is to consider the human body... so I try to have something that's going to support the person and support them in comfort. And in my understanding of the practice of contemplation, it was good to do something that would help the person sit in as upright a fashion as possible and still be comfortable. I wasn't trying to be Frank Lloyd Wright -- you know, his whole thing was having people lean forward to other people to engage them in conversation."  
- Charles Preble

gifts of rooms and objects. The House was filled with the loving craftsmanship of early leaders, such as potter Rita Bartlett and Charles Preble, a priest in the diocese and also a gifted woodworker. Charles Preble had also been the one to notice very late in the planning for the House of Prayer building that no space had been designated solely for prayer, and his attentiveness resulted in the small meditation space at the far end of the residence wing. Soon after the building was finished and before the dedication, the entire board spent a night in the House of Prayer, "vetting" every detail of comfort and ambience and proposing some immediate changes in details from lighting to bedding.

Bob Anderson likes to tell a story about a day soon after the building was opened, when a national group of retreat leaders, including Episcopalians and Catholics, was meeting at the Abbey, including the bishop of Chicago, Frank Griswold, who would later become Presiding Bishop. Bill Franklin brought them down to the House of Prayer for a tour.

"And they said, 'you know it's really beautiful, what is your program going to be?'

"And there was a long silence, and I said, 'we don't have any programs.'

"...And then someone else, 'you have no program, you know, are you going to start retreats here?'

"I said, 'We haven't decided. We think maybe six months we're going to let this building settle into the ground and we're going to stay what we've stayed with all along, we're going to trust that God will provide and the spirit will move us to what we're going to do next. A lot of people have ideas, want to fill this place day and night, but we're not ready to do that yet. We have absolutely no programs here.'

“Who’s going to head it?”

“Well, right now, we don’t have money to pay anyone to head it, so we have George here, who’s helping as a parish priest, and Elaine, who’s working here, cutting wood and doing all the nitty-gritty stuff. And we have lots of lay helpers, our lay people are really interested. It’ll stay afloat until we figure out what’s the next stage. But we’re not sure yet, we have not a clue.

“And there was this silence again, and then someone said out loud, in a loud voice, ‘So you have no programs, no director, and you don’t know what you’re going to do with the House of Prayer but pray about it!’

“And it was just quiet. And then this thunderous applause - thunderous applause - went out.”

George, Elaine, and the board also pulled together an extensive, informal network of lay people and couples and clergy in the Diocese who volunteered to act as “hosts and hostesses” to individuals and groups who came to the House of Prayer for programs and retreats. Some hosts lived locally. Others would drive 100 miles on a Friday afternoon to unlock the doors and get the building warmed up and ready for visitors, greet people as they arrived, serve in the background all weekend as needed, receive and organize meals as they arrived from the Saint John’s kitchens. Groups would often invite their hosts to join in their program. One of the early greeters, Mary Darnall, used to call these her “Mary-Martha” weekends. She was busy serving the guests and at the same time was able to find stretches of “monastic” reflection for herself.

“One thing we did right was to live with the place for a while. I mean, we thought as soon as this is built, we’re going to getting money to build a wonderful chapel. But there wasn’t any money to do it. And the same thing with the kitchen. The idea was, let’s get this kitchen finished so we can cook our own meals. Well, when you live with it for a while, you realize that it takes somebody who has to be away from the retreat working in the kitchen. So getting meals from Saint John’s works just fine. So that ‘wait and see and live with it for a while’ I think was the right decision.”

- Linda Schelin

"It used to be a big rush, when I was a greeter, trying to leave work, shut down, get out there and for the weekend. And so I would have a few minutes before the retreatants would come in and then we'd watch them come in - driving there Friday night on the interstate out of Minneapolis. And they'd just come in wild-eyed, talking about what important things they'd left behind. And a lot of them would come in very defensive, afraid of what would happen to them there... And then by Sunday their whole pace would change. That was really exciting, to see how the place transformed people, and then the host was also transformed."

- Mary Darnall

Sadly, as activity at the House of Prayer intensified, Elaine Marshall had been diagnosed with the first in a series of critical health problems. George Richmond was nearing retirement and stretched thin by his consuming "quarter-time" long-distance responsibility for the House of Prayer. Bob Anderson, too, would soon retire and leave the Diocese. The practical realities of maintaining the building and amenities were increasingly too great to be managed by volunteers. The fiscal and spiritual realities of maintaining the institution could not be met in the long run by program organized through the board. The building was empty too much of the time and without a guiding human presence, and this left it at times less than warm and hospitable. And so finally, although there had been discussion on the board from the beginning about eventually seeking a permanent director, that discussion achieved a sense of urgency.

There was one more overtime saint to appear on the scene before a director was called, however, and she brought skills which the House of Prayer needed to survive at that moment in time. Irma Wyman had been the first woman to become a corporate Vice President at Honeywell. After retirement, in 1990, she was ordained a deacon in the Episcopal church. In 1992, she spent a semester in residence at the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, around the bend on Fruit Farm Road from the House of Prayer. Her scholarly project was to look at the Rule of Benedict and compare the kinds of concepts and directives that Benedict had given to his working monastic community with what she knew of the corporate world. She had not been involved in the House of Prayer, but she had formed her own deep ties with Colledgeville and the Abbey community.

People in the Diocese knew that Irma was there, and more and more as needs arose or a crisis with the building, or when a host or hostess fell ill at the last minute, someone was on the phone to Irma and she pitched in to

help. At the end of the summer after she finished her Collegeville residency, Bishop Anderson assigned her as a Deacon to the House of Prayer. She became known by many as the interim director. She never took up residence at the House of Prayer, but from the end of 1992 until David Keller's arrival in 1994, she was there for several days every week and occasionally for several weeks at a time.

David Keller began to interact with the life of the House of Prayer and its people in varied serendipitous ways from the early 1990's. Assistant Bishop Sandy Hampton invited him to lead a retreat for the deacons of the Diocese of Minnesota, and while he was here deacon Lyn Lawyer asked him if he would like to spend a few days at the newly-constructed House of Prayer. He knew nothing about the House of Prayer, but he eagerly accepted the chance to worship with the monks of Saint John's and visit its revered Liturgical Press. Then, when General convention was held in Phoenix in 1991, Dan Pearson, the rector of St. Clement's, St. Paul, and chair of the House of Prayer board, met with David there. Soon thereafter, George Richmond invited David to lead a retreat on his Centerpoint program for the House of Prayer at Saint Mark's Cathedral. Elaine Marshall had worked as a missionary in Alaska and knew of David's reputation from his own years in Alaska. The Centerpoint program which David had developed as a canon at the Cathedral in Phoenix, Arizona, focused on spiritual formation within the parish setting – programmatically helping lay people integrate spiritual growth and maturity with their everyday business and life. This seemed a wonderful expression of the foundational values and intentions of the House of Prayer. Later David was invited with a colleague to lead a more extensive retreat on Centerpoint at the House of Prayer. A number of leading figures of the House of Prayer took part in that experience.

"To call these (greeters) together so we could train them -- and to schedule them and to keep them and to fill in when one of them got sick-- was just an enormous job, and that's one of the things that Irma particularly was good at. She's a wonderful, committed character, who stepped in with her corporate and systems background and saved the day when Elaine died."

- George Richmond

"So when I came to the House of Prayer for the first time this place, as it does for everybody, did its thing on me...I was just aware of this place and the integrity of its solitude and its location."

- David Keller

Finally, as Bob Anderson was due to retire in 1993, the diocese gave him and his wife Mary the opportunity to go to a Centerpoint pilgrimage/event that David was conducting in North Wales. Board member Nell Hillsley, who had been captivated by David from the first, also attended. With the permission of the board, Nell asked David if he would consider putting his name in as a candidate for the House of Prayer directorship.

“Nell and I took several walks in Billbury Wood. I can remember very vividly walking back from evening prayer one day at the Abbey after the Centerpoint event and thinking, you know it really would be exciting to be director of this place because there are some good things going on but the future is just wide open. And it would be in fear and trembling: where do you start and what do you do? It would be both a tremendous opportunity but also an incredible responsibility to be a steward of this place. And that’s what I considered myself to be.”

- David Keller

There was ultimately a serious search process, in which a sizable number of applications were received and considered, but a great many people sensed from their first encounters with David that he was exactly the kind of spiritual guide and leader the House of Prayer was seeking. When the moment came to call David, the board took the unusual step of committing to raise his salary for three years – without knowing exactly how they would do so. It was essentially a commitment to pay the money out of their own pockets if need be.

Some reflections which David Keller offered to the oral history process are appended to this narrative. There the eloquence and wisdom of his thought – and the continual, prayerful evolution of the program and ethos of this place – find apter expression than any summary of the present could or should offer. He has brought a remarkable depth of both spiritual and programmatic leadership to the life of the House of Prayer. The integrity of his very presence has immeasurably enriched those who come as guests to the House of Prayer as well its historic “hosts,” the Abbey community. He has also forged promising links with the School of Theology, helping them deepen their own attention to the field of “applied spirituality,” and with Saint Benedict’s Monastery. Part of the strength of David’s leadership is also the openness with which he continually discerns and walks his own spiritual path, and in turn continually contributes his learnings to the life of the House of Prayer. He is connected into the larger world of the contemplative movement, and conscious of the House

of Prayer's place in that. He is committed to the House of Prayer's core Anglican identity – its preservation and offering to the world of what is distinctively faithful in Anglican tradition, what can distinctively meet the spiritual hunger of our age. At the same time, he has integrated other spiritual traditions - zazen meditation techniques, for example, and Celtic Christian wisdom which David cherishes as part of a distinctly Anglican “monastic” heritage. With David as steward – the title by which he prefers to be called - the House of Prayer has lived ever more fully into the essential ecumenical impulses which lie at the heart of Anglican tradition and which were so cherished by the founders.

Changes in the life of the House of Prayer in the period of David's directorship have been largely conditioned by the realities of managing a building and institution. New generations of leaders have risen to that challenge. Notably, Margaret Wurtele began a process of fiscal consolidation and endowment which brought the House of Prayer into the new millennium on strong, stable footing. As before in the history of the House of Prayer, Margaret's leadership was guided by prayer and nourished by her personal commitment to spiritual growth. And though the financial insecurity of the 1980's would seem to be past, the board keeps alive the holy tension between pragmatic financial stewardship and the spiritual, non-commercial mission of the House of Prayer.

