

**WITH COMPANIONS FOR THE JOURNEY**



**James Parks Morton**

AN ANNOTATED MEMOIR

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An annotated memoir of the life and work of James Parks Morton for his family, friends, and colleagues.

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With my parents, Vance and Virginia Parks Morton  
photo credit: family collection

## Iowa City

The model room was pure magic. It was located in the vast basement of the new university theater, and the year was 1937. I was an only child, seven years old. My father was a professor of drama at the University of Iowa, in Iowa City, home of the original gold-domed state capitol where President Obama also announced his first election victory, in 2008.

Down the hall from my father's office in the theater basement and adjacent to the actors' makeup and dressing rooms was the magic model room. It had floor-to-ceiling gray steel shelves on all four walls. But in spite of its secular, no-nonsense austerity, the model room had a surprisingly religious impact on my early life. I was obsessed by it.

On the cold steel shelves were scores of exquisite miniature models of theater stage sets. The building of these glorious theater models was a curricular requirement for all graduate students in the department of theater scene design, headed by Prof. Arnold Gillette, who had decreed: “My students have to know how architectural stage sets would look in three dimensions—therefore: models, not just two-dimensional drawings.”

All together the models illustrated the architectural history of theater scene design, from the Greek amphitheaters for Sophocles’s tragedies, to the medieval cathedrals for the Christian mystery plays, to the elegant drawing rooms in Chekhov’s country estates, to Thornton Wilder’s modern urban street scenes for *Our Town*. Literally every time I went to my father’s office—about twice a month—I spent a half-hour in the model room.

Arnie Gillette and my father had adjacent offices and were good friends as well as professional associates. Arnie knew of my love affair with the model room and asked my father if I would like to have a model after his annual thinning of the collection. My father told me of this fabulous possibility, and several weeks later the great day arrived.

Arnie had selected an unusually large model theater built of wood—not a model of a stage set for a specific play, but a model theater for many different kinds of productions. My model had a large proscenium arch framing the stage and more than a dozen moveable vertical wooden scenery flats for my future productions.

In retrospect, my model was totally different from all other models in the jewel box that I loved to visit. My model was like a box of paints and an empty canvas—obviously a challenging educational project to stimulate young students to create their own different theatrical jewels.

So the great theater model came to live in my bedroom at 445 Garden Street, where I designed room after room and building after

building. Elegant miniature furniture and even tiny silver candlesticks for formal dinners arrived from my parents’ enthusiastic friends, all coinciding with a new book of photographs of miniature model rooms created by Mrs. James Ward Thorne, based on famous historic English and American houses. Subsequently, her model rooms were exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago, and the three Mortons journeyed to the Windy City to behold the amazingly beautiful, very expensive tour de force of Mrs. Thorne.

Arnie thought that with my new theater I would produce my own plays, like my father, but in fact I remember only producing one play for a fourth grade classmate’s birthday party: much screaming, not an artistic success. Producing plays was simply not my passion. Instead, the many hours I spent in the magic model room in the theater basement (not to mention my own new model theater and the many days and weeks I spent in my bedroom) were the gateway to my abiding love of the jewel box of architecture itself.

It is no surprise that thirteen years later at Harvard I gravitated to three different history of architecture courses, each of which required the building of a model. The three models I built were all of religious structures. In my freshman year course on the history of architecture, I built my first model of the world’s oldest surviving temple in Ani, Mesopotamia. In my sophomore and junior years, I built models of two cathedrals: St. Sophia, in Novgorod, Russia, built in 1050, and the amazing cathedral of St. Vartan on Lake Van, in Armenia.

Could it be that these models were preparing me for the ultimate architectural love of my life: my twenty-five years as dean of the world’s largest unfinished cathedral, St. John the Divine, in New York, and my passion to continue its construction? It must have all begun in the theater model room when I was seven years old and gone into high gear in my first two years building cathedral models at Harvard as an architecture student.

I was an only child, and my early years in Iowa City were, happily, much influenced by my parents' creative and very positive involvement in the university community of our relatively small town of some 50,000 residents (today its population numbers more than 68,000) in the midst of the richest farm land of the Midwest.

My father, Vance Mulock Morton, was born in Iowa City, where

his father, Henry Kimball Morton, was a professor of engineering at the University of Iowa as well as a shoe merchant in the city. Grandfather Morton's family were New Englanders, all born in New Hampshire. Grandfather's sister, Rose Morton, married Samuel Laubham, a merchant with a shoe factory in Haverhill, Massachusetts, which was at that time the major American center of shoe manufacturing. After the war, the shoe industry moved south, leaving Haverhill (like several other Massachusetts cities) a virtual ghost town.

My father's mother, Mary Elizabeth Mulock, was a Canadian from Toronto, the niece of Sir

William Mulock, the chief justice of Ontario and chancellor of the University of Toronto. Grandmother Morton was a musician, both a pianist and guitarist. My father's musical gifts came directly from her, as evidenced by the many photographs of them playing piano and guitar together. How my Morton grandparents met I have no idea, as they were all long dead before I was born. My father and his older brother, John Kimball Morton, were both choir boys in Trinity Episcopal Church in Iowa City, where I was both a choir boy and also an acolyte at the altar (a priest in the making, to be fulfilled some thirty years later). Church, like breakfast and bedtime, was always a pleasant given in my young life.



Five years old  
photo credit: family collection

My mother, Virginia May Parks, came from Houston, Texas, and was also a pianist and enthusiastic organizer of musical events. Her father, James Reavis Parks, was a lawyer and real estate investor who took his daughter's music education much to heart—even to the extent of asking Mr. Steinway in New York to select the appropriate grand piano for his daughter's tenth birthday (it now graces our living room in New York). Grandfather Parks also persuaded my mother not to go to the University of Texas with her older brother but instead to an appropriate ladies' finishing school in New York, the Scoville School, on Fifth Avenue, where she could also study piano with the great Rudolph Ganz.

Meanwhile, my father entered the University of Iowa with a part-time job selling shoes at his father's shoe store. My father and mother were both incapable of throwing away photographs, and I, the only child, have album upon album documenting their families, friends, cars, major anniversary celebrations, and—most architecturally important—their houses.

Although my father had first studied medicine at the university, he soon discovered he could not deal with the sight of blood and switched to dramatic literature (blood on paper) and ended up a professor of theater—first at the University of Missouri, next at Northwestern, and soon thereafter at the University of Iowa, his hometown, with his new wife from Houston.

My parents met thanks to World War I and the Delta Tau Delta fraternity. Both Vance Morton and my mother's brother James Claxton Parks (after whom I was named) were young army officers stationed in Galveston, Texas. They became friends and discovered that they were both Delta Tau Delta fraternity brothers. Claxton invited Vance for a weekend visit with his family in Houston, the largest city in Texas. Vance met Virginia, her family, and her vast network of musical and social friends. They were married in 1926. The wedding, judging

from the elaborate photographs, was a state occasion. My mother had eight bridesmaids (two of whom became my godmothers), and her long bridal veil of antique lace was said to have belonged to European nobility.

My mother's ties with Houston remained strong throughout her life, and both she and my father are buried in the Parks family cemetery in Houston. I was both born and baptized in Houston in 1930, and the following year I celebrated my first birthday in Grandmother Parks's stately "Gone with the Wind" house with white columns on Main Street. I am also told I peed in her elegant living room fireplace. My mother's father had died before I was born, and sadly both of my father's parents had died before I appeared on the scene.

Every summer we three Mortons enjoyed my father's two-month academic vacation, either in Houston or in the beautiful Hill Country of West Texas. My Uncle Claxton and his wife, Aunt Joyce, being childless, had virtually adopted me. My mother's aunt Virginia Claxton, a painter, gave me my first set of paints and an easel when I was six. Aunt Virgie was always the life of the party. She had lived and painted in Paris and also had spent several months living and painting in Morocco. After her husband, Joseph Lowenstein, died, Aunt Virgie spent one or two months every year living with us in Iowa City. She also spent the summer of 1933 painting with Grant Wood's artist colony, in Stone City, Iowa. Today, eight of her paintings hang in our apartment and my office in New York. As I write this book in my office, I look at four of her paintings: one from Morocco of a mosque in the mountains above Tétuan, two from Texas, and one from Taos, New Mexico. When Aunt Virgie died she left her elegant diamond engagement ring to me, which I gave to my Pamela Taylor when I asked her to marry me in 1954.

Both of my parents were by nature outgoing—both pianists

and both with a wide circle of friends, mostly professors' families. They were members of the hiking club and the Shakespeare club, which often met in our living room. I remember leaning over the banister in our house on Garden Street to catch the lively flavor of these meetings and of the musical evenings organized by my mother and Prof. Rhodes Dunlap, a fellow Houstonian, pianist, and English literature scholar.

Particular graduate students of my father became personal friends of my family and even lifelong friends of mine. One such drama student was Donald Palmer Benblossom (probably originally Beanblossom), whose 200-acre family farm became a weekend retreat for the three Mortons. I was introduced to baby pigs, chicken houses, windmills, and outhouses. Don later became an architect and transformed his family's large old Victorian farmhouse into an elegant, half-timbered English manor house with 18th-century Chippendale chairs. He also adorned his grandmother's square Victorian piano with a pair of 19th-century marble cupids he had purchased in Italy. I especially remember the new indoor bathroom with vermilion walls, ceiling, and carpet, plus an eight-foot, diamond-shaped floor-to-ceiling mirror.

Particularly important to my early interest in religious architecture was Don's remodeling of our Trinity Church in Iowa City—especially his use of Chinese red paint for the inside doors of the church and his use of Bauhaus flat white on the interior walls. Years later, in 1995, Don journeyed north from his retirement home in Florida to visit me at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine shortly before he died in 1997. Don told me how happy he was to have been ordained a deacon in the Episcopal Church, thanks to his long-time relationship with the entire Morton family. He was a wonderful friend.

A significant Iowa City graduate student of my father's was red-haired Dick Baldrige, the son of a professor of surgery in the

university's medical school. Dick's theater work was twofold: directing plays with my father and designing scenery with Arnie Gillette. Dick was passionate about modern architecture. When I was in the eighth grade, Dick became a regular Sunday evening member of our family and witnessed the unexpected arrival of two large wooden crates of architectural books from a deceased cousin of my father's, Frederick Furbish, a New York architect. Word had somehow reached the Eastern branch of my father's family that Vance's son was interested in architecture, and my father received a letter of inquiry from the estate asking, "Would your son like these books?" to which my father replied, "Yes."

The collection consisted of forty leather-bound annual editions of *Architectural Record* from 1885 to 1925, plus several really impressive volumes of 17th- and 18th-century French chateaux and late-19th- and early-20th-century American Robber Baron-era mansions by Stanford White and Charles A. Platt. Dick Baldrige and I assembled a modest bookcase of bricks and three ten-foot shelves in my bedroom, where I devoured the implosion of pictures of this elegant architecture. *Architectural Record* also carefully documented the earliest construction period of St. John the Divine, beginning in the 1890's, and included every historical detail in the scandalous firing of the first architects, Heins and LaFarge, and their replacement in 1925 by Ralph Adams Cram, who radically changed the architecture of the Cathedral from quasi-Byzantine-Romanesque to high 13th-century French Gothic.

Dick was wise as well as smart and had produced his own parallel collection of books on the modern movement for my full architectural education, from Frank Lloyd Wright to Le Corbusier and from Mies van der Rohe to Bauhaus architects Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius.

In addition to Dick Baldrige's architectural tutorials, I was

struck in early 1939 by a poster with the dramatic logo of the forthcoming World's Fair, to open in early summer in New York City. The logo was a powerful photograph of a huge abstract metal structure, Trylon and Perisphere, which consisted of a shining brass sphere 180 feet in diameter joined to a tall vertical brass tower.

Overnight the World's Fair posters covered the university campus, including the theater and even my University of Iowa Elementary School. My mother and father decided to drive to New York in the company of three of their faculty friends and their children. My father arranged for us to stay in Brooklyn Heights in the elegant apartment of a former Iowa theater student, Carl Gutekunst, who was at that time an actor and voice teacher in New York.

Our two weeks in New York in July introduced me to concrete examples of modern architecture at the World's Fair on a massive scale. In Iowa City, only the university theater and the fine arts department building counted as modern, but the immense modern architectural complex of the World's Fair in Queens, radiating out from the monumental Trylon and Perisphere, was a modern city in itself.

After three days at the World's Fair, my father took us to an equally powerful architectural complex in Manhattan that had been of interest to him since the late 1920's: the great limestone and granite Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in Morningside Heights. Even in its unfinished state, it is the largest Gothic Revival cathedral in the world<sup>1</sup>, two football fields in length and tall enough to accommodate the Statue of Liberty under its dome!

The entire thirteen-acre Cathedral complex was both impressive in size and also very beautiful with its landscaped gardens. Its stained glass windows were magnificent. Over the entrance, the giant

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<sup>1</sup> In area (square feet), St. John the Divine is 121,000; Milan 107,000; Chartres 68,270; Paris 64,108; and St. Patrick's in New York 57,768. The biggest religious building in the world is St. Peter's Basilica, in Rome 352,800 (not a cathedral), followed by Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, 70,000 (a mosque).



rose window rose thirty feet in diameter, with a seated life-size figure of Christ in the center. It was all unlike anything I had ever seen and today, seventy-five years later, it is still impressive and spiritually moving. Over the years I have said my prayers looking at the window. It functions like a Russian icon with the sun behind it.

At the Cathedral that day, there were give-away posters combining the sculptured logo of the New York World's Fair with a photograph of St. John the Divine.

The year 1939 represented a unique time in my young life. It encompassed my ninth birthday, in January; our family visit to the World's Fair in New York, in July; my first visit to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, also in July; and my first communion at Trinity Church in Iowa City, at Easter. My first conscious religious mystical experience occurred when I

was in bed, not asleep but with my eyes closed. It was a strong white light that exploded into a rainbow of brilliant colors, and it lasted about one or two minutes. It was real and not my imagination. It has occurred over the years—throughout college, my ordination, and my marriage—and though it happens less frequently in my eighties, it is still an experienced reality that continues to occur.

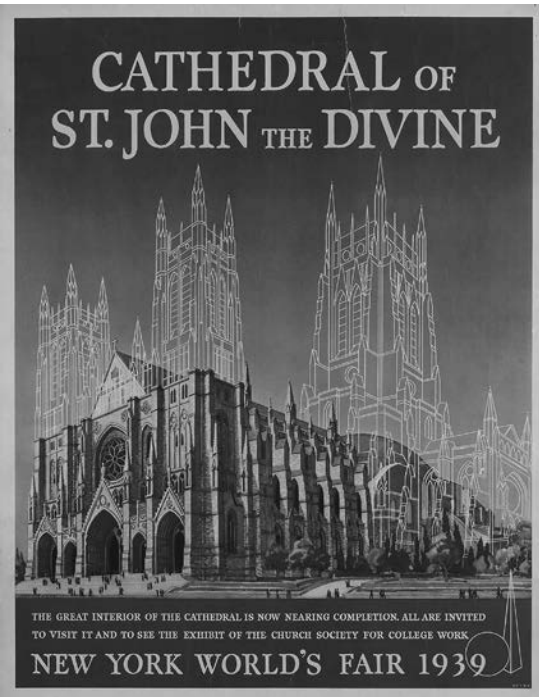
Back in Iowa City in late 1939, perhaps prophetically, my own home—our family house—had radically shifted in both style and place from the previous year of 1938. We moved from the red brick,

slate-roofed English cottage of 445 Garden Street—surrounded by elm and locust trees, a vegetable garden, and my father's beloved and extensive flower beds—to 6 Woolf Court, a modern, white-brick two-story duplex with steel L-shaped corner windows and two windows of very modern glass blocks. Woolf Court was written up in the newspaper, which crowed, "Modern architecture comes to Iowa City!"—indeed, on the west side of the Iowa River, along with the new university theater.

Iowa City's architectural landmark was erected in 1840: the Old Capitol Building, an elegant gold-domed Greek temple with two columned porticos facing east and west. Today the Old Capitol marks the visual and administrative center of the university campus, now spanning both sides of the Iowa River. The present-day state capitol of Iowa is located in Des Moines.

The university's theater and fine arts buildings were Iowa's first striking examples of modern architecture, and both the new Iowa Writers' Workshop and the medical school complex celebrated the expanded campus in the mid 1930's. More dramatically, the university proclaimed to the country at large that in the midst of Iowa's cornfields was a new world-class center for the arts and sciences. As I write this, I remember with pride that Iowa was in 2008 the location of President Obama's first campaign victory, which was proclaimed from the steps of the Old Capitol in Iowa City.

The University Elementary and High School, which I attended through my sophomore year, served a double purpose: as a training ground for university students in the department of education and as a perk for faculty children. I loved University Elementary, because several of my classmates' families were also close friends of my parents, which made me—an only child—part of an extended family. To this day, my oldest friend goes back to my kindergarten days: Philip Stoddard, who is now a retired professor of Middle East Studies in Washington, D.C. When plays at the university theater required little



Poster from the New York World's Fair, 1939  
photo credit: Cathedral of St. John the Divine archives

boys, Philip and I were always on hand. As tall teenagers, we even carried spears in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*!

Our elementary-grade curricula were project-oriented. First grade encompassed farming, with visits to dairies and actual farms with cows, chickens, and baby pigs. In the second grade, we studied Indians with trips to the nearby Tama reservation—plus a very visceral project of making a drum with raw cowhide, which involved scraping off the hair with sharpened seashells. In the third grade, we studied pioneers and assembled a log cabin in the back of our classroom with a kerosene lamp, candle molds, and a spinning wheel. In the fourth grade we learned the states, and in the fifth grade we danced the minuet with required period costumes. The costume department at the university theater supplied Philip and me with really beautiful 18th-century velvet frock coats (mine was green) with gold braid trim. We were little George Washingtons.

But apart from our Native American Tama field trip, my early childhood experience of diversity was minimal. Iowa City was ninety-nine percent white and largely Christian, although a new friend of mine was from India: Arun Tagore, whose father was a guest professor for a year. Arun came over to play in our big yard on Garden Street and enjoyed playing with our large collie dog, Kink.

As a professor in the art department, Grant Wood was very much in my parents' lively social scene. I first met Wood with my father in the university swimming pool (naked men only), when I was seven. Wood was especially close to my best friend Philip's parents, Prof. George and Eleanor Stoddard. He designed all the living room furniture and mixed all the paint for their very modern, white concrete-block summer house at nearby Lake McBride, where I also learned to swim, thanks to a graduate student of my father's.

My mother's closest friend in Iowa City was Madeline Horn, a Texan whose husband was head of the English department. Made-

line was a writer of children's books, and in 1936 Grant Wood did the illustrations for her first book, *Farm on the Hill*. Madeline even asked me to consider doing the illustrations for her second book, but she changed her mind and said mine were "too good," not childish.

The Horns' library was my favorite architectural space in Iowa City. It comprised the central room (not the parlor) of a large Victorian house, which they had extensively remodeled with the help of Grant Wood, whose artistic eye for color and architectural detail was evidenced in the floor-to-ceiling paneling, bookcases, and an elegant 18th-century fireplace with a sculptured overmantel. The entire library was painted with Grant Wood's beautiful leaf green. And the dining room directly beyond the library was an equally beautiful darker shade of leaf green, with a floor-to-ceiling English Georgian window alcove that boasted an oversize thirty-four-inch-high Italian green wine bottle.