The House of Prayer also continues to live into the particulars and dimensions of its identity as an independent ministry of the Diocese, distinct from parish life and complementary to it. The current building was designed to be expanded as funding allowed; the current 17-bed capacity would eventually, it was planned, be augmented with as many as three other residential wings, with a possible total of 120-140 beds. But over time, it simply became evident virtually to everyone that intimacy – smallness of space, simplicity of institution, as well as intimacy with the

“It's a two-way street, by no means one way. Having David come up here for prayer -- he's a Benedictine, he's a member of the community. That really is important. It's very difficult to articulate the significance of sharing the scriptures, and sharing silence, and sharing adoration, worship, praise. That's real communion – and doing that over time. In many ways it's like having a brother, and you may not see that brother for a long time but that bond is there. And the presence of the people from the House of Prayer up here at our monastic prayer is really important for the monks.”

- Kilian McDonnell, OSB

"Before the oratory was built, it was getting harder and harder to create complete silence. The house was a place where you could get some work done. If there was a design failing in the beginning – and not intentionally, just because of a lack of finances – the oratory rectified it."

- Tom Darnall

land -- is part of the core identity of the House of Prayer, necessary to what it does well. "Our grace is our smallness," says David Keller. And so in the late 90's, when the board asked David to describe his understanding of the most important physical need of the place, he insisted that what the House of Prayer needed was not greater sleeping space but a space dedicated to prayer, a space big enough for group contemplative prayer. And he had strong feelings about the way that space should be designed and incorporated into the grounds of the House of Prayer:

"...One thing I've realized," David Keller says, "is that when people come here, part of why they love to be here is they can just walk out into the back or they can walk out and look at the farmland across the street. The agriculture and the woods and the access to the hiking trails at Saint John's really have an influence on people here so that when you're here, you're really here. And the original plan called for a traditional Gothic Anglican chapel in the woods. I really discouraged -- and I hope not in too controlling a way, but really adamantly -- that we not even consider a Gothic structure, a typical Anglican prayer space with pews and an altar. And that it not be in the woods because we would destroy a third of the woods to build such a place there. And then when you look at the woods from the House of Prayer you'd see an Oratory and not the woods and we wouldn't have our meditation path through the woods. And so after a lot of discussion - and some of it heated - we decided to build the Oratory adjunct to the House of Prayer but separate. Only 60 feet on a little knoll did we have to cut down one mature tree and we hated to do that. But it was right smack in the middle. Fortunately it was only ten inches in diameter. And in order to set the Oratory in the trees as it is, we had to do some fancy footwork with the excavating equipment. And there was one tree there that I just couldn't see cutting down and it was a great inconvenience to the excavator and he said, 'alright we'll do our best to work around it.' And they named it 'David's tree' -- 'watch out for



David's tree' or 'damn, David's tree' or whatever -- but they honored it. These men and women who worked on the Oratory really saw it as a spiritual task."

The entire process of planning and constructing the Oratory was marked by the same kind of collaborative, passionate, spiritually-driven attention to detail which had marked the House of Prayer's history from the beginning. The first design was scratched on a piece of paper in conversation between David Keller and John Cuningham one Sunday after Lessons and Carols at lunch at Linda Schelin's house. The process by which it became a reality mirrored the cycle of "reflective discernment" which board member Tom Darnall believes the House of Prayer received from its Benedictine setting: "I remember the architects coming in with these plans, and every shape, every detail, having some theological or spiritual thinking behind it. You wish everything in life could be done with that kind of process. One thing I think the Benedictines have taught us is that there should always be reflective discernment before action -- and maybe several cycles of reflection and discernment. And this was done beautifully."

The most heated discussion around the Oratory concerned whether it should be detached from the building in a climate such as Minnesota -- a feature architect John Cuningham championed from the first. "I said, any Minnesotan can walk outside for 30 to 40 feet, any Minnesotan. You must make a commitment to go to the Oratory. Being in a house of prayer is a house, and it's shelter, and it's comfortable, and everything like that. But going to the Oratory is a whole other thing, you have to get your mind ready, you have to make a commitment, it's not just like slipping into something more comfortable. If it's cold, that's even better, if it's hot even better, if it's raining even better, you must -- you have to make a short commitment through adversity, preferably through adversity. If it's

Richard Bresnahan, the resident potter, who is very well known in artistic circles, said that for him the presence of the Oratory on this campus is so important because it is unapologetically Christian and yet in an institutional sense it doesn't say we're Christian, so that it invites people from whatever tradition they are in to be in there and to be in prayer. And yet we have icons, we have crosses, we have labyrinths, we have sculptures, we have lots of things in there that focus specifically on our Christian path -- all movable according to the liturgical year or the event. But the place itself is a cross and yet it's a cross that is so subtle that it does its work without being in your face to people who might not want to be in a place that's so clearly and in some cases austere Christian. And Richard was saying for him that's the contribution to this place.

- David Keller

a beautiful sunny day, it doesn't count almost, you know. You have to leave the House of Prayer to go to the Oratory. You must leave. You can't step through a corridor. It's not like the Meditation Room -- and I don't know why, that's just the way it has to be."

"I believe more and more that a deepened spiritual life is the only hope for the world. Institutions can and should improve our schools, our health system, politics, our government, and I believe in working for those things, deeply I believe in that. But I think until there's a change in the human hearts of thousands and thousands of people that this world is still gonna wallow in all the mess it's in. And I think the House of Prayer is one place that's working on this in really practical ways. I love the combination of David's mysticism and practical side. To me the whole idea of going deeper is to be filled with Christ's spirit so that you can then be good for the world. And I look back on so much of my own activism in the past and I think how much better I could have done it if I had had some of the insights I have now.  
- Nell Hillsley

David Keller tells a story from the final phase of construction of the Oratory which is almost a parable for the very reason of the Oratory's existence. "When we were about two weeks from the end of the construction, I went out for coffee break, which I did often, and there were two men who were foremen, one local and one from the Cunningham group. They'd worked on it from August to early December. And one of them said, 'You know, I don't know whether I can go back to strip malls or not.' We had this great discussion. And ultimately we realized that we each in our own way had to go back to our individual strip malls. But that we were different because of the experience of having built this place and now the presence of this place enables us to further grow in our life of prayer, whatever that will be. And one of the foremen brings his family reunion here every summer for meditation in the afternoon. They come from all over the country."

For many people, the oratory seems to have closed the circle – beautifully - of the House of Prayer's construction. Perhaps this will not be the last building on the property. But in hindsight it feels like a landmark which completes the identity of the House of Prayer and brings it into a new stage of its own spiritual maturity.

"There's such power in a place that accumulates prayer in that way," says Margaret Wurtele of the Oratory, though she might be describing the entire life of the House of Prayer. "And I think it's only starting. It's only just starting."

## REMEMBERING FORWARDS

*Assist the new without sacrificing the old...*

*The best servitors of the new may be those who know and love the old, and carry it over  
into the new.*

Thomas Mann

*It's a poor memory that only works backwards.*

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass

The collective remembering of an oral history process can root an organization more deeply and consciously in its own story, identity, and values. In closing this report, I would define some persistent questions from the oral history interviews which speak to the present and future of the life of the House of Prayer. There are no surprises here, no themes which have not already surfaced in board discussion. But they offer a range of reflections, concerns and convictions - from founders and present leadership alike - which might inform and guide you as you continue to explore these issues in the future.

## OUTREACH

**Core Question: How do we continue over time to draw new people in to the life of the House of Prayer, to share its graces deeply and widely?**

### Reflections from the Interviews

**1) Continue to attend creatively to issues of accessibility – not simply of cost, but of visibility and programming.**

*I think people are missing the ability to be silent and the ability to listen and the ability to let go of group prayer and doing and organizing...and I think that giving people a place to experience that is at the heart of our diocese. And I hope that more people can find their way to come participate (in the House of Prayer) by finding that it's not threatening. I don't worry that people don't feel welcome there, I just don't think they know what happens.*

*What I really want is that the various parishes and Episcopal groups of the Diocese of Minnesota make the best use of this treasure. I would like for them to see it as an important source of vitality.*

*I think the average Minnesota Episcopalian simply does not even know what a monastic community is. Many of them are still quite frightened by the thought.*

*I had always hoped that the House of Prayer might set aside weekends especially for the use of less financially secure parishes, and that the board or the diocese might subsidize that.*

*There's a sophistication about the programs now, which is wonderful. But they require more time, more commitment, some pretty strenuous spiritual exercise and development. And so I think it's important that we also keep trying to draw in folks who aren't quite totally evolved on the spiritual ladder. We need to appeal to folks who are just getting interested and beginning to think about these issues.*

*I don't think there's any substitute for being at the House of Prayer and experiencing the silence and all that prayer that's been there and that goes on. And I love going up to the chapel to pray with the Benedictine community...to honor the connection, because it's very real. We need to just keep inviting and encouraging people to come there in small groups, to experience that place.*

*We're fairly full on weekends, especially in the summer – booked up well in advance. But we can be intentional about suggesting different ways of using the place. How many people know, for example, that they can come up for a night with their family- or for Valentines Day with their spouse? I've heard someone speak of coming here with a group of friends for a self-led retreat, in the early years. That's a marvelous way to have the place in use during the week.*

*We go back and forth on whether vestry retreats are a good use of the space or not. I think it's great for vestries to come here as long as a basic part of being here is set aside for reflection. We're a culture that thinks the more you pack into an hour, the higher the quality – and we all know that's not true. Vestry retreats can be horrible and vestry members get brutalized. And so I think the chance to come and take the breath and notice the breath is wonderful. It's not a place just to do your work but also to ground your work.*

*Not only is the addition of the Oratory just a wonderful addition to the House of Prayer, but it's given us a great new opportunity to make the House of Prayer better known.*

*Why not invite people from the Diocese for an Anglican Day some year – a celebration of their heritage? I mean, St. Mark's is a wonderful place but why not invite them to an annual picnic at the House of Prayer? They certainly have the space and there's no better place to go in the summertime for a heritage picnic. So there are things we could do that are not "prayer" – though it is prayer, eating together as a community is prayer.*

*Many of the same people use the House of Prayer again and again. I certainly want us to keep trying to reach out to the people who need it most. I'm not sure we got the format with Care of the Spirit right – it's hard to measure the effect it had on the lives of those women, so many of whom have known such terrible abuse in their lives. That program may have done more for the mentors. But we shouldn't give up on this, we must rethink it.*

*A lot of megachurches tend to be more evangelical. They envelope the family and they have career sessions and they help people with transportation issues and babysitter issues and all kinds of stuff. They're there, and it's an entertainment center. Well, Episcopal churches don't like to be entertaining. Okay, but the numbers are going south for the major congregations and I think that's because we've gotten more interested in pomp and in politics and in the power we have than in servant leadership and teaching... So I think the House of Prayer has got to buck the trend and reach out for the issues that people have. We need to talk about recovering spirituality. We need to talk about work and spirituality. And I think we need to talk about how you can live a spiritual life with your everyday stuff like cellphones and SUVs.*

*Where are the evangelicals? What kind of program do we need to offer to more Bible-centered groups in our own church?*

*Spirituality is being discovered by institutions now, even corporations. So how do we take advantage of that – not just take advantage, but support, and allow people from corporate organizations to be at the House of Prayer? Maybe during the work week there are opportunities to have people come up for individual reflection – supported by their organizations. Or maybe corporations could sponsor a day for employees at the House of Prayer.*

**2) Explore new (and old) ways to get the medium and the message out into the Diocese.**

*The strong participation of certain parishes always had to do with “integral people” who kept that parish aware of the House of Prayer and connected to it.*

*I’d always sort of hoped that the House of Prayer could develop a core of people who would be ready and available, say, to go to a parish church on Sunday mornings – to adult education or something like that – and get the word out. We’ve got to work with people where they are on Sunday morning.*

*Is it time to do another “Dog and Pony” show like we did in the early days, should we do that every ten years or so? Create a video of what the place is like and what goes on and who is involved there, and take it out into the farthest reaches of the Diocese?*

*We should go out and talk to parishes and not just talk to them – give them a taste of the experience of centering prayer, of silent prayer. If they can do it at home in their own parish for an afternoon maybe it won’t seem so threatening. So if we had a group of “disciples” who could go out and give mini-retreats, maybe more people would feel comfortable to come to the House of Prayer for a few days. Of course this shouldn’t be David’s responsibility. But maybe it could be an outreach of several congregations looking for a mission; or a cadre of elders who are not working full time anymore.*

*Word of mouth is very powerful in getting people to experience something new and so the board needs to take a more active role in recruiting groups to go up to the House of Prayer and begin actively engaged in that process. It’s easier sometimes to write a check than*

*to make a commitment to get five new people to the House of Prayer every year.*

*I remember distinctly when I was first on the board, our whole concept was that we would be able to take what we learned at the House of Prayer and take it out through the whole state. And maybe we have to assume that everyone can’t come to the House of Prayer. And we also have to balance the ambition of our outreach with the reality that part of the ethos of the place is in its smallness.*

*I would like to see us take some programming on the road...I think that under the aegis of the House of Prayer we could lead seminars and programs and take the mountain to Mohammed. You can’t expect the executive director to do all that so you’ve got to basically build a cadre of associate directors who will operate under the House of Prayer banner.*

**3) Don’t give up on reaching out in new ways to clergy. There has been a tension in engaging them in the House of Prayer from the first. But they are not only vital to the life of faith in the Diocese, and in need of spiritual renewal themselves; they are also a critical link between particular congregations and the life of the House of Prayer.**

*There’s always been this tension between soliciting support and help from the leadership of a particular parish without ever losing sight of the fact that it’s not a parish event or place up there. We need to be able to pull people, entice people, encourage people who are interested in doing this, in serving their time if you will. Now would really be a*

*powerful time to reinvent that wheel of reintroducing the opportunities to the present clergy. There's been tremendous turnover in the Diocese in the 20 years that have elapsed. And because it's heavy duty work to administer a parish, they don't have time to take the initiative. They're also living in a culture and a time still very suspect of clergy taking care of themselves.*

*valuable and be a great help and support.*

*Why not invite parishes, vestries, whatever, to give their clergy a gift of time away at the House of Prayer – maybe just on individual retreat or with their spouse? A by-product serendipitous effect of that would be to help parishes understand something of the expectations that are made on clergy. Those expectations are still severe. We've been talking an awful lot about wellness for decades now and it's still true throughout religious institutions that huge expectations are laid on.*

*(We) clergy very much like to spend time with other clergy. And we so rarely have the chance to do that in an unstructured way. Could the House of Prayer set aside weekdays or weekends throughout the year for clergy to be with each other on retreat and in prayer?*

*You could connect with existing clergy colleague groups and offer weekday retreat days at the House of Prayer - perhaps led by David, sharing his passions, exploring methods of prayer, maybe even giving some basic training in spiritual direction. The parish priest, after all, is the first line of spiritual direction for most people. It's something we'd all like to know something about and something we don't get trained in formally. This would feel*

## IDENTITY

**Core Question: The earliest focus groups towards planning the House of Prayer asked, What would this look like, feel like, as an Anglican home. How is the Anglican identity of the House of Prayer expressed? How is it continuing to evolve?**

### Reflections from the Interviews

*It is less Episcopalian and more universal now. And in many ways, I appreciate that, but I also don't want to lose our Episcopalian, Anglican heritage that is so precious. So that the trick and the challenge for the future may be to pray as to how that can be integrated. Or that our Anglican heritage can be honored and practiced while at the same time we're looking at the more universal aspects of how God shows God's self.*

*How do we need each other as clergy, and as parishes? That kind of question has the possibility of congealing in an institution like the House of Prayer...How does someone who really prays differently than I and who has a different spirituality, how is that person important? And of course implied in that question is...I'll only know by praying with that person, by coming together, by interacting.*

*I think about a Time magazine that came out several years ago, doing thumbs up on issues, and they would say "birth control" and "gays in the ministry" and the Catholic church had two thumbs down and the Methodist church had two thumbs up and the Episcopal church had one thumb up and one thumb down. And I have always felt that the most powerful thing about Anglicans is our ability to embrace diversity and our ability to see that there's a bigger picture and to say "yes/no" and to have it both ways.*

*I don't have a tangible answer to what is Episcopal identity except the ability to discover, the ability to explore a little bit.*

*I think one of the things David has brought is a real openness to learning from other traditions. I like the liturgy of the Anglican church, I also like that it allows you to think.*

*I think one of the ongoing questions for the House of Prayer is, what does it mean for it to be an Episcopal House of Prayer? In the early days, it was clearer and as it's found its feel, I think it's moved in a somewhat different -- maybe more eclectic, inclusive -- direction. And that's neither good nor bad, it's just a question. I think the sense of the Episcopal church as our ecumenical partner in dialogue is no longer as strong as it was.*

*We've been doing some surveys about various institutions in the Diocese. The House of Prayer is on it, and several people came back and said, "Why is this here? This is not diocesan." We have to get the balance of authority and freedom right -- and that's a very Anglican tension. An Anglican ethos is what is offered and at the same time, as we've also said from the beginning, all people are welcome.*

*I think our recent growth has come greatly from the overspin that the Bishop*



*gives and the visibility he gives David – and his support in terms of talking it up and mentioning it, letting David be front and center at a lot of diocesan events.*

*Are you more Catholic? Are you more Lutheran? Are you more low church Methodist type? Those kinds of questions are possible in the Episcopal church. And in being a broad church, do you dilute your identity by allowing too much difference of opinion within the church? So those are issues that are natural to the Episcopal church and less natural to some extent Lutherans or Catholics because you try to embrace as many people as you can, while still maintaining an Episcopal identity. This gets played out in the House of Prayer, in its programming, but its really an issue of the Episcopal Church.*

## A SENSE OF PLACE

**Core Question: What is the House of Prayer's contribution to the Abbey? How can we continue to nurture and develop the relationship between the House of Prayer and the Abbey and University?**

### Reflections from the Interviews

*This "House of Prayer" was so tied up with the vision of a couple of individuals and as they move on, it's just natural that the structures and programs that are left behind change. I mean, the Abbey community is changing too. And I think one of the questions is, "How will the House of Prayer and the Abbey keep reconnecting? And it may be in different ways in time, but to keep asking, how is that happening now?"*

*The Abbey is also looking at the phenomenon of "spirituality" out there. And when you get into that whole area of spiritual quest, I think our shared groping will take us to new places and into new ways of understanding what we're all being called to.*

*We're conscious of the fact that people from the House of Prayer come and join us and we're conscious of the fact that they are Episcopalian and of other faith traditions and yet they feel welcome. I think this has broadened our hospitality.*

*Seeing the House of Prayer helped build the case for the Abbey Guest House – which has been in the works for a long time but not that is going to happen. The House of Prayer has helped make this viable in our imaginations.*

*One of the things I liked as the architectural plans unfolded was the way the patron and architect were both concerned to exist in the midst of that*

*environment. I was delighted with the way they attended to the trees and the lay of the land...The natural setting is absolutely a part of the plan. I was a little accustomed to the style that unfortunately has been characteristic of Saint John's from the start, the way we cleared the woods for a hundred yards before coming in to construct something and then putting in a few ornamental trees when it's all done. Just as a physical reality, the House of Prayer has become an enhancement of the place and looks as though it belongs where it is and is very much at home there.*

*This is an important part of our consciousness now, part of our identity. This is who we are. At the end of our grounds, you have the Ecumenical Institute and the House of Prayer and Mary Stamps forming a Methodist Abbey. These are really historic developments and it's a great honor for Saint John's to have those institutions here.*

*The relationship and the contacts that David has with Saint John's has added a whole new dimension. And that ecumenical dimension is one of the strengths of the House of Prayer.*

*The Episcopal Church is an important witness to Collegeville. It also should be continuing to shape Saint John's. We are there as a living embodiment of what a real liberal Catholicism could be*

-- with women in ordained roles, our attitude towards sexuality -- we can talk about things down there that Saint John's can't really even talk about. Isn't that amazing? So you have this living embodiment of something, half a mile away from a center where officially these things are not supposed to be going on. That is very important if you think of Saint John's ultimately standing for liberal Catholicism ... to have a place embodying that, really, and keeping the conversation going.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic relationship has cooled very much the longer John Paul II has been pope. And intellectually and emotionally, there's not this movement towards the reconciliation of our churches that there was at that (founding period of the House of Prayer). This happened because there was an emotional, spiritual, heart community that was built up between the monastery and the diocese. I'm not sure that you have the environment today that would allow that to happen. It's a sort of miracle that this happened at that moment -- it was a good moment, but now that you have the institutional link, that means those relationships will not be broken.