Over the years I've dreamed about that green bottle, and at the end of my freshman year at Harvard I found its twin for sale at a roadside stand outside Wood's Hole, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod. It cost twenty-five dollars, and it has traveled with me everywhere I've lived. I'm looking at it now as I write. It is one of my favorite man-made objects. It is beautiful.

Grant Wood was a forerunner to Iowa's artistic renaissance with his 1930 painting *American Gothic*—a corn-belt *Mona Lisa*, both ridiculed visually in magazine advertisements as "corny" and hailed by art historians as "groundbreaking." His piece from the next year, 1931, *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*, was later purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York. Wood became a professor of painting at the University of Iowa School of Art in 1934. That same year, the Iowa poet Paul Engle opened the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the first of its kind in America and still going strong today.

In late summer 1939, after my family's return from the World's Fair and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Grant Wood asked my

father for a special favor: posing for his next painting. In 1931, Wood had begun a series of paintings of great moments in American history with *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*. Now he wanted to climax the series with the well-known story of George Washington and the cherry tree, illustrating the integrity and truthfulness of our country's first president.

My father's stature and overall appearance seemed right to the artist, as did my nine-year-old preadolescent figure. All of the posing took place in Grant Wood's backyard in Iowa City, with my father holding an eight-foot lead pipe (the fallen tree) and me holding a hammer (the offending hatchet)—and both of us in swimming trunks. The scene became really off the wall when my father put on the powdered wig and tricorne hat that the artist had ordered from a costume house. Things got even more hilarious when Grant Wood asked my father to fetch his camel tan sports jacket from the bedroom where we had changed. As always, the artist planned to paint his chosen subject from a large glossy photograph of his models.

I remember the scene so well on that late hot July afternoon in Grant Wood's backyard, with his neighbors looking down from their second-floor windows in merriment and disbelief. Papa Washington is a really recognizable portrait of my father, while the most universally recognizable Gilbert Stewart portrait of the head of the mature George Washington sits squarely on my young shoulders. Parson Weems (in fact, Prof. John Briggs of the history department), to whom the story of George Washington and the cherry tree is attributed, lifts a red velvet curtain to reveal the famous scene in Grant Wood's painting. What made the whole sequence of the *Parson Weems' Fable* and Grant Wood and the two Mortons come full circle was my mother's humorous comment: "Parson Weems is a distant relation of my family through our Weems cousins in East Columbia, Texas."

Grant Wood finished *Parson Weems' Fable* in 1939, and it was



*Parson Weems' Fable*, 1939, oil on canvas  
Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas

immediately sold to writer John Phillips Marquand. Today it hangs in the Amon Carter Museum, in Fort Worth, Texas, and Grant Wood today is revered as a great American painter, not a maverick.

Grant Wood died of cancer in 1942, but my mother kept up her friendship with Wood's sister Nan. On New Year's Day in 1940, Grant Wood gave my mother and father an original signed copy of his lithograph *Fertility*—a wonderful Iowa barn and farmhouse surrounded by a field of corn—as thanks for our posing for *Parson Weems' Fable*. It hangs now in our front hall in New York.

Two years after my family's New York trip to the World's Fair and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, followed by my father's and my joint experience with Grant Wood, my father and I shared an extended involvement in the theater. My father was scheduled to direct

William Saroyan's new play *My Heart's in the Highlands*, in which the two principal roles are a young boy and his father. In the annual academic season, the theater department produced six plays, each of which ran for two weeks—ten evening performances and one matinee performance. My father said he would very much like me to consider taking the boy's part, which obviously would involve considerable time and commitment. I was delighted with the whole proposition, and it remains one of the highlights of my childhood. The student who played my father, Dick Bergstrom, became something of an older brother for the next two years. He gave me a beautiful paint box when he graduated. The reviews of the play in the daily *Press-Citizen* were excellent.

The attack on Pearl Harbor occurred on Sunday, December 7, 1941. My mother, my father, Dick Baldrige (a student at the university), and I were in the kitchen listening to the radio and got the evening news. I was about to turn twelve the next month, on January 7, 1942, as the war became a dominant part of everyone's life.

The university was conscripted to train military officers, and various theater friends enrolled in one branch or another in the armed forces: Don Benblossom and Dick Bergstrom joined the Navy, but Dick Baldrige's eyes were so bad that he was rejected. My mother became deeply involved with promoting Bundles for Britain, along with my father's first cousin Florence Laubham Anderson, whom he had brought from Haverhill, Massachusetts, to Iowa City to be the elegant chaperone for the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. Auntie Floss, as I called my new family member, brought a great sense of style not only to the sorority but also to my own love of beautiful objects. She brought with her several small Kazakh rugs, a large paisley shawl, and two gold-framed, hand-painted family coats-of-arms.

During World War I, my father had been stationed for officers' training at Fort Devens, near Haverhill, where he met the New

England side of his family, whom he really enjoyed. Thanks to my parents' photograph albums, I have photographs of my father and his fellow Army officers cavorting in the two elegant Morton and Laubham houses, side by side on Mill Street in Haverhill! Twenty years ago when I was at a conference in Boston, I made a special trip to nearby Haverhill just to see those family houses. They were elegant ancestors. I was thrilled.

DICK BALDRIDGE was following the leaders of modern architecture. Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius and other members of the legendary group had been castigated as decadent Jews by Hitler, who formally shut down the Bauhaus headquarters in Dessau, Germany. Gropius and Marcel Breuer escaped to London and then to Boston, and Mies van der Rohe to Chicago. Baldrige said to me, "You should really study architecture at Harvard, where Gropius and Breuer teach and Gropius is head of the department."

As my college possibilities were leaning to the east, my Aunt Floss suggested that I also ought to consider a New England preparatory school like Andover, where her brother and her son both had studied. So in the next months, I wrote to several Eastern schools for catalogs—in particular, to Andover and Exeter, and, at our parish priest's suggestion, St. Paul's School, whose headmaster had been his seminary classmate. Fr. Richard McEvoy, rector of Trinity Church in Iowa City, was soon to move to New York to be rector of St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery. He suggested that I actually make a trip East to visit these three schools, and first stay with him and his family in New York. I would even be able to see at St. Mark's, where Peter Stuyvesant had been buried.

Aunt Floss thought this was a good idea but suggested I go first to Washington, D.C., and stay with her son and his wife and find out about Andover. My mother and father thought this was a great

idea—my first trip by myself on the train! Washington first, then New York, then Boston and the New England schools, and, on the way home, Albany, close to where Philip Stoddard's family now lived in Schuylerville. Philip's father, after leaving the University of Iowa to be president of the University of Illinois, was now the new president of the State University of New York in Albany. I'll never forget my round-trip ticket. It was six feet long—twelve inches for each ticket stop!

All of this was to take place in July of 1943. Dick Baldrige, as always, had a brilliant idea: Why should I not write a letter to Mr. Gropius in early 1943, saying who I was, how old, and that I was planning on being an architect? I was coming to Boston in July and would be honored to meet with him in his office for a short conversation.

My letter to Gropius was duly sent in February of 1943, and, wonder of wonders, his reply arrived in early March. Yes! Would I come to his office in Robinson Hall on July 6 at 11 a.m.? He would be glad to meet me!



At Harvard with the model of Cathedral of St. Sophia, Novgorod, Russia  
photo credit: family collection

## New England to England

My 1943 July conversation with Walter Gropius was genuinely pleasant and informal, he in a gray sports jacket and with his pipes. We spoke at length about Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, both our heroes. He thought Wright was the single most important American architect and was also glad that I wanted to be an architect and hoped to attend Harvard. We shook hands, and he wished me good luck and hoped my forthcoming visits to New England prep schools would go well. They did! Phillips Exeter admitted me for September 1945. In my four undergraduate years at Harvard, I heard Gropius speak twice, both in public lectures in the Architectural School. But our hour-long, private conversation in 1943 was unique—delightfully personal and unforgettable.

My final months in Iowa City in the summer of 1945 were climaxed by my acting in a new play, *In the Middle of the Air*, the saga of Lindbergh's famous solo flight written by the distinguished poet and playwright Muriel Rukeyser. It was to be directed by an old friend of Muriel Rukeyser's, Hallie Flanagan, who was the creator of President Roosevelt's WPA Federal Theatre Project. Hallie Flanagan was the guest summer director at the University of Iowa's theater; she asked my father to play the father of Lindbergh (called Laramie in the play) and me to play Laramie's younger brother. (I was also smitten by Hallie's daughter Joanne!)

Muriel's play had long been scheduled to open on August 6, 1945, the secret date that would be remembered ever after as the day of cosmic destruction by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and then Nagasaki by the U.S. Air Force. August 6 literally transfigured my feeble understanding of creation, of people, of science, and of religion. It was prophetic for me that Muriel's play lifted up not only the mysterious dualities of good and evil in modern science but also offered a powerful very personal preparation for me and the unknown mysteries in the next immediate stage of my life in New England. How ironic it is that August 6 in the ancient liturgical calendar of the early Christian Church was the Feast of the Transfiguration, the equally mind-blowing occasion in the Bible (Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9) when Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him to the mountain "where he was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun and his garments became white as light. And behold there appeared Moses and Elijah talking with him. And then a bright cloud over-shadowed them and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

The world's mind was blown that cosmic day in 1945. I brought to Hallie the morning paper with the front-page news of the atom bomb and destruction of Hiroshima. On that very same opening

day of Muriel's play, Hallie began writing a new play about the science of the atomic bomb. Her new play, *E=mc<sup>2</sup>*, was first performed at the Columbia University theater in the fall of 1946, and the three Mortons sat in the first row.

Muriel Rukeyser became part of my life again twenty-seven years later, in my first year at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, when on the night of Nixon's reelection, in 1972, Muriel organized an all-night protest at the Cathedral with New York poets reading their poetry. (I recommended Muriel in 1973 to be poet-in-residence, and she soon established the Cathedral poetry wall for school-age poets and poets in prison. The poetry wall created amazing and beautiful literary relationships between the young poets and the poets in prison.)

IN SEPTEMBER 1945, I was off to Exeter, New Hampshire, with a short romantic stopover in Northampton, Massachusetts, where Joanne's mother, Hallie Flanagan, was dean of Smith College, as well as head of the theater department. I had visions of Joanne one day being my wife, but those dreams were soon complicated when on this short visit I also met Helen, Joanne's younger sister, who in the years ahead became my first choice. A few years later, Helen met and married my best friend from Exeter, Andrew Norman.

At Exeter, a four-year school that I was entering in my junior year, I was very much a "new boy." During most of my first year, I had excellent courses but with no significant relations with fellow students. Then, by way of the glee club, I met the theater crowd and designed sets for the dramatic club's production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. In late spring I was elected to the Lantern Club, jokingly called "the intellectuals."

Exeter introduced me to the athletic sport of crew—rowing in eight-oar shells on the Squamscott River. Being flat-footed from birth, I have never been much of an athlete, but sports were required, and



Number six ... Don't rock the boat!

photo credit: family collection

I really loved seeing the beautiful New Hampshire countryside while sitting down in a boat. I was number six, and I'll never forget the yell of the cox, "Number six, eyes ahead." My aesthetic appreciation of the beauty of New Hampshire's pure, raw nature was literally rocking the boat!

My second year was much better in every way, especially with my new senior dorm master, Elliot Fish, with whom I discussed architecture and modern art, his newly purchased Miró, and my interest in religion. He gave me Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, my first intellectual encounter with interfaith diversity. Mr. Fish took my aesthetic and architectural interests seriously and asked my opinion on specific carpentry details and the overall color scheme he had selected for the total rebuilding of his apartment in Exeter's elegant early-19th-century Soule Hall, reserved exclusively for graduating seniors.

My senior paper at Exeter for Henry Bragdon's course on modern European history was on my hero Walter Gropius and the impact of the Bauhaus on architecture worldwide. Also in Fish's senior dorm

was my twelfth-grade classmate Andrew Norman, who became one of my lifelong friends. Andrew and I were both smokers, and smoking in all the senior dorms was allowed only in the basement "butt rooms." As our rooms were on the fourth floor, we rose above the rules and stowed our cigarette butts in my metal tennis ball can. I'm sure Mr. Fish suspected, but he never let on.

At our Exeter graduation, in June 1947, Andrew's parents, Edward and Dorothy Norman, met and had dinner with my parents, and at the actual graduation both families sat together. Edward Norman was the grandson of the founder of Sears, Roebuck and a man of great wealth and generosity. He was also an early supporter of Palestinian justice in the new nation of Israel and established an American foundation in support of Palestinian institutions. His wife, Dorothy Stecker Norman, was a photographer and journalist and a major figure in New York's art and intellectual worlds. Dorothy wrote a weekly column in the liberal New York newspapers *PM* and the *New York Post* and published *Twice a Year*, a biannual collection of political and cultural essays. Over the years Dorothy played an increasingly involved role in my professional life, beginning at Harvard when she called and said, "Mies van der Rohe is coming for dinner next Tuesday. Could you join us?"

Andrew's home in New York was, in fact, the city's first truly modern townhouse. The narrow four-story building of white brick was both a private house and a museum. Large windows of eight-inch square glass blocks faced the street, and floor-to-ceiling clear glass windows overlooked the gardens. It was designed by the modern architect William Lescaze, one of Dorothy's friends.

Inside was art by Dorothy's many close artist friends, in particular the painters John Marin and Morris Graves and the sculptor Gaston Lachaise. Also indoors was an equally large assembly of the arts of nature: rocks and shells, large dry grasses, and even ten-foot



live trees. Most prominent of all were dozens of framed photographs by Dorothy's intimate mentor, Alfred Stieglitz, for whom she had posed. Stieglitz was a leader of both New York's and America's artistic avant-garde. Well before the celebrated Armory Show in 1913, Stieglitz had in 1902 exhibited paintings by Picasso and Matisse in his own Gallery 291, in New York.

After Exeter, I introduced Andrew to Helen Davis (the sister of my first love, Joanne Davis), and a few years later Helen and Andrew asked me to marry them. I had also known Andrew's sister Nancy Norman Lassalle as long as her brother, and both she and Andrew asked me to do the memorial service for their mother, Dorothy, in their much beloved and very beautiful house on East 70th Street, overlooking the garden below. Years later, I also buried both my dear friends Andrew and Helen.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1946, my father was invited by the New York City mayor's office to establish theater departments in the various colleges of the City University of New York, beginning with Brooklyn College. In the summer of 1947, after my graduation from Exeter, my family moved to New York. My father had rented a new and very well-designed modern apartment in the Clinton Towers complex, on Clinton Avenue in Brooklyn. Nestled between the eight new towers were several elegant 19th-century mansions built for the various members of the Pratt family, whose elders had founded and built the Pratt School of Architecture, two blocks south of Clinton Avenue in central Brooklyn. The new Clinton Towers were Brooklyn's answer to Manhattan's Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, New York's first modern middle-income apartment complexes.

EXETER TRADITIONALLY SENT many graduates to Harvard, and in my senior class of 250, no less than fifty-five went to Harvard. Three

Exeter classmates—Bill Graham, Dick Murphy, and John Cowles—and I were all assigned as freshmen roommates to the venerable Thayer Hall in the even more venerable Harvard Yard, which was also home to Wigglesworth Hall, where Andrew Norman was assigned.

As an undergraduate major in architectural sciences (leading to the Harvard Graduate School of Design, directed by Gropius), my courses were largely prescribed. Here I encountered the first roadblock in my freshman year. I had selected a history of architecture survey course taught by the legendary Prof. Kenneth J. Conant, historian of France's 12th-century Romanesque Cluny Abbey. He was also involved in the restoration of the Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul, as well as a consultant architect with Ralph Adams Cram at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. My supervisor said, "No, you don't need history of architecture. You must take the introductory Bauhaus design course." As I had dutifully registered in all the prescribed mathematical and preliminary engineering courses, my supervisor finally relented.

With my first architectural victory achieved, I immediately enrolled in my first history of architecture course with Prof. Conant, and, most important of all, I built my first architectural models: the world's oldest religious temple, in Ani, Mesopotamia, and the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod, Russia, built in 1050. I also took Greek philosophy with Raphael Demos and a survey course in sociology with the fiery Russian professor Pitirim Sorokin.

IN THE SUMMER OF MY FRESHMAN YEAR, in 1948, my mother's brother Claxton Parks got me (the hopeful architect) a construction job in Houston. Being away from family and college friends offered me an important opportunity for reflection. Prof. Crane Brinton's freshman survey course on modern European intellectual history (Marx, Freud, et al.) had raised for me important personal questions about religion. For the first time in my life, I stopped going to church. In the

spring term, however, I had the deeply moving experience of singing Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis" under the direction of Serge Koussevitzky. (The Harvard Glee Club was the official chorus of the Boston Symphony.) In Houston I bought a recording of the Beethoven mass, and when I played the credo over and over again, each time I wept. So in Houston I started going back to church by myself.

My mother's beloved aunt and my great-aunt Virgie Claxton, the visual artist in my family, who had introduced me at age six to my first easel and paint box, now thirteen years later introduced me to her friends in Houston's artist community—especially two young painters, Frank Dolejska and Robert Preusser. I soon discovered that Bob Preusser taught an evening painting class for "non-painters" at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. I enrolled, and we soon became really good friends. Bob Preusser had studied at the New Bauhaus, in Chicago, where his principal teacher and friend was the Hungarian painter Gyorgy Kepes, an original German Bauhaus colleague of Gropius. Kepes now taught at MIT in Boston, and Bob was eager to introduce us. Bob had a car, and he, Frank, and I agreed to drive up to New England from Houston at the end of August. Andrew Norman had also invited me to sail with him at his family's summer house in Wood's Hole, on Cape Cod, after my Houston job. So I called him and asked if I could bring along my two new Houston friends, who also had friends on the Cape, and all was OK.

THE HIGH POINT OF MY WOOD'S HOLE STAY was some time I spent with Andrew's mother, Dorothy Norman, who on my second day drove me to see her favorite old houses and gardens on the Cape. Suddenly she stopped at a roadside stand with four tables and literally a thousand seashells. We spent forty-five minutes just looking and evaluating, a process that was for me a major epiphany of aesthetic variety and quality. The seashell afternoon with Dorothy refreshed my

soul with the immensity, beauty, and profound delicacy of the natural world. At the same time, it sparked a double mental revisiting of my Iowa City childhood love of the beautiful delicacy of my miniature theater models—and also of my family's favorite holiday visits to my father's childhood summer cottage overlooking the Iowa River and surrounded by the round, green hills painted by Grant Wood.

Indeed, it was that summer afternoon in 1948 with Dorothy and the exquisite patterns of nature that inspired my own passionate "green collecting" of feathers, acorns, quartz crystals, and the beautiful flat round white stones that washed up on Long Island beaches after storms. In our New York living room today is a bowl of sixty-eight of these small magic treasures. On the drive home to Wood's Hole, I spotted on a roadside stand the Italian green wine bottle of my childhood dreams. "You must buy it," Dorothy said, stopping the car. It cost twenty-five dollars.

Two days later, Bob Preusser drove Dorothy, Frank Dolejska, and me to Wellfleet to meet Bob's Chicago Bauhaus teacher Gyorgy Kepes, whose cottage was next door to that of another friend of Dorothy's, the Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer. That afternoon in Wellfleet, Dorothy also introduced me to an old colleague, the urbanist Katherine Bauer, whose husband, Bill Wurster, was dean of the architecture school at MIT. Both Bill and Gyorgy became especially wise counselors in my future architectural battles at Harvard.