In 2003, Episcopal General Convention is going to be held in Minneapolis. It would be great if we could have something up at Collegeville as part of the convention. It would be a gift to everyone who came. And it would be a witness to this positive relationship with the Catholic church at a time when so many Episcopalians think of that as a negative.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN DAVID KELLER AND KRISTA TIPPETT  
(excerpted and edited)

January and May, 2001

KT: This job at the House of Prayer was sort of a departure for you, wasn't it?

DK: Oh, it was a very new kind of ministry for sure. But it was an opportunity to do full time what I was really passionate about: to help people who lived very busy responsible lives to integrate a substantive life of prayer. And to open up the richness of 2000 years of Christian spirituality. And to focus on, how can contemplative living be made attractive to people? The church has not done a very good job with that aspect of our tradition. Almost everything the church does is group-oriented, especially the things we do well -- bible study groups, prayer groups, worship of course, outreach. The church has not done well in mentoring people in their individual life of prayer and valuing what they bring to the life of the church as essential. As a result people have thought, "well, that's my private life." The Church must regain its priority of mentoring people in personal prayer and meditation and of seeing the lives of its people as the primary venue of its presence in the world. This was the focus of my ministry in the mid 80s and the 90s and it led to the formation of the Centerpoint Parish Pilgrimage in which Lynn Bauman and I assisted congregations in the spiritual formation of their communicants.

KT: I think it was pretty visionary for you to have been talking about this in the early '90s. Were you aware of other people talking about it? Did you feel like you were charting new territory?

DK: Well, there were not a lot of us being intentional about integrating it into the life of the church in a very open way -- and in a way that would say, as Archbishop Ramsey, the former archbishop of Canterbury, said, "Any congregation that does not take the contemplative life seriously deserves the consequences that will accrue from that." Without that dimension we only have part of the vision and part of the richness of our tradition and of the life that's possible in Christ, because Jesus himself had this as an integral part of his own life. But there were people like Tilden Edwards at Shalem -- Shalem I think was already fifteen years old at that time, I remember going to retreats there in '87 and '88. And I was developing a program in Arizona called "Contemplation in a World of Action." It was exactly what we've been doing at the House of Prayer these last eight years but it was done in a diocesan programmatic level. So Tilden was one of the people, and Thomas Hand at Mercy Center in Birmingham, California. The Episcopal Cathedrals in Seattle and in Portland were doing this. Nancy Roth in North Carolina. There were people with this vision but it was not by and large something that was talked about and something that was, you might say, on the front burner nationally in the Episcopal Church.

KT: Was it in other churches more than the Episcopal Church?

DK: Centering prayer was definitely rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition in America through the efforts of Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating, although "Contemplative Outreach" didn't exist at that time. That has come out in the last ten years I think, and now

it's just going wild. Martin Smith is another person, of the Society of St. John the Evangelist. SSJE is an Episcopal Benedictine order. Although they have their own *Rule*, it's rooted in the *Rule of Benedict*. The oblate system in the Order of the Holy Cross, an Episcopal Benedictine order, also has been stressing this for years. But that's been very quiet, almost unknown. The average Episcopalian would not even know that we have monks, let alone how to practice contemplative prayer.

KT: How do you explain the way this has, as you say, gone wild? How has the House of Prayer been involved in that or part of that or felt it?

DK: By doing it ... by being a place where people can come either to learn contemplative prayer or to grow in their practice of contemplative prayer. And by being very visible -- thanks to Bob Anderson and Jim Jelinek, a very visible aspect in the life of the diocese. When I got here in 1994, there was barely any money. Board members had pledged support to make my salary and program possible for the first three years of full time operation, which was just an incredible thing for them to do, as well as a big risk. It was risky for all of us. We didn't know if the money would come.

KT: It was risky for you, too.

DK: I had no doubt that it would go and I don't think they did either, really. When I got here there was no infrastructure to speak of, and I didn't know what would work. So we just jumped in and started planning things. Some of them didn't work and some of them just took off. What really took off, and what have remained our most popular programs, have to do with contemplative prayer and integrating prayer and daily life: silent retreats or retreats about Christian spirituality, retreats about work -- Spirit in the Workplace -- retreats for women that deal with prayer, and being a woman or being a mother, or a parent. That first year I did a series of retreats called "Pathways to Prayer," a series of three. I think about half a dozen people came to all three but it was set up so you didn't have to.

Another important thing was that I started going to evening prayer at the Abbey Church. I didn't plan this before I got here, but it became an important part of my own life of prayer. And my worshiping there -- I didn't realize this at the time -- meant a great deal to the monastic community. It really began a rich life with that community that has led to a lot of joint things we're doing together and that has put the House of Prayer on the map within the Catholic constituency as well as the Lutheran world. So now I'm teaching courses at the School of Theology on spirituality and parish life and we're doing things jointly in their summer school, including Centerpoint workshops and retreats, because people from our Diocese and other denominations attend. That has helped get the word out. But the primary thing that has helped the House of Prayer grow is just people coming here and experiencing the House itself and experiencing what we do here. Mary Stamps, my associate, and I provide hospitality and we say Noontday prayer together most of the time.

KT: Down here?

DK: Down here. And when people are here, I invite them to pray in the Oratory. And congregations have come from a variety of denominations, and we advertise ... But it's just

people being here, experiencing the place and experiencing contemplative prayer here, that has helped the visibility of contemplative prayer as an important practice in daily life.

KT: I've had some really interesting conversations with people from the Abbey. I wonder if you could say some more about what your experience of praying with the Abbey added to your own spirituality and your own understanding of what this all means.

DK: Well, it would not be possible for me to be a mentor for others in spiritual life unless I'm growing myself -- and unless I'm being stretched beyond where I am. And so worshiping with the monks provided me a regular opportunity for that type of monastic prayer and for that total immersion into the Psalter which is part of monastic prayer, the root of the daily offices in our Book of Common Prayer. But it also gave me a community, and I got to know the monastic community here by praying with them before I ever got to know them as individuals. It also enabled me to learn about *The Rule of Benedict*, by worshiping with Benedictines and then gradually getting to know Abbot Timothy and Eric Hollas and Dale Lauderville who has been Dean of the School of Theology and Fran Hoefgen who is the Guestmaster and Fr. Columba Stewart, Professor of Monastic studies. And Cyril Gorman and John Hanson, monks who have become good friends. And there are lots of people, all of a sudden, who are not only monks but they were friends. That really helped me grow, because worshiping at the Abbey was a contemplative time for me. And oftentimes it's amazing how one or other of the psalms would speak to where I was at that time -- and it wasn't an easy time being the first director of this place. There were times when I really needed help and really needed spiritual growth and discernment. The times at the Abbey were great times of discernment for me.

KT: It's interesting...you talked about how what part of what this place brings to the life of the church is that it's given attention to individual spiritual life. And yet this place also offers you as the director - and also people who come here - this opportunity to join in common prayer, this ongoing community that is joined in prayer. So you really get both.

DK: Yeah, it's a symbiotic relationship. And of course, one of the first things that I wondered when I became director is, how can the House of Prayer and the Diocese and the Episcopal Church contribute to the life of this rich place that's here? But not in the make-it-happen way, not in the superficial "well we've got to contribute" mode; it had to be something of more substance than marching in each other's processions. Those things are essential and important, but how can we really contribute in an authentic transparent way to these two rich monastic communities and what goes on here? I trusted that it would happen if we just lived here long enough. One of the things that I realized afterwards was that having an Anglican priest worship at the Abbey -- and I'm not the first one who's worshiped consistently -- really gave the House of Prayer a great deal of visibility with the monastic community. I think praying together is essential for any group that's going to work together and live together, whether it's husband and wife, or whether it's the House of Prayer and a Benedictine abbey, or whether it's just two close friends or whether it's two colleagues in the same place.

KT: The point is, that's a hard thing to structure. And I guess the thing about the Abbey is that it just has this given structure -- it's like breathing.

DK: I told one of the monks recently that this has been a year of tremendous difficulty and transition in my own life. And praying with the monks has given me incredible discernment and strength -- even when I wasn't there praying with them -- because the community was established through prayer and that transcends space and transcends time. I encourage almost everyone who comes here to worship with the monks at St. John's, or at St. Benedict's. For some of them it's not a pleasant experience, but for most of them it is. They're carried off somewhere spiritually. And they're introduced to monasticism, some of them for the first time.

KT: I think also for Episcopalians in particular there's this surprising sense of homecoming in the liturgy.

DK: Well, it's just like our evening prayer because it is its source.

KT: Exactly. You make a connection that's always been there -- but which most of us don't make.

DK: Right. And it takes Episcopalians' breath away when they see the '82 hymnal there that these monks are using.

KT: What discoveries have you made? What has opened up for you in this world of contemplative experience through your time at the House of Prayer?

DK: That's a very good question. One of the things that's brought the biggest growth is realizing how hard it is to practice what I preach. And so being director of the House of Prayer and working with people has enabled me to go much deeper, you might say, into my own spiritual practice. People who come here and with whom I work, not just at these two monastic communities but also at other spirituality programs, have really mentored me and helped me understand more about contemplative life. There are some world-class people at St. Ben's and Saint John's and in Minnesota who aren't monastic. And so I've had a chance to learn more about the richness of our own Christian tradition -- the great spiritual classics, and who wrote them, and what their life was like. And I've learned more about *The Rule of Benedict*. As you said earlier in the interview, it's true that Episcopalians and also Lutherans who come here realize when they worship with the monks and at the House of Prayer -- and I use *The Rule of Benedict* often in retreats here -- that it's not something new, it's embedded in who we are, especially as Anglicans. That is something that has grown for me, to get back to an important Anglican root that I did not know was so strong. Another thing that has always been important to me -- well it hasn't always, but since the late '80s -- is Christian Celtic spirituality. I've had opportunity to grow in that through continuing education opportunities which the Board has provided.

KT: How did that start for you?

DK: When I was still in Arizona, this was in '89 and '90, I realized that what modern society is going through now is very similar to what was happening in the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries: major transitions, and conflict, and the world becoming immensely smaller. I wanted to find out what people were thinking and doing and how they were praying and how it affected the Christian path in that period of time. So I was over in North Wales studying that early period of Christian history on sabbatical. And in the context of being in

North Wales, I had a sense of coming home. I was just overcome by the beauty and the warmth of the place, and it wasn't some simplistic, romantic kind of thing. I met the man who would soon become the Archbishop of Wales, and I told him about it. He said, "tell me your mother's maiden name." When I said, "Benjamin," he said, "Well, there you have it. This is the land of Benjamin. There are more Benjamins in this part of Wales than anywhere else. As it turned out, my family roots are in North Wales.

KT: You didn't know that?

DK: I didn't know it. And my mother didn't know it, but I did trace all the way back to the fourteenth century and found direct relatives that far back. Being there and being around and meeting people who are Celtic, modern Celtic Christians, and who know a lot about ancient Celtic Christians, something that had been of interest to me became alive in a different way. I've had an opportunity at the House of Prayer to lead retreats on Celtic spirituality either by myself or with Charles and Janna Preble who are very knowledgeable about that and very Celtic in their own spiritual practice. And that has helped me personally. But I'm finding too that this is something we at the House of Prayer can contribute to Saint John's. As I'm sure you know, when the Cistercians came -- and they were Benedictine -- when they came to Britain, that eventually replaced the indigenous Celtic expression of Christianity in an institutional way. It didn't replace it in an indigenous way, but institutionally the church and Britain became Benedictine and monastic. It had previously been monastic and Celtic, heavily influenced by the desert ammas and abbas. What was I studying and what I was teaching here and what we were experiencing was a way of being Christian that influenced the Benedictine way of life. It predated the coming of Benedictine monasticism in Britain by at least 300 years.

KT: Do you talk to the members of the Abbey community about this?

DK: Yes.

KT: What do they think when you say that?

DK: Not all of them would agree about that influence. But the great thing is that the early Celtic monastic way of life had at its heart almost all the values that were important to Benedict. Therefore it's not a competition, it's just that the roots of Celtic monasticism and the roots of Benedictine monasticism are the same roots. One difference is that Celtic monasticism gave more emphasis to the Gospel of John than the Synoptics and to the mystical contemplative part; there's where Benedictine spirituality and Celtic spirituality are a little bit different. The Benedictine way of life has always been suspicious of the contemplative path. They emphasize work and study and prayer in community. And while there are Benedictine hermits, they're the exception. So one thing we have contributed here is that the Celtic spiritual path had a tremendous influence on the Anglican spiritual path. We're here bearing witness to this earlier manifestation of the Christian path. It's a wonderful creative tension, you might say ...

KT: It really is. It's wonderful.

DK: So part of what we contribute here is not simply a warm fuzzy; it is that we're different in some respects. The Celtic Christians expressed theology in more artistic than



scholastic ways. This may be the source of our Anglican comfort with ambiguity as well as traditional statements of doctrine. And so there's this wonderful creative tension -- and this has always been within Christianity. One of the most serious tensions has always been the fear that contemplative life will turn into pietism, will turn inward. If Benedict was adamant about anything, it was that work is an important part of contributing to the life of the community -- that it is in our life together as community that we discover the faithful presence of God. And our worship is what enables us to see the sanctity of our work and our study. The contemplative path would say yes to that, but the contemplative path would also say it is our experience of God in silence that enables us to see the world as God sees the world. And so it's a complementary relationship, it's not a competitive relationship, but there is that little bit of tension there.

KT: That's really nice. I'm glad that we got onto this. I think it's very important. You know Columba Stewart? I'm not sure if it was exactly this context but I think actually it fits, he used this phrase "intimate outsiders" to talk about how being certain of our own identity enables us to help others be clear about theirs. And that is in that creative tension you're talking about. In fact, in highlighting this difference you can be much more of an illuminating presence and even more insightful on the complexities of the other side?

DK: The House of Prayer, if anything, is a contemplative presence on these monastic grounds. I don't think we could be that unless we were intimate as Columba inferred, and unless we appreciated the tremendous depth and integrity of this monastic community. I realized after being here for about three years that Saint John's -- and this is also true for St. Ben's -- can be so inclusive and so hospitable to people from other traditions because they are so rooted in their own tradition. They know who they are, even though they are now questioning how that identity will be lived in the 21st century. They are rooted in tradition. And it's a living tradition and that gives you the freedom to take the risk of being inclusive and innovative. You don't have to worry about giving up your identity because you know who you are ... fundamentally.

KT: I think what you just said about your Celtic emphasis is really revealing of the particular way in which you come at the Episcopal character of the House of Prayer. It's not so predictable, you know? It's rich, it's nuanced... talk to me a little bit about that, about the Anglican identity, because I think that is sort of an issue. I think it's out there: what does it mean that this place is an Episcopal center, its relationship with the diocese, should it be that way forever, should it be more inclusive in a certain way? What are your thoughts on that? Or how do you see that evolving?

DK: My thought is that we are unequivocally and unapologetically Anglican and Episcopal, but we don't wave the flag. And as you notice there isn't an Episcopal flag anywhere around here, and as long as I'm director there won't be. Not because I don't think it's a good thing but because we try to live who we are and don't advertise it in that sense. Everybody in the Abbey knows that this is an Episcopal place. We celebrate the Anglican Eucharist. The *Book of Common Prayer* is in constant use here.

In addition to all this we have brought some of our most articulate Anglican scholars, theologians and spiritual leaders to the House of Prayer to share our unique experience of Christian life: Martin Smith, SSJE, prior of an Episcopal monastic community and Chaplain to our House of Bishops; Canon Donald Allchin, scholar of Celtic spirituality and

Anglican History; Margaret Guenther, Director of the Center for Spirituality at General Theological Seminary; Norvene Vest, an Episcopal Oblate of a Roman Catholic Benedictine Abbey and author of several books on Benedictine spirituality; Marcus Borg, New Testament scholar; William Franklin, Dean of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale and Anglican Historian; Lynn Bauman, former Dean of the Anglican School of Theology in Dallas; Patrick Thomas, a Welsh Anglican priest and scholar of Celtic Spirituality; and next summer, Stephen Smalley, one of the Church of England's finest New Testament scholars will be here for a five-day retreat of the spirituality of John the Evangelist and the Johannine community. Most of these Anglican men and women also lectured and help dialogue with monks, faculty and students at St. John's School of Theology while they were here, as well as at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Minneapolis.

When there are groups here, we do the Eucharist, morning or evening prayer, Compline from the *Book of Common Prayer*, the short family offices. So there is Anglican worship that goes on here, but not on a scheduled basis. For example, we don't have regular services here as if we were a congregation, and that would send the wrong message -- not only to the Abbey, but it would also send the wrong message to St. John's Episcopal Church in St. Cloud. Our Anglican worship is in the context of individuals and groups who are here on retreat. On occasion, Anglican prayer and worship form part of the prayer of groups and gatherings at the Abbey and School of Theology. Several years ago, the choir from St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral came to the Abbey and we led Anglican Evensong for the monastic community. The Abbot took us all to supper! We have also had many retreats for young people and confirmations classes from Episcopal congregations.

KT: Okay, so you want it to be clear that this is not a ...

DK: This is not a congregation. This is a ministry of the Episcopal diocese, although we're an independent institution. We're not funded and we're not part of the program planning budget. And that's important, really important, because the kind of ministry that we have is a ministry that I believe can't depend upon what the priorities are in a given five-year period or three-year period of the life of the diocese. We're about what's fundamental and that is the relationship, the practice of our relationship, with God -- as individuals and as congregations and as diocesan structure. But that also puts a great responsibility on us to make ends meet. We receive support in other tremendous ways. Bishop Jelinek couldn't be more supportive in his appreciation of us and use of us and recommendation of others to the House of Prayer.

Incidentally, I go down into the basement at least once a year, usually twice a year, and I get out the original visioning statements of fifteen years ago and read them. Just to check - are we on course? Not that we have to be exactly what it was, but I think we need to be congruous and complementary to the original vision... and we are clearly that. I have no reservations about saying that. But we're also more, and that's just something that has evolved.

In terms of our relationship with the diocese, the bishop brings his staff here a couple of times a year. We have diocesan organizations that come here for visioning or for retreats. We have congregations that come here -- not only for vestry retreats but for retreats for members of the congregation. It's pulling teeth to get clergy here, that's just something that we haven't really figured out. We have scheduled days when clergy can come and be

here with no program, but very few have come. A handful come to have a time apart, and it means a lot to them. Most of the clergy who do come here come with members of their congregations or their vestries for weekend retreats. A few clergy have come to our silent contemplative retreats.

KT: Outreach to clergy has come up a lot in my interviews. There is a concern out there that many of them are not more interested and involved.

DK: I think there are good reasons but maybe not justifiable reasons for that. The good reasons are that Bishop has two clergy retreats a year and then diocesan convention. And the clergy of the diocese are incredibly involved in diocesan ministries of various kinds.

KT: Yes, but coming here by themselves would be quite a different experience than doing any of those -- which are required.

DK: It would. Right. And clergy feel, I think, that part of it's enforced. Part of it is our God syndrome: we figure that the world can't keep existing if we're not on sight. There's just too much to do. It took me a long time to learn I can just let go of some stuff. I remember vividly when we were about a third of the way into raising a million dollars to endow the salary of the director and to build the Oratory, I got a call from the chair of the fund raising committee saying that it had to have specific information and we had to do this and we have to have two meetings, you know, within the next couple of weeks and everything and I said okay, I'll try to get it all together. And there were people coming for a retreat, and there was stuff going on and I just realized not only I can't do this, I don't want to do this. This is making me into something that is contrary to what the House of Prayer is all about. So in fear and trembling I called the chair of the committee back and I said, "I can't do it, I don't want to do it, I don't think we should be doing this so frenetically." And there was this long pause and the chair said, "Well, okay, we'll just make some other arrangements," and then called back -- I don't know, the next day or something -- and said, "You know, you're absolutely right and I'm really glad we didn't agree to do all of this." But it's hard to practice what you preach, and the church puts clergy into a position where they'll get burned out. And so it's kind of an oxymoron that the very thing that we need as clergy is the thing that our congregations don't give us time to do. One thing we don't want to do is to say to clergy, "you know, you're not spiritually strong because you're not coming to the House of Prayer and learning how to develop your prayer life." But there are three Presbyterian clergy, one who is a Synod Executive, the equivalent of the bishop, who come here like clockwork every month and spend an entire day here.