Back in Cambridge that fall, Gyorgy asked me if I could help him and his wife, Juliet, as an occasional babysitter. I accepted the invitation with delight, and now their children, Julie Kepes Stone and Imre Kepes, are both artists. In 1954 Gyorgy and Juliet gave Pamela and me a marvelous watercolor of Juliet's for a wedding present: a bear smelling flowers. It has graced our Canadian cottage living room for forty years. And when I was called to be the dean of St. John the Divine, in 1972, Gyorgy also told me to select any one of his large oil

paintings from his New York dealer for our new stone Gothic home, the Cathedral deanery.

Bob Preusser later joined Gyorgy Kepes as a professor at MIT. A wonderful abstract painting by Bob Preusser now hangs over my desk at the Interfaith Center in New York, reminding me not only of my Houston birth, in 1930, but also of Houston as the site of my first humble summer construction job pulling nails out of scrap lumber in 1948 when I was eighteen—and, most important of all, the summer that I met Gyorgy, who became my dear friend and mentor. In 2004 I was honored to be asked to preach the sermon at Gyorgy’s memorial funeral service at MIT.

BACK AT HARVARD IN 1948, the fall of our sophomore year, Dick Murphy, Bill Graham, and I moved to Eliot House on the Charles River for the next three years, now joined by Kenneth Keniston from Michigan, where his father was a professor of psychology at the university in Ann Arbor.

Eliot House was sumptuous, one of the seven elegant Georgian red-brick post-freshman residences. (Yale has 13th-century Gothic “colleges,” and Harvard has 18th-century Georgian “houses.”) Our suite, G54, had a living room with a fireplace, four bedrooms (one with a fireplace), and two bathrooms. Over the living room mantel-piece hung Aunt Virgie’s mural of Iowa’s rolling green hills, painted at Grant Wood’s Stone City Art Colony in 1933. And on a table between our two sofas stood my new Wood’s Hole green Italian wine bottle, now the base of a lamp with a large parchment shade.

Also in my sophomore year I had an important spiritual awakening that itself became a lifelong reality for me, thanks to Prof. Charles Taylor’s course on medieval intellectual history, from St. Augustine (354–430) to St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Prof. Taylor invited me for Thanksgiving in his home, which began a lasting

relationship over the years with him and his family and my own spiritual growth in the years ahead.

In my junior year I met Prof. Chandler Post, the legendary scholar of art history. His two courses, on Italian Renaissance sculpture and northern Baroque painting, gave me new analytical eyes for the geometric structure embedded in all art. In addition, his devotion to the Episcopal Church, to the architecture of Ralph Adams Cram, and to the evolution of St. John the Divine became very important to me long after my years at Harvard. Chandler Post became a close friend in my last two college years. In his elegant bachelor apartment I must have had a dozen dinners prepared by his superb French cook. I took two Bible courses for Harvard credit at the Episcopal Theological School, down the street from Eliot House in Cambridge. Eliot House had a complicated reputation—preppy but equally intellectual and artistic, and even avant-garde. Over my three years at Eliot House, some of my lifelong friends have come from both groups. There was John Luce, of the Luce newspaper dynasty (with whom I later worked at Grace Church in Jersey City and, finally, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine), and also the poets Frank O’Hara, Don Hall, and *New Yorker* artist Edward Gorey, of galoshes-and-raccoon-fur-coat fame. Ted Gorey made sculpture and showed me a crucifix he crafted with a cat’s skull for the body and a string of pearls hanging from the cat’s teeth. He died in 2011.

MY SOPHOMORE AND JUNIOR SUMMERS were different from everything before in my life. I had to make some money, and *The New York Times* employment page had the answer with a telephone number: a Maine boys’ camp needing a director of plays and a drama counselor. An interview with the camp director produced a deal: six weeks, two sessions, two dramatic productions, “bunk responsibility,” and supervising the eight oldest teenagers. It was a Jewish camp, and I

wasn't Jewish. OK? OK!

Both summers at Camp Arundel were eye-opening. My first night at "mess hall" for supper I learned to love borscht, which I had never before seen or tasted. I inquired of my nearest camper at the table if it was raspberry soup. Also on that first night as we were preparing for bed, one of my campers asked if I was Jewish. "That's OK," they all said when I told them no. I learned to say the basic prayers in Hebrew. Uniquely interesting was the camp's celebration in 1948 for the new state of Israel. I directed a pageant involving all the campers, including the sister camp for girls, Camp Aquila, on the other side of Lake Arundel. At the close of my second summer, the eight campers in our bunk gave me a gold pocket cigarette lighter, and there were tears in my eyes when I thanked them.

EARLY IN THE FALL OF MY JUNIOR YEAR, in 1949, there reached a crisis point in the long simmering conflict between my major in architectural sciences, with its rigid mathematical and engineering curriculum, and my interest in theology and architectural history. So I arranged a meeting with Prof. John Coolidge, who was both an architect and the director of the Fogg Museum, where all of the art and architectural history courses were held.

"No problem," he immediately said in regard to my problem. "Simply switch your major to history of architecture, and I will be your supervisor. I will be happy to make the call for you." I celebrated by taking Prof. George M.A. Hanfmann's course on medieval German art and architecture.

In the winter of 1950 (my junior year), Jack Bailey, who was president of the Episcopal students' Canterbury Club, told me about an important speaker coming to the club on Sunday night: a young priest from a distinguished New York family, Paul Moore Jr., who worked in the slums of Jersey City. I must come!

In a very personal talk, Moore spoke of spiritual poverty as the center of Christian life. He gave examples ranging from St. Martin of Tours, the Roman soldier and leper who "became Christ," to St. Francis of Assisi, who gave up all his princely wealth in order to serve the poor, to Dorothy Day, who ran a soup kitchen in New York, to the new French worker priests, who worked incognito in factories, to Martin Luther King Jr. and his emerging civil rights leadership—and to Moore's own parish in Jersey City, with the poorest Black parishioners from the South.

I did not meet Paul Moore but was overwhelmed by his talk.

INDEED, the architect-versus-churchman dialogue in my soul soon took concrete form, and I designed and actually built a small modern chapel in the basement of Eliot

House, next to the laundry. It had white walls, black floors, Chinese red benches with black iron pipe legs, and black, wrought iron candle wall sconces made by a local Cambridge blacksmith. The chapel was used by the students at Eliot House, and eventually from other houses as well. Every night at 10 p.m. a different stu-



The basement chapel in Eliot House  
photo credit: Donald Pierce

dent would lead vespers by candlelight. The daily *Harvard Crimson* did not miss the opportunity to weigh in with a dark comment shortly after the services began: "Extreme religiosity on view at Eliot House with candles and blood gutters."

Also, throughout my junior and senior years, I became more involved with courses and students at the Episcopal Theological

School, particularly a third-year graduate student Paul van Buren and his wife, Ann Hagopian, a scholar of medieval art history. Paul insisted that I read the contemporary Jewish theologian Martin Buber and the 18th- and 19th-century mystical Hasidic writers. I did this reading in my second summer at Camp Arundel, to the surprise of my high school Jewish bunkmates. Paul planned to study with the famous theologian Karl Barth at the University in Basel after graduating from seminary. He asked me to read the litany at his ordination in June, the same week as my own graduation from Harvard.

EARLY IN THE FALL OF MY SENIOR YEAR, I met with John Coolidge to discuss my thesis proposal in architectural history: the relationship between the secular, modern, pace-setting architecture of the Bauhaus and the equally modern Catholic Church architecture of German architects Dominikus Böhm and Rudolf Schwarz. Their involvement in the new German Liturgical Movement (initiated by Abbot Herwegen at the monasteries of Ottobeuron and Maria Laach) gave them a parallel significance to Gropius and the secular Bauhaus. Coolidge gave me an enthusiastic green light.

Throughout the spring writing of my thesis, there was the countercurrent of Paul Moore's talk about poverty, the new worker priests in France, and the poorest Black kids and their families, and the ministry of Moore himself, who was serving as a priest in Jersey City. In fact, as I was deep in my thesis writing, I was also reading a new book, Otto G. von Simson's *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna*, on the sacred architecture and mosaic iconography of the famous 6th-century churches of St. Vitale and St. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna. The architecture and iconography were both inspired by the theology and the liturgical worship of the Catholic Church, which only highlighted my dilemma of priest versus architect. Nevertheless, I finished my two-volume thesis (one volume

the typed text, the second volume photographs) and handed it in on time.

Several weeks later, Prof. George Hanfmann asked to see me and said that my thesis had been well received. He also said that I was a candidate for a special graduate fellowship and that I was to meet with the fellowship committee the following week.

The Fiske Fellowship was a year of study (occasionally extended to two years) in England at Trinity College, Cambridge. The committee had all read my thesis and was curious about my future plans. I confessed that I was passionate about architecture and fascinated by the possibility of being a priest-architect like the French worker priests. Perhaps I could read theology at Trinity. It was a warm and pleasant meeting.

A few days later, John Coolidge met with me to deliver a three-fold report. One: I had been selected to receive the Fiske Fellowship. Two: My college degree was magna cum laude with Phi Beta Kappa. Three: My thesis was graded summa cum laude. We embraced, and I had tears in my eyes.

It was a banner year for Eliot House G54. Dick Murphy was awarded the John Harvard Fellowship to Emmanuel College, Cambridge (John Harvard's own college). Bill Graham was admitted to Harvard Medical School. Ken Keniston was awarded a Henry Fellowship to Balliol College, Oxford. So off I went to join my Exeter and Harvard classmate Murphy in Cambridge.

TRINITY WAS FOUNDED by no less than the six-wived King Henry VIII, who also led the Anglican Church away from wicked Rome into "purity and true godliness" (in the words of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer). The fall term at Trinity would begin in October, and as I had never been outside the United States, I had a three month bonanza for "seeing Europe"—especially the modern churches I had

written about but never seen.

At the Harvard Square travel office was posted an advertisement for a summer six-week German language course at the University of Marburg. I immediately inquired about admission. By special delivery came a return letter from the international program director, Capt. Eugene Bahn, asking if I knew Prof. Vance Morton, his former theater director at the University of Iowa. In 1951 the U.S. Army still occupied Germany and its major educational and cultural institutions, which explained Bahn's educational role in Marburg. Eugene Bahn was very helpful and found me a beautiful room in the family home of a law professor at the university. (Once there, I discovered he was a former Nazi.)

The day before I sailed to Germany, I took the subway to Jersey City for the first time in my life. I did not meet with Paul Moore, but I visited his church—Grace Church Van Vorst, a beautiful early-19th-century Gothic stone building. The yard in front of the adjacent stone rectory was no longer a garden but a playground paved with concrete. A half-dozen Black teenage boys were happily and very loudly playing ball. One threw the ball at me, and I threw it back with a friendly yell. Maybe I could be both an architect and a worker-priest!

THE TRIP OVER WAS AN EYE-OPENER. It transpired on an old rusty "student ship," the SS Brazil, bound for Hamburg. On the ship were my Exeter and Harvard classmate Murphy, the poet Donald Hall, perhaps fifty students from everywhere, and some hundred middle-aged German-American couples coming back to Germany for the first time after the war. This last group's return was obviously well anticipated in Germany, for when the SS Brazil entered the Elbe, both sides of the river were lined with schoolchildren waving flags of welcome. Many tears on all sides.

We docked at Hamburg, and I boarded a train to Freiburg,

where I was to meet my theological friend Paul van Buren for our prearranged trip up the Rhine. Our first stop was at Colmar to see the Isenheim altarpiece, the scandalous decaying-flesh painting of the crucifixion by the 16th-century painter Mathias Grünewald. It is overwhelming. Then we chugged up the river to Germany's famous 13th-century Romanesque monastery cathedrals at Speyer, Worms, and Mainz—the first ancient cathedrals I'd seen in my life. Our final stop was at the Benedictine monastery of Maria Laach, the fountain-head of the German Liturgical Movement that was so influential for my thesis heroes Dominikus Böhm and Rudolf Schwarz.

Paul and I spent the night in the crypt of Maria Laach and attended the early morning mass, which exhibited the dramatic liturgical simplification and lay participation that is present today in virtually all Christian churches, but was pioneered at Maria Laach: having laypeople reading the lessons and assisting the celebrant with the wine, and the priest at mass facing the congregation rather than with his back to the people. In the morning we parted and I took the train to Frankfurt and Marburg.

In the years after our trip together Paul and I parted ways geographically. He became a seminary professor in Texas and underwent a near fatal ordeal with cancer. His first book, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel Based on an Analysis of Its Language*, was the herald of the "death of God" writers, and his later principal work was his Boston-based leadership in Jewish-Christian dialogue and writing.

ALL OF THE STUDENTS at the Marburg language course were Americans, but with English-speaking Marburg students as our shepherds-in-crisis. One Marburg theological student, Joachim Haupt, and I became friends, and I was later able to recommend him for a graduate scholarship at the Episcopal Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At the end of the course, four of us (one with a Jeep) did

a ten-day tour of Bavaria, sleeping in youth hostels and seeing the fabulous palaces, cathedrals, and monasteries in Fulda and all the “bergs and burgs” (Bamberg, Nuremberg, Regensburg, Würzburg, and Augsburg), until we finally rolled into Munich.

After Munich, I took a train to Vienna, stopping first in Salzburg, where my Harvard roommate Ken Keniston was attending the Salzburg Seminar, directed by Henry Kissinger, Ken’s Harvard tutor (who also later became the U.S. secretary of state under President Nixon). We had a brief hello and then it was on to Vienna.

By myself in Vienna for five days, I did only three things: the Kunsthistorisches Museum (three times), innumerable cafes for an *einspanner* (coffees named after the one-horse taxis whose drivers could down a cup quickly and safely between rides), and the opera. The great Vienna State Opera House had been bombed in the war and was under construction. The twice-daily operas were all at Theater an der Wien: five days and ten operas, of which I relished seven Wagners and three Mozarts (tickets were seventy-five cents). At the museum hung my favorite portrait in the world: Rubin’s nude portrait of his wife, Helene Fourment, wrapped in a sable stole, plus several superb Bruegels with frolicking peasants and winter landscapes of leafless trees in the snow.

The glorious art of Vienna was the most fitting preparation for my final two days in Cologne, where I was to meet with my architectural thesis heroes before entering Trinity College in England in October. Neither Dominikus Böhm nor his wife spoke English, but his son Gottfried (also an architect) and his wife were both fluent, and I spent my two nights with them. Both days I was taken around Cologne and shown all of Dominikus’s many churches that I had written about. I also met my other thesis hero, Rudolf Schwarz—a very formal man indeed—and seeing his churches completed the full visualization of my thesis. A final note of great surprise: The famous Gothic cathedral

in Cologne, which was completed in the 19th century, was not built of stone at all (apart from the Lady Chapel at the east end), but of cast iron like its Paris rival, the Eiffel Tower!

THE TRAIN FROM KING’S CROSS RAILWAY STATION, in London, took me to Cambridge in the late afternoon, and a taxi delivered me to Trinity College Great Gate, a truly GREAT GATE surmounted by a polychrome statue of King Henry VIII, who founded the college in 1546. I was warmly greeted by one of the college’s black-suited, black derby-hatted porters: “We were expecting you, Mr. Morton, and your trunk is here. May I take you to your rooms? Dinner in the Great Hall is at 6:30. College gowns are worn at dinner.”

Harvard Fiske Fellow rooms were located in New Court, a mid-19th-century, four-story stone quadrangle. Over the fireplace mantel was an elegant wooden carved memorial stating in gold letters: THE LT. CHARLES HENRY FISKE HARVARD FELLOWSHIP. Below, in smaller black letters, were the names of the recipients, beginning in the 1920’s. To my delight was the name Henry Bragdon, my superb teacher of modern European history at Exeter, whose father, I later learned, was the distinguished painter and designer of theater sets and costumes Claude Bragdon. Henry and I both shared life with a dramatic father!

Great Hall, Great Gate, Trinity College Chapel, and the Master’s Lodge were the architectural masterpieces of Great Court, built in the 16th and 17th centuries. (The prefixes “great” are actually both written and spoken!) Great Court itself was as immense as a small football field—and the Gothic Great Hall was equally vast. At the far end of the hall was the high table for the masters, who intoned the blessing in Latin. The students’ tables were long and narrow, with benches on each side for five or six males. Women would not be admitted to Trinity for another twenty years.

Knowing absolutely no one to sit with, I saw an empty space at a table on the left side of the hall, under a portrait of the poet John Donne, an earlier Trinity student. I was welcomed to join the table. All were first-year students, all had done one or two years of military service, all had gone to Eton, and all knew each other very well. Obviously, I was a curiosity. Three, however, had spent some time living with American families during the war, and I was genuinely welcomed. Three of us were prospective architecture students and agreed to have tea together the next day. It was an amazing beginning.

Cambridge is beautiful. Its sixteen ancient colleges are all

architecturally fascinating, and another dozen 19th- and 20th-century colleges are interesting in their own ways. There are wonderful gardens and lawns, the famous “backs” along the River Cam, and a traditional farmers’ market in the center of the city. Today Cambridge is much expanded. An important cultural exception to Cambridge’s overgrown business district today is Heffers Bookshop, with its modern art department, where I bought my

first original artistic treasure, the color lithograph *Birds of War*, by the Mexican painter Rafael Tamayo.

Cambridge’s greatest glories are world-class treasures: King’s College Chapel’s exquisite Gothic architecture and 16th-century stained glass windows, Trinity’s medieval Great Court and its elegant 18th-century library designed by Sir Christopher Wren (also the

architect of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London), and a 19th-century chapel designed by William Morris at Jesus College.

A bicycle ride northeast of Cambridge takes one to the huge and beautiful cathedral of Ely, begun in 1083 on the site of St. Etheldreda’s 7th-century abbey, destroyed by the Danes in 870. The architectural crossing is famous for its octagonal wooden dome, which appears to float in the air. My favorite medieval village church in all of England, an hour by car from Cambridge, is Thaxted, a 13th-century predecessor of my Eliot House basement chapel and the inspiration for my painting of Grace Church in Jersey City—all three with white walls and a sense of the cosmos. Fr. Conrad Noel, Thaxted’s parish priest in the early 20th century, had cleared the church of its Victorian wooden pews, dark stained glass, coziness, and clutter. Most important of all, he restored clear glass windows and candlelight for evening vespers and Christmas and Easter Eve liturgies. He also lowered the high altar to its original level and enclosed it by four wooden “riddle posts” painted black, white, and gold, with candles and hangings of bright Indian fabric. On the altar stood a brilliant brass Ethiopian cross, the sacred center in a sea of surrounding holy space.

THE FISKE FELLOWSHIP was intended for academic study, and in my two years I enrolled in both part one and part two of the so-called Theological Tripos—the required structure for the three-year bachelor’s degree. Here academic mystery enters the scene: I was given one year’s academic credit for my four-year Harvard bachelor’s degree, which magically turned my two years in Cambridge into three! So I have both a Harvard and a Cambridge bachelor’s degree. But that’s not all. A Cambridge bachelor’s degree automatically becomes a Cambridge master’s degree after three years and a payment of five guineas!

My theological lectures at Cambridge were crowned by two seminars with Regius Professor of Divinity, the Rev. Dr. Michael



Trinity College Great Court, Cambridge University  
photo credit: Cambridge University



Ramsay. He was soon to become the hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury. But the dimensions of my religious understanding were both expanded and also dynamited closer to home at Trinity College itself. The college chaplain Fr. Geoffrey Beaumont had previously been a Navy chaplain and was also a jazz pianist and composer. His rooms in college were open to all of us every night after dinner. The liquor was abundant, and Geoffrey held forth at the piano, as he often did in certain London West End clubs. My favorite Beaumont song—"Why Can't I Invent an Original Sin?"—anchored his first jazz mass, performed in both Cambridge and London.