KT: Really? Every month?

DK: Every month. And when they first came, I led them in silent meditation for twenty minutes at the beginning of the day and the end of the day in the Oratory. Now they do the meditation themselves. And they're here like clockwork and the synod executive -- it means so much to him that now twice he has brought the synod executives from the Midwest here to do the same thing once a year.

KT: Talk to me about your perspective on how Buddhist kinds of approaches to meditation complement our tradition and how that's part of the life of this place.

DK: Well, as you know, we don't have any Buddhist retreats here although we came close last year.

KT: Don't you do Zen meditation?

DK: We do centering prayer, what I call root contemplative prayer, which is very similar and influenced by ZaZen, the Zen contemplative experience. And my personal experience of that is that Zen Buddhism has influenced and enlightened my own Christian path in a way that nothing else has done. And so that affects the House of Prayer. We practice all kinds of prayer here, not just silent imageless contemplative prayer. We do *Lectio Divina*, we do centering prayer, we do walking meditation, we do guided meditation. We're not pushing Zen contemplative prayer, but the reality is that the Zen Buddhist path is having a major influence on world Christianity. It is helping us listen to ourselves and listen to God. And when we listen to ourselves and listen to God we learn about ourselves and we are able to discern in ways that we can't by ourselves. Episcopalians have a tendency to work, work, work, work, and do, do, do, do, do and we do it well and we do wonderful things, but we also are at each other's throats too often, and clergy are burned out and laity get burned out, and we can tend to get turned in on ourselves and our own internal problems at the expense of the needs of the world. Vontemplative prayer at its heart is an opportunity to be close to what is most fundamental in our lives. That is the Divine Presence that is already within us. We carry around with us all the time that which is the most significant thing in our lives and we ignore it most of the time.

You know, the fifteenth and sixteenth and early seventeenth century Anglican divines were all contemplatives: Thomas Cranmer, Richard Hooker, Launcelot Andrews. They were all contemplatives, and you can see what they contributed -- not only to Anglicanism. I mean, think also of George Herbert, the Cloud of Unknowing. Of course Julian of Norwich was not an Anglican, she predated Anglican, but the Little Gidding, that whole community -- has richly influenced the Anglican church. So few know about this. It's been a very carefully guarded secret that Anglicans are contemplatives and that our leadership in the formative part of the Anglican communion were contemplatives and in fact they were people who really understood the theology of the earliest Christian communities that has to do with theosis and deification, that the purpose of the Christian path is to enable each person to move from being created in the image of God to manifest the likeness of God in our lives. Take Second Peter, where Peter says it is our vocation to participate in the divine nature. And the way that we participate in the divine nature is by opening up ourselves to who we are. And participating in God is at the root of the theology of Hooker and Andrewes and Cranmer and Herbert and recently people like Evelyn Underhill and Donald Allchin. These are great Anglican mentors we help people get to know at the House of Prayer as well as their mentors from the Patristic period and the period of Desert monasticism and the Greek hesychasts. You do not have to be a scholar to understand the wisdom of these roots of our Anglican tradition. People with no formal theological education have expressed gratitude that they can "meet" these great mentors at the House of Prayer.

KT: And it's true that when I think of those people I think of accomplishments first, right?

DK: Well everybody thought that Hooker was writing about church polity and church laws and in fact he was, but he was writing about the structure that makes this possible. That's very Eastern Orthodox. From the Eastern Orthodox point of view, the church is an environment of grace and the structure of the church is a structure that enables this movement of grace in people's lives as they live from day to day to take place through the sacramental life of the church. The House of Prayer exists to remind us of that, to go back into what's most fundamental in our lives as Christians. It's fundamental to us as Anglicans because we're Christian. And I'm convinced that contemplative prayer will make us more Anglican in that sense, more of who we are because we will be as rooted in tradition as these monastics in Collegeville and St. Joseph are. There's a lot of suspicion nowadays about contemplative prayer because of the New Age movement. The reality is that the New Age movement is a very positive thing, even in its most self-centered manifestations, because it wouldn't exist if Anglicans and Lutherans and Roman Catholics and other mainstream Christian faith communities were paying more attention to this personal spiritual path.

KT: It's one manifestation of something that's much bigger -- this spiritual hunger and this curiosity.

DK: Right. In retreats here, I've often used an ad Ford Motor Company had in *Time* magazine about four years ago, when they were really pushing the Broncos ... no, the new Explorers, a step up from the Bronco, I think. Anyway, it's a picture of an Explorer with all five doors open, the hatchback door open and there is this thirty-something male sitting in the lotus position in front of the Explorer which is sideways to the viewer and there are all kinds of things around -- jet skis and motorbike and a snow machine and all that kind of stuff. The caption reads: "If you want to be one with everything, you have to have one of everything and a way to carry it around." They paid a lot of money for that ad -- but the advertising company would not have believed that would sell Explorers if they weren't in touch with what you just said, this growing awareness of the spiritual dimension of human life that has atrophied. Our bodies know that. Our physical bodies remember the spiritual dimension. We have repressed it for so long that our bodies are screaming for it and finally our minds are beginning to catch up. And that's another thing that the House of Prayer exists for. When people realize that there is more to church than going to church on Sunday, and more to it than the Bible and the sacraments and the surface structure of the church -- and I don't mean this in any kind of a pejorative way -- when people realize what's behind all this, the church consistently fails in leading them into that deeper experience of the divine. We don't have mentors, particularly lay persons who, when a person comes to that, can say, "come with me." And the church by and large doesn't know what to do with people like that.

KT: No, and it loads its clergy down with other jobs.

DK: People who are attracted to the House of Prayer are oftentimes people searching for a spiritual practice separate from the corporate life of the church but not disconnected from the church. And the House of Prayer has been instrumental in helping, I think, and that will ultimately feed into the life of the church because the church is not created by human beings. The church is gathered by the life of the spirit in individuals who come

together. And that faith community eventually forms an institutional structure that is supposed to support that life of grace.

KT: How has what is happening within these walls evolved? One thing some people will observe is that there are perhaps too many vestry retreats.

DK: First of all, I don't agree that we should limit the number of vestry retreats that are here. I think there are at least three types of things that take place here. One is the mentoring in contemplative life -- which is saying, to the church, that this rich part of our tradition is something we cannot do without. The second is to open up the richness of our tradition through conferences, seminars, retreats or whatever -- a retreat on Julian for example, or the Theology of the Eucharist which we did in December, or the Theology or the Spirituality of Being a Mother or a Father, or Spirituality and Work. The third is to allow groups who have something to do -- whether they're from the church or groups from business, health care, government, whatever -- do it in a different way that allows the spiritual dimension to influence what they are doing. This space does its work without a word being spoken. One of our best customers is the St. Cloud School District.

KT: Really?

DK: We have administrators and principals and social workers from the St. Cloud School District here three or four times a year. Yes, they are doing some visioning, they're doing some interpersonal relationships, but they're doing it here. And I tell them our policy, that you have to embed in your design for being here reflection and prayer, but we don't dictate what that will be. I don't check up on them. The last time they were here, they were doing an exercise very similar to lectio divina. I know that as human beings who are spiritual beings -- in the best sense of the word -- as a result of being here and doing the work that they do here, they are able to be more compassionate and more effective as teachers and administrators, more humane. And if that isn't prayer, I don't know what prayer is. Our life is our prayer: how we live as a human being, how we work. You don't have to be a monk, you don't have to be doing church-y things.

KT: You're not willing to make that distinction between doing business here and being here in prayer ...

DK: No, not in the strict sense. And I'm not saying that the House of Prayer does not have a very intentional ministry in the life of the church. It does. I'm saying two things. One is, the distinction between sacred and secular is false. It's a philosophical distinction that human beings have made. The best way to teach people that is to let them do business things here, to realize that building budgets is a spiritual task, that you don't have to be in the Oratory sitting in silence in order to be doing a spiritual work. I would not want the House of Prayer to become a place that's just space for rent -- and that's what the early visionaries were adamant about. Just to make ends meet, we're not going to just fill the place. And I'm very conscious of proportions, so that is controversial in a sense and it always is a tension. I told the Board a couple of years ago that I believe our mission is to be small-time, to be here and to have a life here for those who come here, especially those who come on a regular basis. They're ... we're ... ordinary people and we're living ordinary lives and some people have more responsibility and more leadership and more influence than others. But we're here for the folks, too, who are being a mother every day,

being a teacher every day, being a ... whatever, whoever we are. And that is the venue in which we're called to be bread for the world, to be Christ present in the world. This is a place that can help people live their life as a prayer. That is what the House of Prayer is all about: in a variety of ways to assist people so that their life can be their prayer, so that they can be a house of prayer. That includes prayers and it includes spiritual practice but the ultimate prayer is for each of us to be God's presence in the world. That is our ultimate prayer. And that's what this place is all about in several dimensions. One is a reminder that that's our call, that our life should be our prayer and that our life is our message. People talk about preaching the Gospel, but the best preaching that we do is the way we live. In a practical sense, we can open that up and say okay, it takes showing up for prayer. It's not so simple. People laugh usually when I say there's only one real prerequisite for prayer and everybody says, oh, what is it? I say: showing up. We have people who come to the House of Prayer as individuals for a day or several days. We have had spouses here together, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons. People come for rest, quiet, discernment, to grieve, to give thanks, for spiritual direction, for R&R and for deep contemplative prayer. We have people who bring a small group of friends here, for celebration, study and prayer.

KT: Say something about the architecture, about how that is such a central facet of what goes on here.

DK: I can say from a personal point of view that I've been to a lot of retreat centers in my adult life, and when I was an adolescent, but it was when I came here to this place that I had the desire well up in me, "boy, I would love to be the director of this place." And something in me recognized that this architecture enables opportunities to take place for spiritual formation and growth that other places don't have.

KT: So what is it?

DK: It's the combination of wood, glass and stone. It's the warmth of the wood, the challenge of the stone. It's the location in the woods – exactly the right place for this to be. It's the way you come into the place but you don't know what's here until you get in. And there's space to put your stuff down, so you don't have to immediately be conscious of where am I going to go or what am I going to do...? You can just kind of walk into this cathedral ceiling living room with a real stone fireplace and the fact that the natural world is present in every room in this place. There isn't a single room that isn't connected with the natural world, and so there is a sense of presence here. It's the combination of color and space. Like all good architecture, it defies explanation, just like a poem. You can't pin a poem down and you can't pin the House of Prayer down. But it's inspired architecture and John Cuningham is both an artist and a person of great spirit.

KT: He's also a great storyteller.

DK: Yeah. And he listens and so do his staff and probably it's because John and his senior colleagues know how to recruit staff who listen. And John listened to the vision of this place and designed this place so that it would be ... the way I characterize it is that when you walk in the door, it disarms you. What that means is, you're ready to be here and nowhere else. You can let go of what you left ... of what you've brought with you even. And just be here and a comfort level sets in. You can empty yourself and let go of

expectations. And it's because there's a combination of spaciousness – but also, the rooms are small. They're little nests where you can go into your nest and just have a place.

Also - one thing I've realized is that when people come here, part of why they love to be here is they can just walk out into the back lawn or woods or they can walk out and look at the farmland across the street. So it's both the agriculture and the woods and the access to the hiking trails at Saint John's that really have an influence on people when they are here. And we do not cut a shrub or a branch or a tree down unless it's deformed or it's going to be dangerous to the building or to people. And when the meditation path was built by a Jesuit friend and my spiritual director and mentor, Thomas Hand from Mercy Center in California, while he was a scholar at the Institute writing on contemplative prayer -- it took him from the 26th of August until the 23rd of December to build the meditation path in the woods. Two hours a day, every day, as a spiritual discipline. He recycled everything, there was no brush pile. Everything was cut into four inch sections and thrown back into the woods and he did it in such a way that you don't even know the meditation path is there unless you're on it. And that's just important to us. We're planting trees out in front so that eventually the Oratory will be surrounded by forest which it is on three sides now. In twenty years the Oratory will sit in the woods just like they had grown up around it. We planted forty tree. We're going to plant forty more trees. We planted honeysuckle and high bush cranberry and sugar maple and bur oak and another type of oak.

KT: Are you doing that yourself? You and Mary?

DK: No, it's beyond what we can do. We do our part but we have a local landscaper. But part of our annual appeal is to solicit money to make that possible.

KT: So, I'm sure that we just talked about a couple of the things which you had described as some of the high points and the most important things about being here and the Oratory is obviously a great, great addition.

DK: Well before I say more about the Oratory I just have one more comment and then get me back to task on that. In reference to our Anglican presence, the Oratory fits with the House of Prayer but it was designed so that it's different. Yet it's congruous architecture. It also fits with the woods. But you have no clue as to what's inside when you look at it from the outside. That symbolizes our journey with God, a willingness to go into something that looks like something on the surface but when you get in, it's a whole different ballgame and so it takes that that doing, that going in. The structure itself is very traditional in its sacred geometry; for one thing, it is cruciform. It has components that form a Celtic cross. The pattern in the carpet and the alcoves and the circle in the center form a Celtic cross. And that's intentional, so that the people who sit on the floor are the corpus, we are Christ. We become Christ once again as we sit. But there is no permanent Christian symbolism within it, and that was quite controversial when it was being planned. Just the other day, Richard Bresnahan, the resident potter, who is very well known in artistic circles, said that for him the presence of the Oratory on this campus is so important because it is unapologetically Christian and yet in an institutional sense it doesn't say we're Christian, so that it invites people from whatever tradition they are in to be in there and to be in prayer. And yet we have icons, we have crosses, we have labyrinths, we have sculptures, and we have lots of things in there that focus specifically on our Christian path. But they're all movable according to the liturgical year or the event. But the place itself is



a cross and yet it's a cross that is so subtle that it does its work without being in your face to people who might not want to be in a place that's so clearly and in some cases austere Christian. And Richard was saying that for him, that's the contribution to this place.

KT: Does he come there to pray?

DK: Next Thursday he is bringing a class that he teaches here and I'm going to talk to them about meditation and we're going to be in the Oratory twice for meditation.

KT: Are there individuals and groups who just regularly come?

DK: There is a group of faculty and students who come every day Monday through Friday for an hour of meditation. And that's something they do on their own.

KT: The same people?

DK: Mm-hmm. Well others ... they have some that come and go but there is a core of six or eight who come. And other groups come. The Oratory is in fairly constant use by individuals or by groups. It is used by groups that are here on retreat and is open 24 hours at those times. Local churches use it. A group of Lutheran and Roman Catholic bishops come once a year. Leaders from denominations represented in the Minnesota Council of Churches use it; Bishops Jelinek brought them the first time and they keep returning.

KT: And it is open for that, right? It's there for people to come.

DK: It is. And I just tell people to call to make sure there is not a group here that wants to use it so there isn't competition for space. Every Wednesday we have an hour of meditation and people from the communities that surround this place come, people from the monastic communities, the student body, staff. Sometimes we have two, sometimes we have twenty, twenty-five. We never know.

KT: What haven't we talked about?

DK: There are two other things that come immediately to mind, three. For me personally, the greatest fringe benefit is the people who come, experiencing their spirituality and their wisdom. I learn so much about what life is like, and what the church is like, from the people who come here, who live in the church, in daily life, a great variety of vocations and situations and life style. And so that's been a tremendous thing for me to see them. And some of these people fortunately, for me, and I'm sure for them, come back fairly often -- three, some of them four, five times a year. And over the period of the last almost seven years to see them change and mature and grow -- and I don't say that in a patronizing way -- I mean it's obvious and they have done some substantive things in society and in their churches. And others have done substantive things just by being the ordinary person they are but being a person of prayer. So that's one thing.

Another blessing has been the broad base of denominations that come to this place. We have Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, Baptists, two branches of Lutherans, Episcopalians of course, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists ... so it is a House of Prayer for all people. A high priority for me has been the accessibility and inclusiveness of

our retreats and programs. Our retreats on contemplative prayer have drawn people from a variety of ages (including teens), races, denominations and walks of life. Our methods are simple and easily learned. The best way to learn meditation is to "do it" in a group where there are experienced people and novices who learn from each other. The courses at the School of Theology and the workshops and retreats at the House of Prayer are designed so that many things usually taught and experienced at seminary, yet are a rich part of our spiritual tradition, are accessible to people who have not had opportunities like this before...and they welcome it. In the Fall of 2001 we will begin an 18-month Internship in the Art of Leading Christian Meditation for persons from a variety of vocational backgrounds who want to lead meditation not only in their congregations, but in business, health care and community venues.

And going back to an earlier question, there is still no danger that the House of Prayer would be taken over by other denomination. We are aware of the volume of use, and right now it's clearly at least 60-65% Episcopalians who come here. The Board is 60% Episcopalian, in fact, we're more right now, closer to 75%. But I am convinced that we must have people on the Board from a variety of denominations. And working with the Board has been another great gift for me. This place would not be what it is without the Board. It's a working Board committed to what the House of Prayer exists for in their own lives and in the society at large. They not only give great financial sums proportionately, not all of them are wealthy people, but they give proportionately -- but they give of their time and they do mundane things that just wouldn't get done by me and Mary. And so to work with a group like that has inspired me tremendously. I teach a course on the spirituality of collaboration at St. John's School of Theology/Seminary. The life of the House of Prayer is a living example of what I teach in that course and it has been from its very beginning.

KT: Has the Board become more ecumenical since you arrived? I think it has, hasn't it?

DK: Oh, without question.

KT: What is the benefit of that, that you observe? How has that changed things?

DK: What it has done is shown clearly that other denominations are experiencing what we are in the Episcopal church -- in terms of our need for contemplative prayer and the need for spiritual formation, for congregations to look more intentionally at their life as a place that is an environment of grace, where people are mentored in their life in Christ. It helps us see that we preach the Gospel by the way we carry out our administrative work as well as in the pulpit and in other ways. But the denominations who come here give a richness to this place because of what they offer about living the Christian life. We learn from each other. Sometimes they're mixed, so that we have some of each at a given retreat. And at other times all the people will be Lutheran or Roman Catholic, for example.

I initiated something else which has been a tremendous source of growth for me. I submitted a proposal to the Abbey and the School of Theology for the formation of an Institute for Contemplative Studies and Practice -- balancing the study and practice, because there's such a rich background and talent here of the Christian tradition of spirituality and the people who teach it and who live it. I include the House of Prayer in that. But how can we make that available to the widest possible constituency, and not only

graduate students, and not only people who can afford or take the time to come to retreats? Several things have happened. The House of Prayer is collaborating with Saint John's Abbey and the School of Theology in jointly sponsoring retreats and seminars and courses. I've taught six courses at the School of Theology in the last two and a half years. They bring people together from a variety of denominations. They are one credit courses on such things as "Jesus at Prayer" -- which is, how can the prayer life of Jesus influence our own prayer life, looking at his life of prayer. Another was the "Spirituality of Collaboration." What is behind collaborative ministry? Is it just an efficient way of doing things or is it deeper than that? And what we discover in that is that God is collaborative and the Incarnation is talking about collaboration in a big way.

KT: Yes.

DK: And how does that influence the way we want to consider doing things in the church? "The Spirituality of Vestries and Parish Councils", "Spiritual Resources for Local Congregations" and the Centerpoint workshops and retreats are examples. These courses have been a great resource, close at hand, for our diocese and many Episcopal congregations. Because I am Anglican the courses reflect our perspective and I am "up front" about that. Yet, we hear and discuss a variety of perspectives in the courses. Last summer I led a three day retreat for Roman Catholic clergy, with a Roman Catholic priest, focusing on how our priestly ministry is the same or different from what we felt we were called to be. And what are the things that are stressors and dysfunctional and what are the things that support us? These men had to have been in ordained ministry at least ten years, so there were two who were ten years in ministry and a couple who were near retirement. And it was the first time for all of them that they had ever been to a retreat like this. I mean, they had been to retreats but not a retreat where they could really be safe and talk about what their priesthood really is and their loneliness, their passion -- I mean their passion for their ministry -- and their passions in all of, everything. And I told them was that it was an incredible honor -- I felt like someone who lives down the block who had been invited into a family talking about the intimacy of their own family life, to help them facilitate that kind of a family dialogue. We've also done jointly sponsored retreats. In October 2001, I will lead a retreat for Roman Catholic and Episcopal clergy. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Saint Paul and Bishop Jelinek are co-sponsoring it. There will be Episcopal clergy, male and female, praying with and reflecting on ministry with Roman Catholic priests. The implications for mutual support and ministry are enormous. So you know the ecumenical dimension of this has been an immeasurable pleasure for me and an honor and humbling in real ways, humbling. At a time when Roman Catholic/Anglican relations are not all that healthy, to be asked to be the first non-Roman Catholic to preach in the Abbey Church on a Sunday morning was awesome. I had the decision to make, do I preach a pro-forma thing -- that ecumenism is great? Or do I really preach the Gospel for the day from my own personal Anglican perspective?