One night he came up to me and said, "Morton, why do you think God invented lizards?" I thought he was joking, but he was also serious. The ancient theological category of mystery really entered my being at Trinity. When Geoffrey Beaumont retired from Cambridge, he became a monk at Mirfield, the Anglican monastery in the north of England with an amazing membership of stars, including Fr. Trevor Huddleston, who was Bishop Tutu's associate with Nelson Mandela in the South African struggle for liberation from apartheid.

My technical theological supervisor at Trinity was Fr. Harry Williams, a brilliant author<sup>1</sup> and preacher who later became the dean of chapel. Every week I met with him and read my paper that he had assigned. He was truly heroic, with intense suffering from depression and undergoing profound psychiatric analysis. Later when Prince Charles went to Trinity, he was also assigned to Harry Williams as his tutor, and after the prince left Cambridge, Harry remained his close friend and advisor. After Harry himself retired from Trinity, he joined Geoffrey Beaumont at Mirfield. In 2009, Harry Williams died, and his obituaries throughout the English press were thoughtful and deeply appreciative.

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus and the Resurrection*, 1951; *Wisdom in Christ's Cross*, 1960; *The Last Four Things*, 1960; *The True Wilderness*, 1965; *True Resurrection*, 1972; *Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience*, 1975; *Tensions*, 1976; *Becoming What I Am*, 1977; *The Joy of God*, 1979; *Some Day I'll Find You*, 1982

My two years at Cambridge are particularly memorable because of my English classmates, who have remained close friends to this day. Their careful humor and understatement I treasure.

Roger Cunliffe and I met my very first night at dinner, and I later persuaded him to leave engineering for architecture. Roger's mother, Lady Joan Cunliffe, became my "English mother," and his family my "English family." Many years later I preached the sermon at the Dowager Lady Cunliffe's funeral in London. Roger, now Lord Cunliffe, is godfather to our daughter Sophia, and I am godfather to Roger's first son, Harry.



Roger Cunliffe  
photo credit: family collection

Harry was a hugely popular and recognized success at Eton, but later, after years under the spell of alcohol and drugs, he moved to Minnesota to enter treatment and learn how to live a new life. He stayed on in Minneapolis, and after twenty years in banking, Harry became a professional consultant, coach, and teacher in the field of recovery. He designed and ran the outpatient program at one of the top treatment centers in the country and then set up his own company, Two Wolves, named after the Cherokee story about feeding the good wolf within us. Harry had seen many people fail after leaving treatment because of inadequate direction, support, accountability, and encouragement. At Two Wolves he created a new innovative path for recovery, developing training programs for recovery skills and life skills, the first programs of their kind in America.

My godson Harry has always been a great friend to his own many friends—never more vividly appreciated than on August 26, 2011, when Harry gave the eulogy for his own godson Horatio

Chapple at his funeral in Salisbury Cathedral, with a congregation of over one thousand friends of Horatio and his family. Harry's sermon about Horatio's extraordinary death was reported worldwide.

Horatio was with a group of adventurous English teenagers on an exploratory hiking trip on the island of Svalbard, Norway, when he was killed by a giant polar bear that attacked their camp one night. Harry sent me a copy of his beautiful sermon and added that his words about "keeping Horatio alive within me and using the memory of his wonderful, extraordinary character as a guiding light to help me live a better life and be a better person" appealed to many people that day.

Anthony "Ant" Barnes, was at King's College, not Trinity, along with my Harvard pal Tom Smith. In 1953 we traveled together in a Jeep from Cambridge through France to Italy to Yugoslavia and, finally, to Greece. Ant has had much to do with the restoration of medieval churches and finding ways that they are used today. Pamela and I are godparents to Ant's daughter Sophie, and he is godfather to our Sophia. He spent several days with us ten years ago in our Canadian summer retreat with friends and mushrooms—and again in Canada, in August 2012.

John Money-Kyrle, also at the Eton table my first night, was a practicing architect who lived in his family's rambling 16th-century country farmhouse with his three brothers and their families, plus his own family and two 1930's Rolls Royces in the barn. I will never forget the array of rabbit carcasses—ten of them—hanging from the ceiling of the pantry. Later, cooked, they were very tasty!

Two final Trinity friends now communicate only from the heavenly realms. John Mander and I shared a large suite in Great Court my second year. He was part of the Eton mafia and a housemate there with Roger Cunliffe. John introduced me to the art of the famous English potter Bernard Leach, who had taught him to pot at Eton. I

now possess five Leach bowls, two of them by Leach's son Michael. John's family's home in industrial Wolverhampton was designed for his grandfather by William Morris: gardens, furniture, fabrics, rugs, and wallpaper. To this day, I remain hooked on Morris wallpaper, which we had in our Trinity sitting room and with which I glorified five rooms in our Cathedral deanery. John died in 1997.

My second heavenly friend from Eton, Trinity, and New York was Aubrey Cartwright, the son of an aristocratic English father and a wealthy American mother. Aubrey's father, an officer in the Royal Air Force, was shot down over Rotterdam while Aubrey was at Eton. Aubrey had three passions: great art and architecture, serious religion (we went on two retreats with Harry Williams), and serious friendship.

Aubrey died in 1972, as my family began our years at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. When we got the telephone call from his former wife, Eva, Pamela and I decided to follow up immediately on Gyorgy Kepes's generous offer to select any one of his paintings from his New York dealer. That very afternoon we went down from the Cathedral and selected the six-foot-square canvas *Joyous Radiance*, with its vivid oranges, browns, and turquoises. Ever after it has hung in our living room, bringing radiance to every situation, as did Aubrey himself.

THE EIGHT YEARS comprising my high school, college, and graduate study in New England and England were full of brightness and delight, but not free of shadows and sadness. My academic and artistic family did not have serious money, and all of my studies at Exeter, Harvard, and Trinity College, Cambridge, were made possible only by most generous scholarships and grants. And throughout these eight years there were emotional and physical health realities in my family life and in my personal life that were a negative burden.

First of all, when I left Iowa City to go to prep school at Exeter, my mother entered menopause with a simultaneous growth of

cancer lodged on her face. The cancer was eventually cured medically, but it plunged her into a psychological depression that lasted several years and included two stays of several weeks in mental hospitals. Throughout my years at Exeter and Harvard, my mother was under a psychiatric doctor's care, and during my first year in England she was in a mental institution undergoing intensive electric shock treatment. My father was heroic during my mother's agony.

My own personal blow during these otherwise glorious academic years occurred during my second year in England: a rupture in my love life caused by an abrupt breakup with someone I'll call A. This lovely woman had become my serious true love in my senior year at Harvard, and when I received the Fiske Fellowship to Trinity College, she had changed her plans and went to study in Paris, with only the English Channel separating us. She bought a small Renault, and we drove to the Riviera over the Christmas holidays to visit Matisse's amazing new chapel in Vence. Early in the new year, I received a letter from her saying it was all over. I was not a favorite of her family. It was really over.

Years later, I wrote to A. at the death of her father and again at the death of her husband. She answered each letter with a beautiful reply. After her husband's death, we had a truly wonderful lunch and catch-up after fifty-eight years. In the world of faith, miracles abound!



December 30, 1954, the Church of the Resurrection, New York City  
photo credit: Jay T. Winburn

## Jersey City

The reality of friendship—the deep emotional relationship with a different human being (be it my wife, one of my children, or a friend)—has always been my greatest joy in life, parallel to my joy in architecture, the arts, and theater. Tom Smith, my friend from Eliot House and our two years together in England, once said to me, “Morton, you really have deep emotional friendships!” Paul Moore’s talk at the Canterbury Club in my junior year at Harvard took my understanding of friendship to a radically different level: to God himself initiating friendship with us through our openness to the “other”—or “friend”—through our own spiritual poverty. He gave seven examples of poverty and friendship.

First: St. Martin of Tours, a third-century Roman soldier in Gaul, who heard a voice screaming, “I’m cold! I’m cold!” Martin got off his horse and beheld a leper in a ditch. Martin wrapped his cape around the leper, but he continued to scream. Next, Martin lay down on top of the stinking man and breathed into his mouth. And the leper became Christ.

Second: St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), the son of a rich merchant, who at age twenty-two experienced a profound religious conversion to live in poverty. He gave away all his possessions, including the clothes he was wearing—and his entire princely fortune—and lived joyfully in poverty with God and his new community of friends, his spiritual sisters and brothers, and also God’s community of nature, with sun and moon, wolf and lamb.

Third: Dorothy Day, in the Depression years of the 1930’s, who embraced poverty and friendship by opening houses of hospitality with soup kitchens in New York City and by establishing the Catholic Worker Movement.

Fourth: The new French worker-priests (1944–1954), who took off their clerical garb and, working incognito in factories and on the docks, lived in small fraternities in Paris and Marseilles.

Fifth: Martin Luther King Jr. and his many courageous associates, who, in God’s name, made interracial friendship imperative by creating the Civil Rights Movement. For the first time, we began spelling “black” with a capital “B.”

Sixth: Grace Church’s new work in Jersey City with the poorest Black families, who had arrived recently from the South with their children and were living in tenements and in segregated housing projects.

Seventh: For me, personally, when Paul ended with a question: “What work of friendship in spiritual poverty could you do?”

I DID NOT MEET PAUL MOORE that night in 1950, nor when I went out to Jersey City and Grace Church in 1951, the day before I went to England for the next two years. But his words about transformation and friendship and poverty changed my internal debate about my life’s work as an architect or priest or conceivably both, as a worker-priest.

Back from England, in September 1953, I began my third and final year of studying theology, now in New York at General Theological Seminary, with the intention of being ordained as a priest. In my second week at seminary, I met a fellow student who was doing field work in Jersey City and knew Paul Moore very well. He had just been on the summer staff as a seminarian at Grace Church for three months, along with six Black and Puerto Rican teenagers from the neighborhood. For all my “best education” and travels, I had literally never known a Black person, let alone had Black friends.

My new seminary friend Ledlie Laughlin took me out to Jersey City for an event at Grace Church, and I even briefly met Paul Moore. But the high point of the trip was supper with Ledlie’s good friends in the parish, the Williams family. Mrs. Williams (“Call me Angie”) presided at the kitchen table with her three daughters, Loretta, Jerry, and Shirley, who had been on the summer staff with Ledlie, and her three sons Noel, Frank, and Lonnie (nine for supper; Mr. Williams worked nights). Over the next few weeks, Ledlie took me with him to Jersey City two or three times, and once I spent the night with the Williams family, sharing a bed with seven-year-old Noel in their third-floor walk-up apartment.

As a seminarian, I took field work placement at St. Marks Church in-the-Bowery in New York’s East Village. Fr. Richard McEvoy, my childhood Iowa City priest, was now the rector, and my mother and father, also now living in New York, were once again his parishioners. It was a marvelous, very racially mixed church, with poor and middle-income families from the “white” as well as the “Black”

projects, and Village intellectuals and artists of all kinds. The poet W.H. Auden lived two blocks away and came to the 8 a.m. communion service every Sunday in his fluffy blue bedroom slippers. Dick McEvoy was also a longtime friend of the Episcopal bishop of New York, the Rt. Rev. Horace Donegan, who had been his classmate in seminary and now presided at the great Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

An earlier rector of St. Marks in-the-Bowery was the Rev. Dr. William Norman Guthrie, a legendary figure in the city's intellectual world from 1911 to 1939, who transformed New York's oldest parish church into a major center of the arts and religion. He turned the immense churchyard into a sculpture garden, where monumental medieval and Native American carved stone figures shared the beautiful green yard with no less than

the marble tomb of New York's first mayor, Peter Stuyvesant. Dr. Guthrie also transformed the church's parish hall into an art gallery with a huge circular terra cotta sculpture of the annunciation by Andrea Della Robbia, which he had purchased in Italy. Dr. Guthrie was also a liturgical innovator in weaving drama and poetry into the Sunday morning worship. It is well known that Bishop William Thomas Manning, a liturgical conservative, was increasingly concerned. However, when the great innovator of modern dance Isadora



With Fr. Richard McEvoy, New York City, 1955  
photo credit: family collection

Duncan became involved on a regular basis, the bishop exploded and refused to enter the church for any reason as long as Dr. Guthrie was rector. Dr. Guthrie was unperturbed, and Isadora Duncan continued to dance. The bishop outlived the rector but kept his word and did not enter St. Marks as long as Dr. Guthrie was alive.

A final testimony to Dr. Guthrie's artistic foresight was his work with the "greatest American architect" (to quote Walter Gropius), Frank Lloyd Wright. Dr. Guthrie hired Wright to design a series of modern apartment buildings on real estate property owned by the church and contiguous to the churchyard. Unfortunately, however, the church property had long been and was currently occupied by four elegant, early-19th-century townhouses that would have had to be destroyed; therefore, the Wright project was never realized. However, I saw the amazing model that Wright built for the St. Mark's apartments at the great Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1994.

Needless to say, I never met Dr. Guthrie in the flesh. In the realm of the spirit, however, he has been a significant force in my life, both complicated and inspiring.

IN LATE JANUARY, Ledlie mentioned that Paul Moore would like to talk with me in Jersey City. So out I went, and Paul and his wife, Jenny, asked at length about my future plans. Paul said that their associate Fr. Kilmer "Kim" Myers was moving to St. Augustine's Chapel on the Lower East Side and that they would be looking for a replacement. Would I be interested? I replied that I would be ordained a deacon in June and would be very interested!

Another major event that first fall back in New York was the strange telephone call in late October from my close Cambridge friend Aubrey Cartwright: "I've met your wife in Italy! It's the perfect match. She is interested both in inner-city church work and the art world."

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” I said.

So I was introduced to Pamela Taylor in January, and we were married in December 1954.

By then I was a priest and at work in Jersey City with Paul Moore. Pamela had been working at Trinity Church and on the Lower East Side and knew Kilmer Myers at St. Augustine’s Chapel. Indeed, she had grown up in the art world: first in Worcester, Massachusetts, where her father had been director of the Worcester Art Museum, and then in New York, where he was director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Pamela was the eldest of four children; her younger siblings included Emily, a restorer of paintings and a film editor; John, a writer (now deceased); and Mary, also a writer and social activist who worked with Danilo Dolci, who led the charge against the mafia in Sicily (where she now lives with her Sicilian husband, Antonio Simeti, their two married children, and their four grandchildren, all of whom enjoy living in both Sicily and New York).

Aubrey had been correct as well as prescient.

In my first six bachelor months in Jersey City (June through December), I lived on the third floor of the stone rectory in the bedroom Kim Myers had vacated. Down the hall was Fr. Robert “Peggie” Pegram, who, with Paul and Jenny and Kim, had started the new ministry at Grace Church in June 1949, and Joe Valdez, a teenager separated from his foster parents. On the second floor slept Paul and Jenny and their then five children: Honor, Paul Jr., Adelia, Rosemary, and George. On the ground floor was the kitchen, where we all had breakfast together (with the washing machine and dishwasher); the dining room, where we had dinner together (Jenny did all the cooking); and the living room, where we never sat. In the basement was the “clothes room” for people who needed clothes, and in the glass-enclosed front porch was a bench where the “porch set” (usually homeless men, often alcoholic) sat and had a cup of coffee for

breakfast and a cup of soup and more coffee for supper.

The rectory was known as an open rectory—and it literally was open to members of the parish and the neighborhood and the street. In the front hall on the wall by the front door was a small framed quotation from St. Benedict: “Let all guests be received as Christ.” Engraved in my consciousness is that first sight of Grace Church the day before I sailed to Germany in June 1951: the Black teenagers playing ball in the cement covered front yard of the rectory at 268 Second Street. And now I lived in that rectory.

Pamela and I got engaged in July of 1954 and were shown the apartment up the street, where we would live after our marriage in December. St. Christopher’s House was the new name for the old four-story, red-brick railroad tenement building at 278 Second Street that the church had bought three years earlier. The Sisters of St. John Baptist of Mendham, New Jersey, had their convent and chapel on the fourth floor. Our apartment was on the third floor, Sunday school classrooms and meeting rooms were on the second floor, and half of the first floor was filled with the church offices, while an enlarged clothes room took up the other half. The basement had a dirt floor.

Fixing up our railroad apartment-to-be was for me like building the chapel in the basement of Eliot House and falling in love with the airy openness of Thaxted Church in England—and now bringing the white walls of the Bauhaus into our daily life. Angie Williams’s family lived on the same block with the Butlers and the Walkers and the Carters—all four families now members of Grace Church—and all of their kids got involved in our apartment project with rolled-up sleeves and joined Pamela and me with gusto. We knocked down the wall between the sun-filled front room and the windowless bedroom behind it, making a really glorious open white space that Gropius and Le Corbusier and Mies would applaud. “White walls for white folks!” yelled Sonny Butler, and we all roared with laughter.

Beautiful Grace Church, built in 1847, was located in once-fashionable lower Jersey City. The history of Jersey City was interesting. From its beginning in the 17th century, Jersey City, across the Hudson River from New York City, was white—first Dutch and English, then Irish, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Jewish, and Greek. But in the early 1940's, at the beginning of the war, vast numbers of African-American families came north seeking work—to Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. Most of the new Black families in Jersey City were not from Southern cities but instead from the country: rural sharecroppers, very poor, and with minimal schooling. Almost all of the new Black families lived in lower Jersey City (near the entrance to the Holland Tunnel), and in one of the three public housing projects renamed Booker T. Washington. The Williamses, Carters, Butlers, and Walkers all lived two blocks down the street from the church and were among its first Black families.

When the foursome—Paul and Jenny and Kim and Peegie—began the “new work” in 1949, there were no Black families in Grace Church. Instead, the beautiful church, seating 600 in its mahogany pews most Sundays, had only some twenty very old, single white parishioners (mostly women in their sixties, seventies, and eighties) and one elderly white couple. Their conversation about Grace Church was always centered on “how things used to be.” But the new ministry itself had really begun with the young children of the Black families down the street and their new safe playground in the front yard of the stone rectory.

And it was the children who took by the hand each of the new foursome up the creaky stairs of the tenement apartments to meet their mothers (only very occasionally fathers) in their kitchens. And next their mothers came to visit the new safe space of the rectory play yard and ended up in the rectory kitchen with Jenny. Jenny's ministry is so well-described in her book, *The People on Second Street*. In the

fall and winter spanning 1949 and 1950, the large parish hall attached to the church had become on alternative afternoons and nights a basketball court, a craft class, and, most important of all, for three evenings a week, a family TV room.

Another tremendous gift to the new ministry came from one of Paul Moore's oldest friends, Anthony “Tony” Drexel Duke, who had been in Paul's class at both St. Paul's School and Yale. Tony's family owned a large oceanfront property in East Hampton on which Tony decided to establish a summer camp for poor inner-city boys, and Grace Church became a primary source of supply both of campers and counselors at Boys Harbor. A few years later, Tony established a parallel Girls Harbor.

When Pamela and I came to Grace Church in 1954, five years after the new ministry had been started, there was already in place not only a large weekly Sunday school but also a huge summer two-week daily Bible school, both directed by the new resident order of Sisters of St. John Baptist. Equally important each year was the two-month summer program, with its special staff of college and seminary students, as well as older Grace Church teenagers. The new church bus, in addition to bringing kids and families from all over Jersey City to downtown Grace Church, had a crucial reverse function in the summer program especially: to take both groups of kids and teenagers on organized excursions to the wider world and its glories. We went on overnight outings to Episcopal conference centers and camps in the green wooded countryside and to the treasure chest of New York City, visiting the Museum of Natural History, the Bronx Zoo, and the biggest spellbinder of them all: the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Perhaps most important in the rebirth of Grace Church was the new group of Black lay leaders, and especially Black men, who were drawn to the work of Grace Church from all over the city. Certainly





Summer Bible school  
photo credit: family collection

first of all came Bill Johnson, a lawyer and officer in the local NAACP chapter. Then James Brown, who worked at the American Can Company and organized and ran the new Boy Scout troop for fifty-five years until his death in 2008. Next came Jay Harden and Ishmael Simmons, who both worked at the post office, and finally Ray Brown, one of the top criminal lawyers in the state and also the president of the Jersey City Chapter of the NAACP. Ray's son Raymond Jr. became an acolyte at Grace Church and later, in his senior year at Columbia, one of the leaders of the student protest in 1968 that shut down the university.

IN 1957, Paul and Jenny left Grace Church (with their now seven children) for Indianapolis, where Paul was called to be dean of Christ Church Cathedral. A priest from Mobile, Alabama, named Francis



Mother's Day tea, Parish Hall, 1956  
photo credit: family collection

Walter joined Ledlie Laughlin and me. Pamela and I (with our two baby girls) then left the wonderful white third-floor apartment in St. Christopher's House and moved into the rectory, first painting the walls flat white—more jokes about whiteness—and then sanding the fine oak floors after removing the hideous flowered linoleum the Moores had installed in the living and dining rooms “to identify with the neighborhood.”

Although the largest group of new families at Grace Church were now Black, Pamela and I joined the team just as an almost equally large number of families from Puerto Rico moved into lower Jersey City to live side by side with their Black neighbors. Naturally, the children of these newcomers became the focus of the summer staff, and our baseball teams and Bible school and summer camps became

more diverse overnight. Also arrived the Flores family, who had been in Jersey City for a decade and had been Episcopalian in their former home in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. Marina Flores became an instant organizer with our new Puerto Rican mothers. Pamela and I took Spanish lessons, and I even became able to say mass in Spanish. But, as evidenced by my feeble attempts at German and even three years of high school French, I've never been much of a linguist; luckily for us, our new Puerto Rican families wanted to speak English!

During our eight years in Jersey City, four new families came into the parish, and their children entered its various programs. Three of the families were half-English, and the war-bride wives became leaders, particularly in educational programs. Another steady stream of diversity came from Paul and Jenny's friends, Peegie's and Ledlie's friends, and Pamela's and my old family and college friends who fell in love with Grace Church.

In addition, virtually all of my English friends from Trinity College visited for two or three weeks, living with us. Aubrey Cartwright and Anthony Barnes moved from London to New York and were in Jersey City every Sunday. Anthony went so far as to join Shirley Williams and Sonny Butler in the cast of an outrageous Grace Church comedy directed by Paul's old college friend, Freddie Bradlee, a Broadway producer. The annual summer staff of college and seminary students obviously contributed to the racial mix and cultural diversity of the parish. Some of the summer staff returned annually, and some literally never left; for example, Ledlie married Roxana Dodd shortly after her summer as a volunteer.

A new couple from Jersey City joined the parish and soon became involved in my architectural passions. Henry Newman was a builder and construction pro who declared that the church badly needed painting and he wanted to organize the whole project. Needless to say, this offer went straight to my aesthetic gizzard: England's

Thaxted parish church comes to Jersey City! And the beautiful Grace Church interior went from a dirty, dark, creamy tan to dazzling glorious white. And at the entrance to the choir stalls leading up to the altar was the horizontal Gothic rood beam fifteen feet from the floor, with the Bible verse "Thou hast overcome the sharpness of death" spelled out in dark brown wooden letters, which we repainted in alternating bright medieval red, blue, and glistening gold leaf!

After the sparkling new church interior was painted entirely by church members (including clergy and wives) under Henry's professional direction, building projects led by Henry became very popular. We poured cement into the earth-floored basements of the parish hall and St. Christopher's House and created six new classrooms and a woodworking shop. We even created two bathrooms in the open space between the parish hall and the church, to everyone's joyful relief!

Our growing diversity sometimes backfired. A sweet little six-year-old Catholic girl who lived on Second Street loved to walk Sammy, our ancient beagle. Every afternoon after school (St. Mary's parochial school was across the street from Grace Church), Emily would collect the dog and—almost being pulled by him—would march up and down Second Street. One day Emily didn't come, and then another day. Was Emily sick? A week later, Pamela met her on the street. "Oh, have you been sick?" Pamela asked. "We've all missed seeing you, especially Sammy."

Emily burst into tears. "Sister said I couldn't walk the Protestant dog," she said.

Although "Emily and the Protestant dog" suggests that Jersey City in 1959 was not at the forefront of Roman Catholic "best practices," in the previous year of 1958, John XXIII had been elected as Pope and soon announced the forthcoming Second Vatican Council to take place in Rome between 1962 and 1965, which indeed would usher in the most revolutionary Catholic Church reform in 500 years.

Our fieldwork seminarians from across the river kept the clergy at Grace Church up to speed theologically. In fact, even in the year of John XXIII's amazing election, Robert Weeks, our seminarian from General Theological Seminary in the summer program of 1958, asked me if I had heard Fr. Alexander Schmemmann lecture. I confessed I had never even heard of the man. Who was he? Bob simply said that Schmemmann was a Russian Orthodox priest from Paris and the new dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York. The seminary had first been housed at our own Episcopal General Theological Seminary but now had its classes at Union Theological Seminary, up by Columbia University.

"Liturgical theology is Schmemmann's<sup>1</sup> main focus, like your own," Bob told me, "and you just must go hear him lecture!"

So I went up and met Fr. Schmemmann that September and went to all of his classes in 1959—twice a week from 10 a.m. to noon—up and down on the subway from lower Jersey City to the

Upper West Side. Then at lunch with Pamela back in the rectory kitchen, I would share my new revelations.

What excited and genuinely moved me spiritually about Fr. Schmemmann's mind was the time context: always now, not the past or the future.

And the spatial context: not this room or this country but God's kingdom in heaven where "the

Christ fills all."

The time and the place where this new reality happens with power on Earth is the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, which for the earliest Christians was also the eighth day, the new Resurrection Day after the Sabbath on the seventh day.

The Holy Communion is itself heaven on earth, *now*.

The phrase "all in all" (Ephesians 1:23) was to me deeply architectural, structural, radiant, and all-inclusive.

And most important: Christ's "all in all" of the eighth day includes literally *all* humans, living and long dead.

*All* times.

*All* events—dogs, stars and galaxies, disasters.

*All* creation transformed into the living Christ *now!*

In the course of 1959 and 1960, Fr. Alexander and his wife, Juliana, became friends with Pamela and our young family. We went to each others' homes in New York and Jersey City. They came to Christmas Midnight Mass at Grace Church (their own Russian Christmas in those days was January 7, my birthday!), and Fr. Alexander preached at Grace Church at our Holy Week service on Maundy Thursday. He said that we should visit their own family summer chapel in Canada sometime and talk more deeply about liturgy and the needs of the church today.

Later in the spring of 1960, Juliana asked Pamela if we were going to Maine, as usual, for our summer holiday away from Grace Church. Pamela said no. Her aunt's guest house in Southwest Harbor was not avail-



Chapel of St. Sergius, lac Labelle, Québec  
photo credit: Alexis Troubetsky

1 *The Lord's Prayer; The Eucharist; Ultimate Questions; Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy; For the Life of the World; Of Water and Spirit; The Eucharist; Introduction to Liturgical Theology; Great Lent; O Death Where is Thy Sting*; published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press; [www.svspress.com](http://www.svspress.com)



Fr. Alexander Schmemmann blessing the lake  
photo credit: Serge Schmemmann

able for our three-week scheduled holiday after the summer program. “Well,” said Juliana, “come up to our heavenly Canadian lake! It’s all very simple.”

So our summer holiday life changed in 1960 as we became the only non-Russian, non-Orthodox family in their community on the amazing glacial lake (200 feet deep)! Twelve years later, in 1972, after Jersey City and Chicago, we moved to New York and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The following year, we built our own cottage on Juliana’s uncle’s lakefront land. I designed our glorious, very simple moon-gazing pavilion—ever the frustrated architect! In the days since, we have delighted in our summers spent in that place of simple beauty and very dear friends.

THE YEARS AT GRACE CHURCH IN JERSEY CITY shaped my life in the church and in the world, as they did for Pamela and our daughters. The lively community of staff and parishioners and family, with its diversity and its commitment to confronting the needs of the city, was a joy and a unique preparation for what was to follow.



photo credit: Ulli Steltzer

# The Plunge

So-called urban unrest in American cities in the 1950's and the 1960's was a problem to all established institutions: commercial, educational, and religious. In 1962, James Baldwin published *The Fire Next Time*, which went to the top of the bestseller list all over the country. The various large, white religious communities were concerned because in the racially changed central cities where many of their long-established churches and synagogues were located, large numbers of members were now moving away.

The same post-war years that produced the fast growing new suburbs also witnessed a radical shift in how all institutions were organized, due to the new reality of instant information. After the war, computers, electric typewriters, faxes, and finally e-mail became the basic tools of the centralized organization of the new bureaucracy. Training and sensitivity to diversity became necessary new skills and disciplines for the staff of almost all institutions. New and very popular two- to four-week sensitivity training courses were held in Vermont and California. Not surprisingly, the executive council of the Episcopal Church got the message and sent many of its staff to the new sensitivity workshops.

In 1962, the National Council reorganized itself and created a division of inner-city and metropolitan ministries. Paul Moore's work in Jersey City (and later in inner-city Indianapolis) had become recognized nationally, and he himself played a major role in getting the new national department established and funded, working with the new rector of New York's Trinity Church, Dr. John Heuss, and the Very Rev. Darby Betts, Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. Bishop Daniel Corrigan, of the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado, was asked to head up the newly organized Executive Council in New York. He recruited me from Jersey City to head up the new inner-city and metropolitan office. Bishop Corrigan had previously led a two-year conference comprising six one-week sessions, called the Total Ministry of the Church. Fifty participants were invited, and each pledged to attend all six meetings over the two years at a conference-center farm in Ohio. In my seventh and eighth years in Jersey City, I was the "inner-city man" for all six weeks of meetings.

Soon after I left Jersey City, in May 1962, to begin the new job, Bishop Corrigan asked me to write an outline of my program. I said, "Yes, of course." What I didn't say was: "What is a program?" In all my years of ministry in Jersey City I had never thought of it as

"a program." Then it dawned upon me—my new job was to make all of the hard-up, inner-city Episcopal churches in America's "changed neighborhoods" cued in to what we did in Jersey City: interracial team ministry, big summer programs for kids, a staff of older teenagers from the neighborhood (largely African-American and Puerto Rican), and the impetus to call, call, call on all of the families in their basement and tenement apartments or in the projects. We had baseball teams, a Bible school, and a bus that picked up kids from all over the city. The Jersey City summer project itself soon became the first program to be learned in the "how-to" training.

Bishop Corrigan also hired as a part-time metropolitan consultant Dr. Perry Norton, a professor he had recently met from Gropius's department of architecture at Harvard's School of Design. Perry had opened the bishop's eyes to recognize that the so-called leadership of the church (bishops, cathedral deans, major parish priests, and lay leaders) was largely ignorant about the changed institutional dynamics of cities. They were structurally metropolitan and no longer simply a large collection of residential neighborhoods and governmental, commercial, and financial organizations called "big cities."

A second major program was created specifically to address the new post-war metropolitan reality. With Bishop Corrigan's enthusiastic blessing, Perry and I developed a national series of weeklong metropolitan training conferences (Sunday night through Friday) for top church leadership nationwide, in all fifty states containing the hundred ecclesiastical church dioceses. The first two conferences in the dioceses of Chicago and New York opened in January 1963, followed by San Francisco in May 1963, Atlanta in February 1964, and climaxing in April 1964, in Omaha, with western dioceses from seventeen states totaling 168 participants. The five conferences brought together a total of 520 church leaders.

The five weeklong conferences were, in fact, built around the problems of a hypothetical major American mythical metropolis we called Metabagdad. Each participant received a hefty fifty-page workbook (the creation of genius Perry Norton) with maps of the larger region, land-use patterns of Metabagdad itself, major highways, and major concentrations of minority groups, with each map noting locations of Episcopal churches. In addition to the maps—and really most important of all—was a printed description of twenty-five problem hot spots in Metabagdad. For example: the proposal of a new federal highway extension of Interstate 75, which would either avoid the central city altogether or cut through and destroy major inner-city concentrations of minority housing. This would be compensated with new federal urban renewal funds for rebuilding new minority housing.

The task of each work group, which comprised ten to twelve people, was to work through all the hot spots and supply concrete proposals for their solutions. Each work group met twice each day for two-hour sessions. In addition were brilliant daily meditations by Bishop Corrigan and serious ninety-minute lectures by three national metropolitan professionals: Calvin Hamilton, city planner for Pittsburgh (and, soon thereafter, for Los Angeles); James Banks, the African-American director of family relocation and housing rehabilitation for the D.C. Redevelopment Land Agency; and Paul Ylvisaker, the Ford Foundation's public affairs director.

On each of the five mornings, the Holy Communion was celebrated at 8 a.m. using the new liturgies developed by the Taizé brotherhood, in France, and the newly rebuilt Coventry Cathedral in England, which had been largely destroyed in the war. The five services were deeply moving: refreshing new language and music from Taizé and Coventry with brilliant short homilies by carefully selected conference participants. Worship at its best!

The result of the five Metabagdads was a significant desire

by several church leaders to go deeper and develop a continuing relationship with our national office. This produced third and fourth national programs. Third was a pilot diocese program, with initially three (and later eight) willing dioceses who wanted continued serious consultative partnership with the national office as they attacked their own specific metropolitan problems at home. Fourth was a communications project: a new quarterly national magazine, *Church in Metropolis*, sent free to every parish and every Episcopal parishioner in America.

By the end of the second year, we had a full-time staff of four: myself; Fr. George Lee, a Chinese-American priest who ran the national inner-city summer programs; Fr. Jack Woodard, from Houston, who ran the new pilot diocese program; and Perry Norton (AKA Mr. Metabagdad), who served as a consultant to both the new pilot dioceses and the national office—plus four part-time associate staff members from the education and community relations departments of the national office. A new fifth national program was termed “interchurch” (not “interfaith”).

By 1963, nearly all of the largely white Christian denominations and the New York-based National Council of Churches had developed inner-city/metropolitan departments in their headquarters, each with an urban executive staff person like myself. These twenty-one urban executives began to meet quarterly as a group, and in early 1963 we agreed to create and jointly cosponsor a radically new national training center to re-train the clergy of the twenty-one national denominations. The twenty-one urban executives constituted the board of directors of the new organization, the Urban Training Center for Christian Mission, known as the UTC.

Chicago was selected as the best location for the training center; there it would be supported by the resources of the University of Chicago Divinity School and its urban specialist, Prof. Gibson Winter,

who had written *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*. Additional help was to be provided by Don Benedict, the executive director of the Community Renewal Society of Chicago (and former cofounder of the New York's East Harlem Protestant Parish), and Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation. The training center would occupy the unused building of a church on Chicago's West Side.

In early 1963, the search committee of the new UTC board selected Fr. Kilmer Myers to be the director. Myers was the legendary inner-city pioneer who, with Paul Moore, had developed the new ministry at Grace Church in Jersey City in 1949. It was Myers's place I took in 1954 when he started a new ministry at St. Augustine's Chapel in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Kilmer Myers accepted the job and moved to Chicago to organize the new UTC, which was to open in September 1964, with fifty students already enrolled.

That fall, the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan elected Fr. Kilmer Myers to be its next bishop. Kim Myers informed the Michigan diocese of his Chicago commitment and persuaded them to postpone his consecration ceremony until December. Then lightning struck a second time, and in June 1964, to my total surprise, I was elected to be the new executive director, to follow Kilmer Myers for the second time in my life! Quite honestly, I have always thought of myself as pastoral: people-related rather than a manager or bureaucrat. However, I knew that the new center was in a crisis with Kim's unexpected resignation, and I accepted the offer with a sense of humor and the thought: "God's ways are inscrutable." Pamela and I rented an apartment in Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago—an intellectual, intercultural, interracial South Side community (which was also the Chicago home of Saul Alinsky, the author of *Reveille for Radicals*, and, later, of Barack Obama).



Ronne Hartfield

photo credit: The Hyde Park Herald

*After simmering for decades, and ignited by the Selma March and the 1968 assassinations, the late 1960's and early 1970's saw phenomenal change in the relationship of church, particularly the urban church, and community. The small Episcopal church on Chicago's South Side where the Morton family and our family were parishioners was no exception. We were*

*a recently blended group, still not totally easy with our divisions, high-church, Sunday-only Anglicans, mostly white academics who came to hear brief, theologically sound sermons, now sharing the peace with a long-standing, settled, low-church community, whose racially integrated, comfortably bourgeois members took pride in their traditional worship services, the starched correctness of their altar linens and their highly organized Sunday school.*

*Jim Morton, a parishioner with a mission, offered a fierce challenge to re-form our thinking to include our obligation to a much wider community. Equally life-changing was the new collective power of the committed ministers, pastors, priests, and nuns that he brought to the Urban Training Center and to us, with not just admonitions but strategies for change.*

*Ronne Hartfield, 2021*



Kilmer Myers had recruited a superb staff for the new center: Dr. Archie Hargraves—“the Afro-American Socrates” (nicknamed “Soc”) who had cofounded, with Don Benedict, New York’s legendary East Harlem Protestant Parish—was to be the director of mission development. Dr. Richard Luecke (former Lutheran chaplain and scholar at Princeton) was to be director of studies. Carl Siegenthaler (a Presbyterian pastor and psychiatric social worker)



The Urban Training Center classroom with Archie Hargraves and Richard Luecke  
photo credit: Ulli Steltzer

was to be director of field work. And Dr. Niles Carpenter (a retired professor of sociology and an Episcopal priest) was to be director of research. Equally important, Kim Myers had also recruited four part-time staff members: urban giants including Msgr. Jack Egan, Dr. Stanley Hallett (a Chicago city planner and co-director of the Chicago Council of Churches), the Rev. Don Benedict, and the

formidable Saul Alinsky.

What became a major trademark of the new center was Archie Hargraves’s unique negative warning and curricular invention: “Most of these white clergy types never felt poverty or ostracism in their gut.” So, to remedy this dynamic, Archie created “the plunge.”

At the beginning of each training session on Monday morning, every man was given directions for Tuesday: (1) Don’t shave in the morning; (2) Wear old clothes; (3) Bring your toothbrush; (4) Leave in your room your wristwatch, all jewelry, and money; (5)

Leave behind all personal papers; (6) Bring your Social Security card; (7) Meet all together Tuesday morning at 9 a.m. at the street door of the center.

Monday evening at the new UTC was always a jovial get-together to lessen the new trainees’ inevitable nervousness about Tuesday and the plunge. Under the leadership of actor Mel Spiegel, the whole group of trainees and staff was directed to pair off by twos and stand facing each other and introduce themselves. Mel Spiegel was the student of Viola Spolin, who had invented theater games, and both Spiegel and Spolin were members of Chicago’s avant-garde theater company Second City.