KT: And you preached the Gospel for the day?

DK: I preached the Gospel for the day and I didn't know whether I'd be thrown out of the Abbey Church or not ... I don't really mean that, but you know you have to be who you are without crossing inappropriate boundaries. I knew I had to be me and I had to be Anglican and it was an awesome experience. But it was also an experience where we knew we had to decide ahead of time that I would not receive the sacrament, because I was

in a public liturgical role in the Sunday Mass. That was a really significant thing. I wasn't the first Protestant or Anglican who had preached at a communion service here, but it was the first Sunday that someone who was not Roman Catholic had preached. I told the Abbot and others afterwards that I was in the midst of the Body of Christ in just as efficacious a way as if I had received the bread and the wine.

KT: What else?

DK: It's just such a privilege to be part of this place. This place is making history all over the place. And to have Mary Stamps as a colleague is a great privilege. She's not an employee, she's a gift from God. And the fact that the Abbey has invited her as a Methodist woman to begin a retreat center, I mean a monastery, is an amazing thing. And she's going to take her final vows as the abbess of a Methodist monastery in the Abbey Church on the first of February. Mary works three-quarter time and her position was an intentional evolution of staff functions here. When I first came, George, Elaine and Irma had all "done what it takes" to keep the place going and to give it life. I did the laundry, bookings, light maintenance, some housekeeping, clerical work, PR, administrative work and led retreats. Mary's position and her diligent work takes in most of the clerical administrative work, bookings, record keeping, laundry, etc. That gives the Steward (the name I prefer to "Director") more time for planning and leading retreats, teaching, PR, planning, working with congregations, etc. Mary shares, also, in providing hospitality and in caring for this place. Her presence adds a rich dimension of care and warmth.

One other thing that has happened to me personally is a renewal of my awareness of how integral Eucharist is in my life and -- oh, it has been so formative since I was a little child.

KT: Through experiencing that at ...?

DK: Through experiencing the Eucharist here, by being close to graduate students, and through my interest in Dom Virgil Michel, who was a monk here and who was the father of the American Liturgical Movement in North America. And through being involved with liturgical discussions and ecumenical worship at the School of Theology. I was invited to be part of an international dialogue on liturgy, "Around the Table." I'm one of two Anglicans and we're on five continents now. We're connected by e-mail and we share issues of inculturation and we also share very mundane things. I had an e-mail from Steven Onyeba in Uganda saying that the clergy in Uganda -- and this is Catholic clergy -- depend for their food, literally, and their clothing literally on the people that they minister to. They're not salaried in any way. And their people are dying of Ebola and they are dying from the revolution that are going there and they're terrified and they don't have anything. The priests don't have food, they don't have clothes, they don't have a way ... I mean, their life is just really ... and so he wrote and, in a way that retained his integrity, said he couldn't bear to ask for help and yet he needed help. And so at a retreat at the House of Prayer -- and we never take offerings -- I said to the group, I just got this e-mail from Steven Onyeba and I want to invite you to help if you can financially to a situation that is a real crisis. In five minutes we had almost \$400, which over there is an immense amount of money. Later, at my suggestion, the Abbey designated a Sunday offering for Stephen's work in Uganda and over \$1,000 was raised. So, you know, there's an essential part of my personal relationship here, that these kind of ecumenical ties aren't based on

let's see how close we can get, get together, but let's just care for each other. Once again it boils down to hospitality.

Another really exciting connection is that each year The House of Prayer collaborates with The Friends of St. Benedict and we have what's called a Benedictine experience. It brings people from all over the country who want to experience the values and the life of the Benedictine Rule. They come here and they're here for four or now it would be five days. Monks from St. Benedict's and from Saint John's come and tell about the different aspects of Benedictine life, and I give two talks now on what does this mean for us who aren't monastic and have no desire to be monastic. This is something the House of Prayer provides for this Abbey: a way for the monks and the sisters of these two communities to share the richness of their life with people from all over the country. Granted, they already do that with their oblate program, but this is a way to do it together that enriches us and also affirms them and helps them articulate what they live for, what their life is and what their passion is. And it enables Episcopalians to see how much Benedictine spirituality and worship have formed who we are as Anglicans.

KT: How do people from all over the country find out about it? Word of mouth again?

DK: Part of it is word of mouth, part of it is ads -- I took out ads in *Episcopal Life*, the national magazine, though we can't afford to do it very often, it's so expensive. The *Living Church*, of course, *Soundings* -- and part of it comes through connections that I brought to the House of Prayer. Any director who comes, my successor will come, and she or he will have connections and so we will expand.

Something else I want to mention before we finish. Recently, at a Board meeting, someone said, what can we do to get more people of color to the House of Prayer? And at another retreat someone mentioned that spiritual direction in its popular manifestation is really a middle, upper middle class phenomenon. So the issue has come up, shouldn't we be working harder to get people of color or people from lower incomes to the House of Prayer?

The reality is that we have a policy that no one should be prevented from coming here because they couldn't afford it. A considerable number of people who get some financial aid. The Native American community pretty much by choice chooses not to be at the House of Prayer -- because, in the words of one of their leaders, "we don't need it." And that's great, I just think that's an incredibly positive statement. It is not a rejection of the House of Prayer. The Native American community gave their own liturgical blessing to the House of Prayer when it was dedicated. Native Americans come here as retreatants. But they are saying that the venues for their individual tribal paths are where they live. They do not need to be here to pursue that. They have a more indigenous way of living their faith in daily life. What I have not wanted to do is to play with Native American spirituality by having retreats here entitled "Native American Spiritual Resources" or something like that. I think it would be patronizing and any of the Native American leaders I know wouldn't do it in the first place. As I said, Native Americans come here, as individuals and diocesan groups concerned with ministry with Native Americans have met here.

I've spent most of my adult ministry with Native Americans, living with them, and that's important to know in what I'm about to say. We tend in this day and age to say, well

we've got to have people of color in any program or it's not going to be a good program. Or we've got to have a program for very low income single mothers, which we do at the House of Prayer, or for African Americans or for Hmong or whatever, and we never think that that program is deficient if White people aren't there or African Americans aren't at a Hmong event. My point is this: if the House of Prayer is a ministry that attracts and ministers to people of middle and upper middle class right now, what's wrong with that? That's a tremendous segment in our world. And in fact, it is a segment of the population that right now -- it won't be always, but right now -- can have an extremely positive influence on our institutions in what we call secular society for creative transformation and change.

So I don't feel apologetic about the ministry of the House of Prayer attracting primarily middle and upper middle class people. These are people for whom this is a great need. There is nothing to be apologetic about for that and we do everything we can to include other people. And we can ... you know we can do more. And that isn't to say that we won't and shouldn't have more people of color or people of lower income here. Our "Care of the Spirit" program has brought very low income single others here twice a year for six years. They come to look within themselves and find affirmation of spirit and God's presence. Some of the original mothers now have leadership roles in the program, which now collaborates with Episcopal Community Services. I don't buy the perspective that somehow our ministry is incomplete or deficient or not fully Christian -- which some people go so far to say -- because we don't include everybody or don't bend over backwards to include everybody. Having said that, our Program Committee is working hard to find ways we can minister with and to a wider variety of people.

There are some African American people now who come regularly and one of those people, I hope, will be a Board member soon. And I spent twenty years in Alaska living and working with Athabaskan Indians and Inupiat and Yupik Eskimos, and I've learned something about leadership in other cultures. I've learned that White people can be very patronizing in assuming that people of other cultures want to be involved in what you're doing. In fact, when I was living in Alaska one of my best friends who is an Indian, a priest, taught me something really wise. I was bending over backwards to try to include Native Americans in what the diocese was doing, and it wasn't happening. I was kind of down in the dumps about it. And I was venting on Titus and saying "I'm just frustrated. Are we doing the right thing?" And Titus said, "David how long have you lived with us? You still haven't learned". And he said, "The reason we don't take on the things you're offering is that we don't think they're important. They're important for you and for your culture but they aren't what we need right now. It was the most loving thing he could have said, even though it was really hard to take. So I've learned from that, that maybe the thing to do is not to just bend over backwards and say, let's just get people of color and Native Americans and Hmong people here and do something for them. Let's wait and see. Let's listen. If we can be open and in dialogue, they will lead us to mutual work.

KT: And it is getting more diverse, even if they're White Presbyterians, right? I mean those differences matter too.

DK: I think we have to live within the limits of who we are at the given moment.

**House of Prayer Oral History  
PROJECT DETAIL**

Forty individuals were interviewed, and are listed below. A (b) denotes members of the board at the time of the project. In addition, I conducted informal conversations with various clergy at the suggestion of board members. I studied extensive files and documents. The oral history archive will be housed at Saint John's, and will include this report, complete transcripts of all interviews, and select background documents.

Doug Baker (b)	Columba Stewart, OSB
Denise Reilly (b)	Kilian McDonnell, OSB
David Keller	Lucy Mack
John Gould (b)	Richard Champ
Jim Schwarz (b)	Nell Hillsley
Pat Blakely (b)	Joyce McFarland
Katy Carlsen (b)	Dale Launderville
Tom Darnall (b)	Cathy Cella (b)
Mary Darnall	Emily Wilmer
Jim Delameter	Lou Ann Tigue (b) (by telephone)
Heidi Eales (b)	Margo Maris (by telephone)
Jean Freeman (b)	Thomas Hand (by telephone)
Rody Hall (b)	Elizabeth Swenson (by telephone)
Rev. Tom Harries (b)	
Eric Hollas, OSB (b)	
Dick Howard (b)	
Mary Reuter, OSB (b)	
Margaret Wurtele (b)	
Bill Franklin	
John Cunningham	
Tom Johnson	
Hilary Thimmesh OSB	
Bob Anderson	
George Richmond	
Irma Wyman	
Dan Pearson	
Charles Preble	
Rita Bartlett	
Linda Shelin	
Ollie Rose Olsen	
John Cowan	