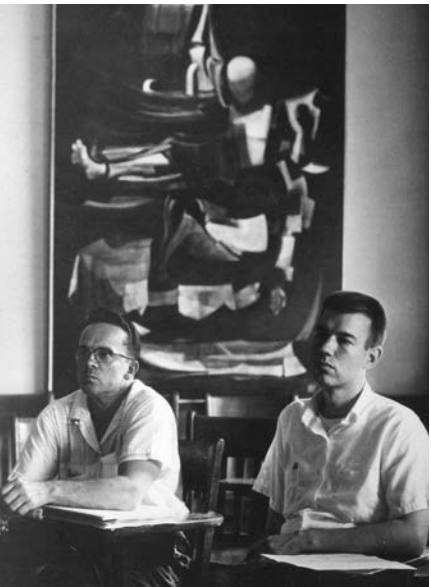
Mel called out directions: “Everyone shake hands—both hands—with your partner and then scratch each other’s backs.” Then, after a couple of minutes: “Now mirror each other’s every facial movement: grin, laugh, wriggle your ears, stick out your tongue. And now mirror other’s total body movements: wiggle your arms and your legs. Jump up and down. Now each twosome join with your neighboring twosome and all four play facial mirror together, and do some serious back scratching and some foursome total body mirroring. Now each foursome form a group of eight and play ‘London Bridge is Falling Down.’”

The music changed, and the whole room joined hands in a circle for a wild samba dance. Finally, with everyone exhausted from such unaccustomed clerical gyration, we had cold drinks and popcorn. The new trainees went off to bed for a good sleep before the plunge Tuesday morning.

When we all met at the center on Tuesday at 9 a.m., each trainee was given three dollars, and everyone was told that for the next three days they were going to live on the streets. They could not return to their room at the Y that night. Instead they could search for all-night movies, waiting rooms at bus and train stations,

or so-called gospel shelters. They could beg at churches, sell their blood, panhandle, or try to get a day job.

On Friday evenings, we all met at the local bar near the Y for drinks and supper in the backroom, followed by a shared sermon highlighting our new insights from the three days on the streets. The evening culminated with Holy Communion. Everyone agreed that their greatest challenges were, first of all, being avoided on the street and, second, trying to find a public bathroom. Then there was the exhaustion—as well as the unexpected meanness and kindnesses from strangers. The plunge was soon written up, with pictures, in *Time* and *Newsweek* and in the magazines of every religious denomination, seminary, and social agency. The Urban Training Center was suddenly known everywhere in America (and in parts of Europe, too, due to coverage from European publications).



Carl Siegenthaler and trainee; painting by Arthur Hall Smith, *Lazarus Rising*, 1956, collection of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine  
photo credit: Ulli Steltzer

Every Wednesday morning was the community Holy Communion, celebrated by four or five clergy of different traditions and using the ancient liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, as updated by my Russian Orthodox mentor Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. The sermon each Wednesday was given jointly by two or three trainees of different backgrounds.

Each year the center had four one-month sessions, two three-month sessions, and one nine-month session. The students' denominations paid tuition and housing. In January 1965, both the new one-month and three-month courses were titled "Black Rage." This new curriculum was organized by Archie and

several Black leaders in Chicago to deal with the near boiling point of urban unrest in many American cities, including their own. The racial explosion in Selma was two months later, in March, and the entire student body and staff flew down to Alabama for a full week of protests and marches. We got to know Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his staff in action. We were with Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian minister, the night he was shot. It was unforgettable.

After Selma, I had a serious meeting with Paul Ylvisaker of the Ford Foundation, who had become a good friend in the Metabagdad conferences. Paul asked me the UTC's Black-to-white ratio. "Fifty-fifty?" he asked.

"About one-to-fifteen," I replied.

"That's nuts!" said Paul. "If you can get it up to fifty-fifty, the foundation will pay for all Black clergy."

So I went to Atlanta and spoke with Dr. King and Andrew Young, who was on UTC's board.

Dr. King said, "This is important. I'll give you our director of affiliates for SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), Rev. C. T. Vivian, who knows every Black minister in the country. But Ford must pay not only for every Black clergyman's four-week program, but also for his weekly roundtrip fare home, because he has to be home in his pulpit every Sunday morning. That's the bread and butter of Black churches. Will you agree to these conditions?"

I said yes without a moment's hesitation.

The Rev. Dr. Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian joined our staff, and his family moved up from Atlanta. He created a hugely successful and very classy Ford fellowship program, and, with the addition of the Ford fellows, UTC became fifty-fifty Black-white. Being a Ford fellow became very cool throughout the Black church community nationally.

Chicago was the perfect training ground in the 1960's for



UTC classroom; wire cross, by Ruth Asawa  
photo credit: Ulli Steltzer

both racially and reactionary involvement and evaluation. The morning lectures were superb and challenging. Archie Hargraves and Saul Alinsky recruited every major community organizer in America, including major politicians and city planners (and their critics) and the most challenging theologians, such as Ivan Illich, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, and Prof. Charles Long, the historian of the Black church from the University of Chicago. In one June session, the entire student body and staff was arrested with Dr. King and hundreds of protestors on State Street. We were all in a make-shift jail for about thirty minutes, but at least now I have an official jail record! Our home telephone was also regularly tapped.

All of the center's staff in turn took sabbaticals, and last of all, in 1969, I had the first and only sabbatical in my life: six months in Paris! In 1968, Dr. King had been shot, and soon after Robert Kennedy was



Protests with Dr. King at State Street and Madison, in Chicago, 1966  
photo credit: Ulli Steltzer

shot, with major riots occurring after each murder. Also, in 1968 the French students shut down the Sorbonne. In an exchange, a Belgian professor from Louvain took our Chicago apartment, and we lived in the apartment of a professor at the Sorbonne, located one block from Place de la Contrescarpe, the meeting place of student protestors in 1968. Due to the generosity of our friends Perrine and Arthur Terry, who found our apartment, we were introduced to wonderful friends. During family trips to Romanesque churches, our daughter Hilary would see a steeple in the distance and from the back seat say, "Daddy, eyes straight ahead. Please don't pull over again." But she dutifully got out of the car and took a picture of each tympanum! It was a joyful family sabbatical.

I had hoped to write something about the French worker-priest movement that, along with Paul Moore and Kim Myers and

Jersey City, had been so transformative to my thinking some fifteen years before. But the Pope had shut them down in 1954, and no one in Paris was interested in their work and mission in 1969. So I didn't write anything. Instead, my French theological focus shifted to the French ecumenical monastic community of Taizé, near Cluny, with its several small fraternities of brothers that were located in small communities and trouble spots elsewhere in Europe and the Far East, where they could offer help both by their presence and their creativity.

Paris was a breath of fresh air: wonderful new friends, the food, the architecture, and Taizé. I spent many wonderful mornings in the Jardin du Luxembourg with our one-year-old Sophia while Polly and Hilary took the bus across Paris to school. Our fourth daughter, Maria Anastasia, was born in Paris on moon-shot day, and we almost named her Apollonara.

*Paris by Moonlight*

*July 16, 1969, 5 a.m. I was asleep in the window seat of our apartment in Paris on rue Thouin, near the Sorbonne, where I'd dozed off the night before. Pamela called out, "It's time, Jim!" She was about to give birth to our fourth daughter. I drove her in our new Peugeot to the American Hospital in Neuilly.*

*For most of the day, I hung around the hospital stealing glances at our new little one. Pamela had been so tired this time that she had one quiet evening at Taizé gone into the old Romanesque chapel and dedicated the coming baby to the Virgin. "This one is yours, Mary," she'd said. So she was named Maria, for the Mother of God, and Anastasia, meaning "resurrection," the return to life.*

*It was hard to believe that there could be any greater miracle for the day than this birth. But a call of congratulations from our pal Robert DeVecchi, another American living in Paris, reminded me of the other impending miracle. That evening, Neil Armstrong was going to walk on the moon, he said. Did I want to come watch?*

*I did. Robert lived in a wonderful house on the Quai d'Orsay, directly across from the Louvre. Looking out his parlor windows, I could see the Louvre and the Cathedral of Notre-Dame reflected in the water.*



photo credit: Mary Bloom

*The TV was black and white. The evening was still. The full moon seemed to float among the buildings reflected in the Seine. Armstrong crunched down on the lunar soil and made his famous pronouncement: "One small step for a man, one giant step for mankind." But what really got to me was the picture they showed when he turned his camera back toward Earth. There was our home planet, just our little blue ball in the midst of black space.*

*I looked down the quai. There was the Sorbonne to one side, the Louvre—once the royal palace of art—to the other, and the old Hôtel-Dieu, the hospital nearby. The university, the state, the healing arts all stood practically in the shadow of the dark bulk of the Gothic cathedral that had leant them legitimacy and support, Notre-Dame.*

*James Parks Morton, 1969*

WE CAME BACK AS A FAMILY TO CHICAGO REBUILT—the sabbatical in Paris was wonderful, and now we were six! It was heartwarming to be once again in Hyde Park, a diverse university community where we had so many neighbors and friends. Our daughters Polly and Hilary were happy to be walking to school or to the nearby Museum of Science and Industry, enjoying the freedom to bicycle along Lake Shore Drive, or jump rope in the courtyard of our apartment complex. We felt fortunate to be part of a politically engaged community in which the civil rights movement was very much on everyone’s mind and part of our lives.

It was fascinating to recognize that the UTC had turned into a movement. New ecumenical urban training centers had opened in San Francisco, New York, Omaha, Kansas City, Washington D.C., and Detroit. And the plunge itself was being used not only by the new training centers and churches of all kinds, but also by hospitals and social agencies. The simple notion of sitting on the other side of the professional desk proved to be illuminating in virtually every profession. It was so shocking to our clergy “plungers” who had the church door slammed in their face when they begged for a sandwich. Not to mention the women clergy and nuns, changed out of their habits into plain dresses, who knocked on convent doors not their own and were assumed to be prostitutes. The plunge was dramatic and revealing but also adaptable to a variety of situations. Many years later in 1996, two good Buddhist friends, Roshi Bernard Glassman and Sensei Grover Gauntt, started to take the Peacemaker Community to Auschwitz every year for a two-week plunge, sitting zazen in the death camp.

In my last years at the center there were several significant new developments. First, the center’s curriculum itself became part of the curriculum of several seminaries, beginning with the University of Chicago Divinity School, which sent all of its students

to the center full-time for an entire semester. We trained many Jesuits from Chicago’s Bellarmine Jesuits Retreat House. And when the Dominican sister Marjorie Tuite joined our staff, nuns of various orders began to attend. Rabbi Arnold Wolf, of Congregation Solel, in Highland Park, joined our board of directors and opened the door to Chicago rabbinical students. Jesse Jackson became involved as a lecturer, and his Operation Breadbasket became a major field placement for our trainees. Taize’s decision to establish a small fraternity of six brothers in Chicago added a refreshing dimension to the center’s spirituality and community life.

Collaboration with our frequent lecturer Ivan Illich (and his study center, CIDOC, in Cuernavaca, Mexico) and with his architect brother Sascha Illich brought us into a working relationship with the new Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies. Sascha organized a weeklong urban housing workshop in Cuernavaca, inviting New York developer Melvyn Kaufman, the two co-directors of the Harvard-MIT team, and the entire UTC staff. In 1971 and 1972, my last years at UTC, the Harvard-MIT team did weeklong workshops at the center on sweat equity, owner-built housing. Church-related housing groups from all over the country attended, as well as two New York City mayor’s housing interns, Charles Laven and Philip St. George. Soon Don Turner, who headed the Harvard center, and the two New York interns, would later become my sweat-equity housing protagonists at the Cathedral. (In fact, in 1973, these three founded its Urban Homestead Assistance Board, or UHAB.)

AFTER EIGHT EXTRAORDINARY YEARS in Chicago, in what felt like an amazing circular turning point, the new bishop of New York, Paul Moore, asked me to join him as the seventh dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.



Archangel Gabriel

photo credit: Cathedral of St. John the Divine archives

# Cathedral Moon

In 1969 Paul Moore was elected bishop coadjutor of New York, and in 1970 Paul first asked me to consider being dean of St. John the Divine. “The Cathedral has not had a dean since 1966, and it really needs to be turned around, and I think you’re crazy enough to do it,” he told me.

So I took Paul’s words seriously. I spoke at length with Pamela and five dear friends—Ledlie Laughlin, Alexander Schmemmann, Ivan Illich, Ivan’s architect brother Sascha Illich, and Paul Moore’s wife, Jenny—as well as four of our Chicago friends: Stan Hallett, Dick Luecke, Msgr. Jack Egan, and Archie Hargraves. They all said, “Go!”



clockwise from left to right: Sophia, Hilary, Polly, Maria  
photo credit: Beverly Hall

*Three years later, almost to the day, I stood looking at an almost identical scene to what I had observed in Paris, only this time the full moon shone just east of Gabriel's trumpet. I mean the bronze Gabriel by George Borglum that sits atop the east end of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Here, Gabriel looked out over smoldering Harlem, not over the bohemian streets of the Fifth Arrondissement.*

*Paul Moore, now the Episcopal bishop of New York, had invited me to run the place. I'd just spent my first day wandering the thirteen-acre close and looking at my new church. The structure was longer than two football fields and wide enough for a four-lane highway. I stood looking at a big, dark, and empty place.*

*It had been a lousy day. Among the introductory sheaf of materials I'd received was New York Times architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable's attack on the Cathedral as "mis-measured for meaning in the modern world." As a would-be architect, I was particularly stung by this opinion coming from a writer I admired.*

*Then Canon Edward N. West mentioned to me gravely—and not without sarcasm—that I ought to attend the meeting of the fabric committee of the trustees the following day, because they were going to give final approval to a plan to tear down the old Guastavino dome that covered the crossing and replace it with a more up-to-the-minute modern structure. The fact is, he told me, the old dome is dropping pieces of the tile to the ground.*

*"Just what I need," I thought. I wanted the Cathedral to be a lightning rod for urban priesthood in the United States, yet it seemed that I was about to keep the structure from falling down.*

In 1971, I was formally interviewed by a committee comprised of the bishop and three Cathedral trustees, and in April of 1972 I was officially "called" to be the seventh dean—jointly "called" on the telephone in my Chicago office at the Urban Training Center by both the new bishop, Moore, and his predecessor, Bishop Donegan, who had ordained me as priest at the Cathedral in 1954.

So, happily, in July 1972, Pamela and I (both forty-two years old), our four daughters, a green parrot, and a lemon tree arrived at the vast Gothic Cathedral in a beat-up, rusty green Peugeot and moved into the seventeen-room stone deanery.

*I looked up at Gabriel, thrusting his trumpet up towards the moon. "What am I doing here?" I asked the angel or the moon or both, "trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear?"*

*Neither angel nor moon had any answer to my complaints, so I went inside to inspect the suspect dome. It was deep, dark, and quiet inside the Cathedral. A light lit the large Russian crucifix. It had been very hot that day, but it was still cool inside the church. (I was to learn that the Cathedral has its own weather because of the great thickness of its stone walls.) I found the power panel that a guard had shown me earlier and turned on the lights.*



A view of the Cathedral close  
photo credit: Cathedral of St. John the Divine archives

*I looked up at the dome again. "Amazing," I thought. Back in 1909, it was supposed to be temporary, and it had stood all this time. I marveled at the craftsmanship of Guastavino tile. It had all been laid without*

*scaffold or support. The architect in me rebelled at the idea of tearing it down.*

*But something else began to happen in me as well. Later I would learn that it happened to many of the men and women who became my colleagues. None of us is really able to describe the experience. It isn't exactly awe, and it isn't that the place talked to any of us. Maybe it was that the place seemed charged with an energy that was calling out to be used before it was lost for good.*

*Whatever it was, I knew after a few minutes gazing, that I would never permit that dome to be torn down. Furthermore, I vowed to start building the Cathedral again and to fill it with activity, life, and light. White elephant, nothing. We would use its vast scale to move even a city as big as New York to action, healing, and communion.*

*James Parks Morton, 1972*

The dominating vastness of the great medieval cathedrals of the 12th and 13th centuries is explained by the fact that they were mostly built in that hundred-year period of the rebirth of Europe's cities after the largely rural and decentralized Dark Ages. These new cathedrals were designed to accommodate the entire new population of their town or city. They were similar to the enormous new Roman coliseums and stadiums of the earlier pagan age but, in addition, were also to be intellectual centers of learning (the school of the new Paris cathedral became the Sorbonne), centers of compassion (cathedrals sponsored many of Europe's first hospitals, orphanages, and almshouses), and simultaneously patrons of the business and craft guilds. This was a mix of the sacred and the secular to meet the spiritual, economic, and human needs of the new cities. The powerful image of the great cathedrals of the European Middle Ages dominated my thinking.



Repairing the Guastavino dome  
in the great crossing, 1973  
photo credit: Beverly Hall



But to make the image of St. John the Divine become a reality in the all-inclusive modern city of New York, several structural and legal changes had to be made. Today's globalized cities are full of immigrants from everywhere, of every language, religion, ethnicity, and culture—a real challenge for St. John the Divine, even with its own surprisingly inclusive 1873 charter declaring it to be a house of prayer for all people. How could a 20th-century Episcopal cathedral embrace the global diversity of New York?

The providential jumpstart toward proclaiming and demonstrating by word and deed the Cathedral's commitment to openness and diversity came in 1974, with a joint request from the United Nations and the Temple of Understanding (America's oldest interfaith organization, founded in 1960) for the Cathedral to host and cosponsor the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the UN's founding in 1945.

The Temple of Understanding was founded by Juliet Hollister, an amazing woman from Greenwich, Connecticut, who was the wife of a Wall Street banker. She was shocked that the nation's capitol, among its great monuments to art, literature, and science, had no memorial to the deep wisdom and spiritual understanding of the world's great religions. Over tea with Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House, she shared her concerns. The result was a global tour to meet world leaders, with letters of introduction from Mrs. Roosevelt.

The interfaith organization got its start with not only the public support of Mrs. Roosevelt, but of twelve world-famous "founding friends": Pope John XXIII, Mother Teresa, Patriarch Athenagoras, Henry Luce III, Thomas Merton, the Dalai Lama, U Thant, Albert Schweitzer, Anwar Al-Sadat, and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The program of the 1975 event Spiritual Summit V, organized by the United Nations and the Temple of Understanding, began with an evening address from the Cathedral of St. John the Divine's pulpit

by the anthropologist Margaret Mead, followed by prophesies chanted by Native American leaders, Muslim whirling dervishes, and Sufi circle dancing, which, to many people's surprise, almost everyone (including me) joined in!

The high point of the evening, however, was the address of the organization's founder, Juliet Hollister, who quoted Thomas Merton, the great Roman Catholic monk who died shortly after he spoke at the Temple of Understanding's first conference, in 1968 in Calcutta: "My brothers and sisters, we are already one. What we have to become is what we already are!" Thomas Merton's words in the Cathedral that night became the theological rock of my life.

The second day the Cathedral hosted a traditional Shinto purification ceremony before the high altar, offered by the Oomoto community (the venerable Shinto group that was largely unknown in America), and the third night we were treated to a pageant in the Cathedral nave, *The Cosmic Mass*, inspired by the Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin, written and directed by Muslim spiritual leader Imam Pir Vilayat Khan, and performed by two hundred young people recruited by the Temple of Understanding from every culture and religion under the sun, who also slept in sleeping bags in the Cathedral's basement crypt!



Interfaith service in the great crossing  
photo credit: Oomoto Foundation

It all culminated on Friday morning in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium at the United Nations, with prayers by Mother Teresa, Hindu leader Sri Chinmoy, Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, Imam Pir Vilayat Khan, Benedictine monk Brother David Steindl-Rast, and Temple of

Understanding founder, Juliet Hollister, with a final address by UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim.

Such planned interfaith diversity has seldom been met with enthusiasm by all parties. In 1975, when some clergy in the diocese saw the photo in *The New York Times* of two Shinto priests with mikado-like headgear in the Cathedral pulpit—along with Margaret Mead and me as dean—there were ominous rumblings.

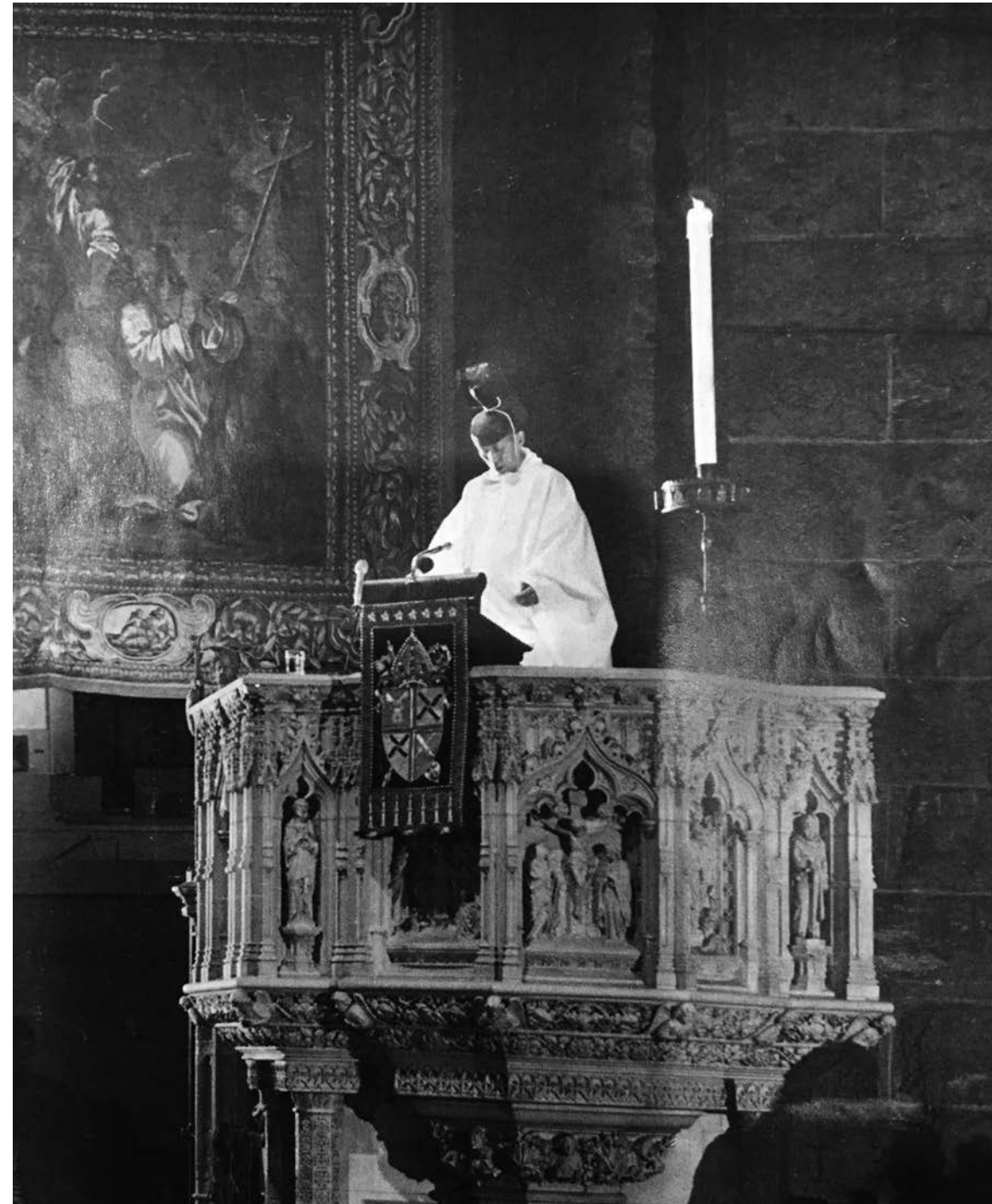
Matters came to a head on account of a rutabaga. The following week, when the Oomoto priests gave their traditional service of thanksgiving—an offering of fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, and rice, directly in front of the Cathedral’s high altar—there was talk of sacrilege and pagan rites desecrating God’s holy temple and even the possibility of having to reconsecrate the Cathedral. This was such an absurd proposition in light of every tenet of our faith that I could only respond, “How can the altar of God be desecrated by a rutabaga?”

Fortunately, the storm passed over, but it long remained a flickering red light for me.



The Oomoto altar at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine

photo credit: Oomoto Foundation



Yasumi Hirose of Oomoto offering a prayer from the Cathedral pulpit

photo credit: Oomoto Foundation

I'd say there is no circle at the Lord's Table that doesn't include by invitation every living and breathing creature. Any form of exclusion, I would say is my definition of heresy.

## The Lord's Table

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Several very positive and unexpected responses to the October 1975 event brought the Cathedral of St. John the Divine into a new relationship with leaders at the United Nations, the American Muslim community, and Oomoto. The first of these meetings was with UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim and resulted in the creation of the annual United Nations Sunday, which celebrates the September opening of the UN General Assembly. The newly elected assembly president preaches from the great pulpit of the Cathedral on the Sunday following the General Assembly opening. Today United Nations Sunday remains a significant annual event for both the Cathedral and New York City.

A second meeting with Kurt Waldheim occurred a few months later on Christmas Eve.

*December 24, 1980, Christmas Eve.*

*The snow had been falling all afternoon. It clothed the bare branches of the sycamores and the oaks outside my office window at the Cathedral. It was going to be a white Christmas, all right.*

*I am the farthest thing from a sentimental cleric, except when it comes to Christmas. I especially love it at the Cathedral, so I should have been overjoyed. Pamela was busy at home preparing our annual tree-trimming party, always a gala gathering for family and friends. At 5 p.m., I would go to witness the blessing of the Cathedral's beloved crèche by the bishop. I could well imagine the dozens of friends in the warm yellow light within the church who were even now laying out the wreaths and the Christmas flowers that would adorn the nave and choir for the great Midnight Mass.*

*There was only one problem. I am also a disorganized procrastinator when it comes to Christmas shopping. It was theoretically possible, I calculated, to get to SoHo to shop for offbeat gifts for a beautiful wife and four equally beautiful daughters and to return in time for the blessing of the crèche. But I would need much luck and grace and fluent Balinese or Mexican shopkeepers.*

*I went outside. It was slippery underfoot. The great gray bulk of the Cathedral hung like a dark cloud over the drifts of snow. I had the feeling that it was going to be a long Christmas Eve. I did not know how long.*

*But shopping turned out to be the least of it. I had almost fifteen minutes to spare before the blessing when I turned into the Cathedral driveway. For some reason, Bernard Sharp, one of our security guards—my partner in crime, I always*

*called him—was blocking my way. He was waving with both hands, apparently at me.*

*“Dean Morton!” he called. “Dean Morton, go home quick! It's important!”*

*My heart raced. Had my mother died? What if something happened to one of the children or to Pamela? I practically skidded down the path to our door and pounded inside without wiping my feet.*

*There was Pamela, all in one piece, thank God.*

*“Oh good, you're here,” she said with that maddening composure of hers. “The secretary-general has been calling every half hour all afternoon.”*

*“Good Lord.” I tried to hide my shopping bags from her. “On Christmas?”*

*She presented me with a scribbled phone number and returned to the kitchen.*

*I stood looking at the number. My hat was beginning to drip snowmelt onto the entry hall floor. What would United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim want on Christmas Eve?*

*I stowed my bundles in the vintage bathroom under the grand carved oaken staircase. Then it hit me: the Palestinians. There had been demonstrations at the UN all week, PLO supporters demanding a Security Council resolution against the West Bank settlements.*

*“Good Lord,” I thought. Still wearing my coat, I picked up the*

*hallway phone to call.*

*“Oh, Dean Morton,” Waldheim said, his clipped accent reflecting a mixture of extreme anxiety and genuine relief. “It is so good of you to return my call. I have here a potentially serious problem.”*

*“Mr. Secretary-General, will you please hold on a moment?” I interrupted. On the other line, I called over to the sacristy to tell Bishop Moore that I would miss the blessing of the crèche.*

*“Why?” the bishop asked.*

*“It’s one of the three kings,” I said.*

*“It is my four Palestinian mayors,” Waldheim continued. “They have been on a hunger strike all week. They are guarded by the PLO. And now that I am trying to close the United Nations building for the holiday, they refuse to leave! And I simply have to close the place. What if they should remain and one of them should die or become sick?” He was fairly spluttering with exasperation. But I had not the slightest idea how I could help.*

*“There is only one way,” Waldheim went on, as if to answer my unspoken question. “They have said that they might be willing to leave if a holy man comes, dressed in his official regalia, to take them to his church or his mosque or whatever it may be. They say their fast is a religious act. They want a sanctuary in which to make their prayers. A ritual conclusion to their intrusion—or use—of our quite unreligious place. You will do this for me?”*

*“Do what?”*

*“Be their holy man.”*

*“Oh, good Lord,” I thought. “Will the wonders of holy absurdity never cease? Holy man?”*

*“It is the mayors of Bethlehem and Nablus, and two others. Three are Christians. The PLO go with them,” he went on, as though I had already consented. “They will leave with you. You will need at least two limousines.”*

*Two limousines? The utterly and literally mundane character of this detail nearly made me laugh out loud. Not dromedaries, but limos. Not three kings, but four mayors. Oh holy night. Holy absurdity. Holy man, that’s me!*

*But the prospect of war in the Middle East wasn’t absurd, and neither was Waldheim’s anxiety. The Palestinians weren’t enacting a Christmas pageant. This was serious.*

*“All right,” I said. After my shopping triumphs in SoHo, I must have felt invincible. “I’ll get back to you in just a minute.” I hung up.*

*Two limousines. My mind was stuck on that detail. Peace might come to Bethlehem, but getting two limousines on a snowy Christmas Eve with no notice, with darkness falling—no room in that inn! The Cathedral is a treasure house of contradictions, and while much of the time little seems completely possible here—exactly because we’re never finished—nothing ever seems completely impossible either.*

*Limos. Two limos. Now. Right Now. And then—poof!—I had it.*

*Two limos? Lily! Lily!*

*Lily Auchincloss would be coming later for Midnight Mass. Right now, at this moment, she would be seeing to the candles on her dining room table, checking the oyster stew. A woman of traditions. A woman of compassion. A woman of infinite practicality. Without having to look it up, I dialed Lily's number. I told her it was the holy man calling, and that I needed not one dromedary but two.*

*Sure enough, before the hour was out, I had been picked up at my door by a pair of black stretch Cadillacs. In the meantime, I had put on all my finery, including the long back cape, the Russian Orthodox stovepipe hat, the gold brocade stole, and the jeweled cross that had been given to me upon my installation by the since-martyred pope of the Ethiopian Coptic Church, the Abuna Theophilus. I may not have felt holy, but I surely looked the part.*

*When the limos pulled up at the ambassador's entrance to the United Nations building, the mayors in their gray suits and the PLO with their keffiyehs were already waiting. Without a moment's hesitation, the mayors got into one car with me, while their bodyguards occupied the other. Secretary-General Waldheim smiled with immense relief. Now the mayors were my problem.*

*"Your Honors," I said, "I have set aside the Chapel of St. Saviour, the most elegant of all our chapels, with mosaics and icons, directly behind the high altar."*

*I noticed them eyeing each other. One said, "We were hoping..."*

*"What?" I asked. "Anything."*

*"Showers," another answered.*

*"Scotch whiskey," another said.*

*"Food."*

*Despite myself, I felt a grin breaking on my face.*

*"My home," I said. "Come to my home. All the sanctuary you need."*

*They relaxed immediately, and I took off my Russian hat.*

*"My family and my friends," I said. "I want you to meet the people I love."*

*And so that is how it happened that four Palestinian mayors and their PLO bodyguards were at my tree-trimming party that Christmas. My daughters and their boyfriends. My Cathedral colleagues. Our patrician trustees. But also dear friends from our Jersey City days, like Niathan Allen and Emma and their perfect almond-eyed April.*

*As an old family tradition, we celebrated Christmas ecumenically, as a feast of faith, but also of the winter and of friendship. The Palestinians had stumbled, willy-nilly, upon the way it is with us. And so my four mayors noticed when Emanuel Winternitz, a curator of musical instruments from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, solemnly lit a candle on the tree.*

*R'abia Heller, also from Vienna, a Sufi of Jewish extraction who wrote about the kabbalah, let out a little laugh.*

*Charlotte Cramer, whose family had fled Hitler and whose ancestral home in Berlin is now the seat of one of Stanford University's programs in Europe, lifted her eyebrows with interest.*



Christmas Eve at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

## The Lord's Table

*Nora Sayre, writer and teacher at Columbia University, pointedly nodded at one of the mayors then took the taper:*

*Our two visiting artists—kimono-clad men from the Oomoto community in Japan—were hanging their freshly calligraphed diamonds of rice paper.*

*Olara Otunnu, the Ugandan ambassador to the United Nations, stood on a ladder by the tree.*

*The mayors and their PLO bodyguards watched it all, sipping their cider. No one pressured them. And they stayed where they were. But when the Cathedral choir came in, Pamela suggested that we all sing “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” in honor of the mayor of Bethlehem. To his surprise, as much as ours, the mayor himself began to sing along. That broke the ice, and his comrades took candles to help with decorating the tree. Suddenly, these men—who had lately been locked in a hunger strike and a ferocious demand for justice—suddenly were laughing and singing with our guests.*

*Later we all trooped through the snow and into the vast Cathedral for Midnight Mass. And, as customary on solemn Cathedral occasions, a rabbi chanted the Old Testament lesson in Hebrew. The Arab mayors and the PLO looked on as Rabbi Shalome Michael Gelber sang the great words from Isaiah in Hebrew: “For unto us a child is born, for unto us a son is given.” The mayors knew better than most what the words were saying.*

*I could not gauge how our guests were taking all this. As before, they seemed reserved but attentive. Then, at the moment in the service when members of the congregation exchanged the Kiss of Peace, something happened that I had never anticipated and have never forgotten. The mayor of Bethlehem*

*strode right up to Rabbi Gelber, grabbed him in a firm embrace, and kissed him on both cheeks.*

*The sigh of delight from 4,000 people floated in the air. I hadn't been aware of it, but everyone was relieved. Their open hearts opened ours. At the conclusion of the service, Bishop Moore acknowledged the moment. "What we have all witnessed tonight," he said, "is the spirit that lies behind the United Nations, God's ever-creative spirit that unites us all."*

*This, I thought to myself, is what a cathedral is for.*

*James Parks Morton, 1980*

Earlier in 1975, before the UN event, the Cathedral had hosted the first American exhibition of the art of Onisaburo Deguchi (1871–1948), the grandfather of Kyotaro Deguchi, who had led the Oomoto delegation. Kyotaro Deguchi's grandfather Onisaburo had been a celebrated religious leader and humanist among the Japanese intelligentsia. He cofounded Oomoto in 1897 with Nao Deguchi, an illiterate peasant woman of profound wisdom and leadership, whose remarkable gift of "automatic writing" clearly foretold Japan's destructive future at war. Nao Deguchi, a widow with nine children, was thirty-five years older than Onisaburo. He married her youngest daughter, Sumiko, in 1900.

Onisaburo was also a professional publisher, political, and religious writer (as well as an artist) and had publicly, in print, opposed the Japanese government's increasing militarism. Indeed, Onisaburo's repeated criticism of the government led to two major persecutions of the Oomoto community. First, in the summer of 1921, Onisaburo was sentenced to 126 days of prison, and the government

destroyed Oomoto's sanctuaries in Mt. Hongu, in Ayabe.

The second major persecution, in 1935, was much worse. More than 1,000 Oomoto members throughout the country were subjected to brutal physical police investigation. Onisaburo and his wife were sentenced to life in prison, and this time all of Oomoto's sanctuaries were destroyed by the government. Onisaburo was released from prison seven years later on August 7, 1942, the day American armed forces landed in Guadalcanal.

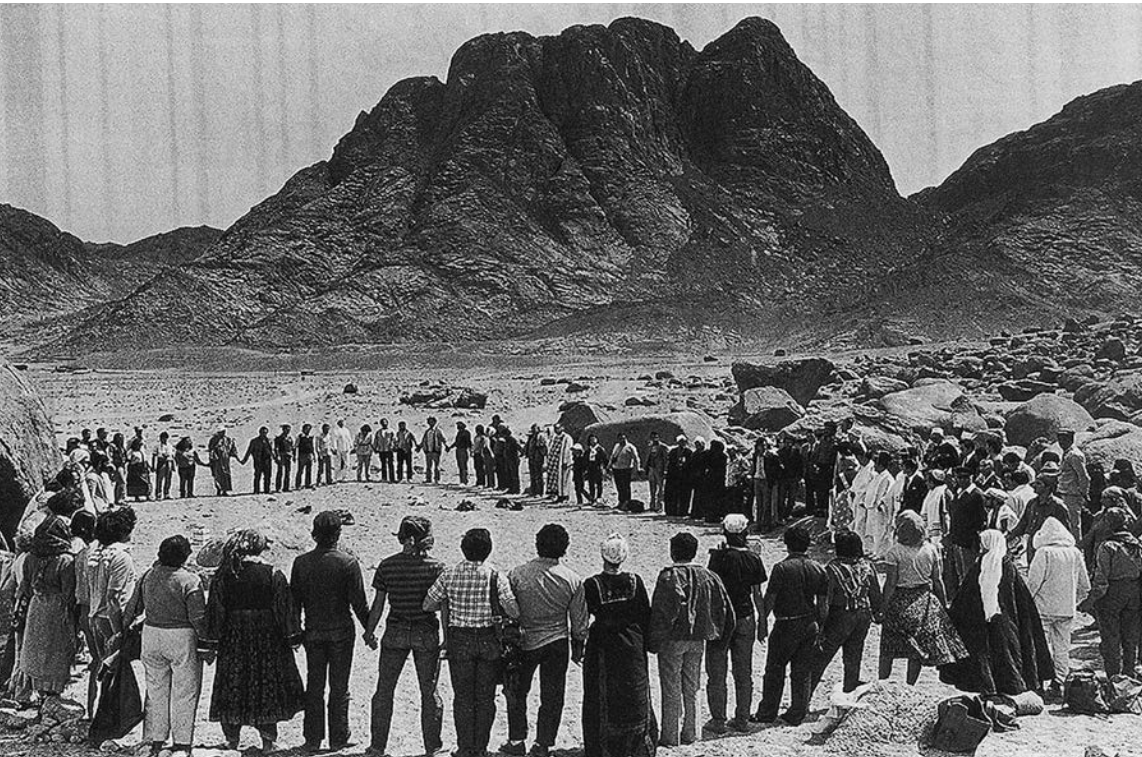
After Onisaburo's death, in 1948, his grandson Kyotaro was determined to get his grandfather's art known outside of Japan and took it to both the Musée Cernuschi, in Paris, and also to the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, where he heard of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in America and its interest in international sacred art.

The third very significant interfaith result of the October 1975 event came five months later in March 1976, when my wife, Pamela, and I were asked to schedule an important meeting at the deanery with the Shinto president of the Japanese Oomoto community.

Kyotaro with his wife, Mayuko, arrived at the deanery for tea promptly at 10:30 in the morning in 17th-century silk brocaded attire. We all had tea, with conversations translated through an interpreter. Kyotaro first expressed his community's deep gratitude for the Cathedral's March 1975 exhibition of his grandfather's art—the unusually bold and brilliantly colored tea bowls and the equally surprising eight-foot calligraphy scrolls painted with a mop. All of his grandfather's art had been created in the last two years of his life after his seven years in prison.

With great feeling, Kyotaro also thanked the Cathedral for my help in arranging for the entire exhibition of Onisaburo's art to travel to Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. He said that the Oomoto community was, above all, most deeply grateful to have been invited to offer their sacred purification ritual at the Cathedral's high altar. Then





Prayer for peace at Mt. Sinai, 1984

photo credit: Oomoto Foundation

Kyotaro reached for an envelope from his brocaded sleeve. “We would be honored,” he said, “if you and Pamela would come to Oomoto next year and offer the Christian ritual at our shrine in Kameoka. Here are two roundtrip tickets to Japan.”

In January 1977, Pamela and I spent two weeks in Japan, our first of many interfaith meetings over the next ten years, all initiated by Oomoto, but now joined by Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders from Japan and beyond. At one of these meetings, we made a pilgrimage to Hiroshima for the 50th commemoration of the bombings.

Two years later, a surprisingly diverse group of religious leaders, organized by Oomoto, journeyed together to Egypt and Israel and spent the night in tents in the desert before climbing to the top of Mt.

Sinai for the sunrise. Next to my cot in the tent was Rabbi Marshall Meyer, who said to me in the morning, “You son of a bitch! You snored so loud I couldn’t sleep.”

Through Oomoto, I met both the grand mufti of Damascus, Syria, one of Islam’s major religious leaders, and also the new very progressive Catholic lay community of San Egidio in Rome, in the midst of today’s new urban diversity.

In 1978, our eldest daughter, Polly Morton Barton, spent a six-week summer course on traditional Japanese arts at Oomoto, which introduced her to her life’s work of weaving Japanese silk. Polly returned to Oomoto in 1981 and lived with Kyotaro Deguchi’s family for a six-month private study with Oomoto’s master silk weaver, Inoue Sensei. Today Polly is a textile artist working in silk on Japanese looms in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her work is in museums in Boston and Chicago, in several private collections, and in U.S. embassies abroad. In March of 2012, Polly’s commissioned silk weaving *Arab Spring* was installed in the Textile Museum, in Washington, D.C.



The Kiss of Peace,  
Kameoka, Japan, 1977

photo credit: Oomoto Foundation

It was through Oomoto and our trip to Japan that I discovered the beauty and generosity of seriously planned experiences of religious diversity, and they led to my conversion to serious interfaith work as a priority in our globalized world. It changed the next 45 years of our family life.

*The Beatitudes are my job description.*

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil  
against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven,  
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

*Matthew 5:3-12*

# Building a Sacred Community

**D**uring my teenage summer visit to New York City in 1943, Fr. McEvoy at St. Mark's in-the-Bowery had arranged for me to meet over lunch a new friend of his at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Canon Edward West, who was in charge of all worship for the three daily services of Matins, Holy Communion, and Evensong and the enormous Christmas and Easter services broadcast nationally on the radio. I remember my father being glued to the radio in Iowa City, listening to the Christmas service. Who could imagine that twenty-nine years later, Canon West and I would be working together at the same cathedral?



Canon Edward West leading a procession  
photo credit: Beverly Hall

Canon West was twenty-one years my senior and had already been at St. John the Divine for thirty-one years before I arrived as dean. The Cathedral was both his life and his family. He loved it and knew every detail of its history, its art and its treasury—both its glories and its scandals.

He and I shared many passions. Perhaps first was our love of the spirituality and worship of Eastern Orthodoxy. Canon West was both a board member of the Russian Orthodox Tolstoy Foundation and served as an honorary canon of the New York Serbian Orthodox Cathedral. (It had been an Episcopal parish church that was put up for sale, but Eddie succeeded in getting it given to the Serbian archdiocese for use as their cathedral.) He knew several of our Russian friends from our summers in lac Labelle and admired the writing of

my theological hero Alexander Schmemmann. So, twenty-nine years after I had met Canon West as a teenager, we discovered that we not only shared a deep love for the Eastern Church but also for the art world and the theater—and that we were both frustrated architects.

Our shared architectural background and deep appreciation of Eastern Orthodox worship led us to ask our new Orthodox honorary canon, Fr. Schmemmann, to advise us on how to combine elements of Byzantine liturgy and architecture with the Cathedral's Gothic architecture and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. It was a wonderful series of meetings with beautiful and surprising results. It began architecturally with a discussion about an iconostasis in the Cathedral. The earliest Christian icon screens with painted images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, prophets, apostles, and saints were placed near the church entrance so that the congregation and the priests were together around the holy table inside the iconostasis—inside the holy heavenly space of the Lord's Supper. Being inside the iconostasis is spiritually being in heaven on earth. Such was the practice of the earliest years of the Christian church.

Canon West brilliantly solved the problem of the iconostasis and where it should be located. The director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Francis Henry Taylor, had loaned the Cathedral a pair of 18th-century German carved wooden choir stalls, which for years had been hidden in the basement storage room of the museum. From their first Cathedral location in St. Ansgar's Chapel, Canon West, Father Schmemmann, and I moved the antique stalls to a new location forty feet inside the great bronze entrance doors of the Cathedral, facing the high altar 600 feet away. On the back of the two choir stalls Eddie hung two new wooden sections of the iconostasis. Above the ten-foot central opening between the two sections of the new iconostasis, a carved wooden beam was placed supporting an ancient Russian icon of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St. John the Baptist, the gift of

Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, an old friend of Bishop Manning and Canon West. Other icons from the Cathedral's collection of Greek, Serbian, and Russian icons were installed.

Canon West and I were committed to making the Cathedral of St. John the Divine open and welcoming to the religious diversity of New York. After all, the oldest parts of the Cathedral were the seven Chapels of the Tongues surrounding the high altar, chapels in which worship could be conducted in seven languages, welcoming the diversity of the new immigrants from many lands in the 19th century and throughout the 20th century—and to this day in the 21st century.

Canon West's early ministry was as a parish priest and chaplain at Sing Sing Prison, and Fr. Rodney Kirk shared a passionate concern for urban poverty, social justice, the arts, and religious diversity. Shortly before Pamela and I arrived in 1972, a young group of eight Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist singers and actors known as the Trees had come under Canon West's spiritual direction and literally moved to the Cathedral, with an apartment across the street. The Trees were enchanting and attracted a large group of young people who made a very fresh contribution to St. John's worship with their singing, acting, and shared creativity throughout the thirteen acres and eight buildings and gardens of the Cathedral close.

Canon West's office was right next to Madeleine L'Engle's office, which was in the Cathedral library. As Cathedral librarian she wrote many books and taught classes in writing there. Her books, many of them exploring modern science and Christian faith in a world of fantasy, are enormously appealing to children and young adults.

Two years before I came to the Cathedral, Canon Edward West had hired a young priest, Fr. Rodney Kirk, whose ministry was in the art world and the theater in both New York and London. Fr. Kirk, with the professional help of theater publicist Merle Frimark, had brought the off-Broadway cast of *Godspell* to perform at a special Sunday

afternoon service of Evensong for more than 2,000 teenagers from the youth groups of the 190 Episcopal parishes of New York! The creator of *Godspell*, John-Michael Tebelak, naturally became one of our earliest new Cathedral artists-in-residence. Fr. Kirk's English connections also led in 1975 to the Cathedral's amazing long-term relationship with the Japanese Shinto community of Oomoto, whose art had been exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London.

Both Bishop Donegan and Canon West were committed to the unique role of the arts in the Cathedral and the specific sacred contributions of individual artists. Duke Ellington had become a close friend of Bishop Donegan, and his Second Sacred Concert was first performed in the Cathedral in 1968. "The Duke" died in 1974, and my first vivid image of St. John the Divine as a powerful and true center of the city was his funeral, with 10,000 worshippers who became one family as his body was finally carried down the aisle while the organ played "Lady of the Lavender Mist."

Over the years, Duke's sister Ruth became deeply involved in the Cathedral. Ruth had cascades of yellow curls halfway down her back, and she often read the scripture at mass. We became good friends, and I both performed her second marriage, to the opera singer McHenry Boatwright, and got to know her sons and their families. At Christmas and Easter they made a truly unforgettable picture, marching together down the center aisle with Ruth in floor-length white ermine and tall McHenry in floor-length black sable! They both were delightful and good friends.

SHORTLY AFTER I ARRIVED IN 1972, we welcomed the artist and writer Frederick Franck with his team of four young Australian activist artists: Richard Mann, Catholic priest and painter, and three actors in Franck's play, *Everyman*.

Canon West, Fr. Kirk, and the four new Australians must take

full credit for the wonderfully creative double celebration of the official hundredth birthday of the Cathedral on Sunday afternoon, May 20, 1973. First came my formal installation as the seventh dean, followed by a gloriously creative outdoor festival on the beautiful grounds and gardens of the close.

Richard Mann, the aforementioned Australian Catholic priest/artist, had created the written invitation: a two-foot poster in red, white, and black, which was mailed to the entire diocese, inviting everyone to my installation as the new dean of the Cathedral, followed by the festive celebration on the close “with clowns, fire-eaters, jugglers, animals, popcorn, and pink lemonade.” What a fantastic party it was! My favorite actor-clown was the “exotic butterfly,” who most skillfully performed from a trapeze fifteen feet up in a tree. We had a short conversation in which I congratulated her artistic creativity and skill, and inquired what else she did.

“Well, actually,” she replied, “I’m doing a book on Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus.”

I couldn’t believe it! Miracle! Miracle! A day of miracles!

Trumpets suddenly sounded, and the clowns announced that everyone was invited to Synod Hall for food and drinks. Paul Moore and I stood at the main entrance doors of Synod Hall to welcome each guest personally. Beside us stood a small elephant and a goat, plus a young pig that ran back and forth between the bishop and myself.

The press covered the hundredth birthday party of the Cathedral, my installation sermon as the seventh dean, and the outdoor celebration with clowns, fire-eaters, and animals. Most press attention was paid to my sermon announcing that construction of the Cathedral would begin soon again (after stopping in 1941) and to the fact that animals were part of the celebration. The mention of animals created a wonderful dividend: a call from a reporter at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* stating that a Philadelphia lady who had read



Richard Mann's poster for my installation

photo credit: family collection

the coverage of the Cathedral event was interested in the fact that live animals were part of an American cathedral, as in several historic English cathedrals. The real purpose of her call, however, was to ask if the new dean would like to have peacocks live on the thirteen acres of lawn, since she had several peacocks that were soon to hatch and she would be happy to give the Cathedral several young chicks. Were we interested?

What a gift!

I returned the call and said we would be honored to have



One of the four peacocks, named Matthew, Martha, Luke, and Joan  
photo credit: family collection

peacocks. Four chicks arrived in June and were carefully placed in a strong wire pen in our deanery garden (fortunately, the garden is also encircled by a strong hedge). To this day, the Cathedral is the only New York institution besides the Bronx Zoo with peacocks walking about the lawn. How beautiful they are! Later, in May, we discovered a problem. They would awaken at 4 a.m. from a tree outside our bedroom windows and begin their screaming.

James Baldwin's funeral in 1987 brought together the literary,

theatrical, civil rights, and members of the Black artistic community in a deeply emotional experience. Jimmy's nephew, thirteen-year-old Trevor Baldwin, sang a short solo as the lead chorister in the Cathedral choir, which made the service very much a family affair—especially when the long silence following the choir and Trevor's solo was dramatically and tearfully broken by the sobbing scream of “Jimmy! Jimmy!” by Baldwin's mother, who was sitting in the front row of the packed Cathedral.

James Baldwin had been one of my earliest guest preachers at the Cathedral, when in March 1974 on the occasion of the centennial observation of the Cathedral, the award was made in recognition of the artist as Prophet. David Leeming, a great friend who had been Baldwin's literary assistant in Istanbul while teaching at Robert College, was his authorized biographer. David was one of Baldwin's pallbearers at the funeral.

Jim Henson, the creator of the Muppets, had specified in his will his desire to have his own funeral at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. He included very specific details: several thousand fresh flowers (one bloom for every worshipper), an African-American Dixieland band to lead the procession out to the hearse, and Big Bird as master of ceremonies.

Before they died, Alvin Ailey, Romare Bearden, and Keith Haring (the iconic street artist and sculptor) had all stated that their funerals must also be in the Cathedral. Keith Haring had specified that the amazing white gold altar triptych, which he designed for Yoko Ono's apartment (where he also died), must be placed in the Cathedral. Today, Keith's sculpture is displayed on the altar in St. Columba's Chapel.



Keith Haring's triptych altar piece, *The Life of Christ*  
photo credit: courtesy of the Sam Havadtoy and Keith Haring Estate

In every moment and each place in the world there is, beneath the apparently random and helter-skelter surface, a web of connections, of converging and diverging paths. God is the name for the maker of these paths.

## The Fabric of the Cathedral

As the new dean, my first major job was to act creatively on the Cathedral's three specific areas of ministry, as clearly set forth in the legal language of its formal charter from the state of New York of April 16, 1873: "To be a house of prayer for the use of all people"; "To be an instrument of Church unity"; "To be a center of intellectual light and leading."

This statement of the Cathedral's "universal" versus "parochial" mission was an explicit command to present the wisdom of the world's greatest thinkers and doers: scientists, public servants, artists, intellectuals, activists, reformers, and demonstrably spiritual men and women, both in the Cathedral's pulpit and in its programmatic outreach to the diversity of New York's global community.

First, beginning in 1973, we had to rewrite and bring up to date the Cathedral's original 19th-century legal charter of by-laws about trustees, so that priests and Episcopal laymen as well as women and non-Episcopalians could be elected to serve. Second, also in 1973, we



Boys and girls at the Cathedral School

photo credit: *The Westsider*, 1974

created new by-laws for honorary canons and lay Cathedral colleagues to include the most distinguished and creative religious, artistic, and scientific leaders, irrespective of their particular beliefs. A third structural change made the Cathedral's Choir School coeducational and brought female choristers and acolytes into traditionally male preserves.

*Jim Morton loved the voices of children, peacocks, and—yes—even flowers. During his tenure at the Cathedral, he was surrounded by these voices. At Cathedral services, he listened to the choir made up of children from the Cathedral School.*

*He and his family lived next to the Cathedral School, so the voices of children from K-8 could be heard throughout the day. In the summer the whole Cathedral close rang with the voices of campers from the ACT program (Activity, Care, and Trust).*

*From the side of the house, campers worked with James Blount and Mary Croft in the garden. The peacocks munching on vegetables as they came up, and the cherry tree that James planted kept growing providing shade to the children. Around the back of the house the wooden playground and basketball court, with children running and climbing during recess and in the summer all day.*

*From Jim's office Jim could hear this call and response: "Where is all the ACTION?" and the children's voices yelling*



The ACT playground

photo credit: Nancy Torres

*back: "ACT is where the ACTION is!" Repeating it louder and louder, until it blocked the traffic sound from 110th Street.*

*As Jim left his office, he would encounter many events: the schoolchildren measuring trees with their arms linked together or Nancy Torres's class tying yellow ribbons around the trees for the hostages, and, later in the day, children*



*playing non-competitive games stressing cooperation and teamwork. He enjoyed hearing their joyous laughter, accomplishing what seemed impossible.*

*Jim told José V. Torres that ACT could have the use of the Cathedral crypt with a gym, classrooms, and kitchen. This allowed for the growth of the ACT nursery school and a larger after-school program.*

*Paul Halley, José V. Torres, Bruce Fifer, John Bess, Alphonso Wyatt, and the Cathedral School staff taught the children the skills they would later need to spring their wings. Those children from the Cathedral School, from the ACT program, from the Cathedral Choristers, years later are doctors, lawyers, architects, and artists involved in film, music, writing, painting, and anything you can name—and, importantly, raising their own children. They look back on those magical years at the Cathedral as unique and inspiring and where diversity was applauded and honored.*

*Nancy L. Torres, 2021*

A fourth structural change created a lay program staff (not just Episcopal clergy). My first new lay program director was an old friend I had known as a teenager at Grace Church in Jersey City, Niathan Allen, a brilliant African-American community organizer with a college degree in social work. Niathan and his wife, Emma, and their daughter, April, lived at the Cathedral, and Niathan soon had a Cathedral football team composed entirely of young men from Harlem: the Cathedral Panthers!

The intellectual, interfaith, and universal impact of the revised by-laws for honorary canons and Cathedral colleagues (the old by-laws requiring only male Episcopalians) is brilliantly clear in the trustees'

## HONORARY CANONS

**Fr. Thomas Berry:**

*Roman Catholic priest and major environmentalist*

**Senator Carl McCall:**

*United Church of Christ minister and African-American community organizer*

**Fr. Alexander Schmemmann:**

*Russian Orthodox priest, theologian and dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary*

**Brother David Steindl-Rast:**

*Benedictine monk and environmental writer*

**Howard Thurman:**

*African-American scholar, often called "America's greatest preacher," dean of chapel at Howard University and later at Boston University, spiritual mentor of civil rights leaders Martin Luther King, Jr., Whitney Young, and James Farmer*

## CATHEDRAL COLLEAGUES

**Mary Catherine Bateson:**

*Anthropologist, environmental writer, and university professor*

**Dorothy Day:**

*Founder of The Catholic Worker and an advocate for the poor*

**René Dubos:**

*Renowned scientist and professor at Rockefeller University, who invented the first clinically useful antibiotic (gramicidin), and also the acknowledged "dean of environmentalists"*

**Muriel Rukeyser:**

*Poet, playwright, and political activist*

**William Irwin Thompson:**

*Founder in 1972 of the Lindisfarne Association, a group of scientists, environmentalists, scholars, and spiritual leaders*

**John and Nancy Jack Todd:**

*Environmental innovators at the New Alchemy Institute; John Todd was the first recipient of the Buckminster Fuller Challenge Award, for environmental innovation*

**Elie Wiesel:**

*The deeply moving Jewish writer on the Holocaust*

election of the thirteen extraordinary men and women, who soon became immensely popular preachers and creative innovators of the new Cathedral program, a radical shift from the previous ninety-nine years of only male Episcopal honorary canons and colleagues.

The first nine Cathedral artists-in-residence were an exceedingly popular gift to New York, a city increasingly interracial, international, and interfaith. Philippe Petit was the first official artist-in-residence. I had met him at the new Big Apple Circus in my second year at the Cathedral, and we became really close friends. Everyone was delighted with Philippe's presence, except when I got an emergency call from the Cathedral security guard saying that Philippe had been arrested by a New York police officer for walking a high wire inside the Cathedral, and I must come over at once to the guard room. There was Philippe in handcuffs—now off his high wire. We made sure he was released.

None of these popular and highly successful artists did we pay. Instead we opened up the vast unused Cathedral crypt and offered each an artistic home and office: free work spaces in which to create, rehearse, and perform, and the greatest gift of all—access to the amazing performance space upstairs in the vast majestic nave and crossing.

Bishop Paul Moore set a dynamic and creative pace with his compelling Christmas and Easter sermons—always to a packed cathedral and always linking the scripture to local and international issues around social justice, war, and peace. Easter 1976 crowns the top of the list, with the city teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and major corporations leaving their New York headquarters “like rats leaving a sinking ship.” These six words from Paul's Easter sermon had already made the front page of the Monday *New York Times* when Felix Rohatyn called Paul's office and said to him, “At last someone with the balls to speak the truth! You can have my job.”

Wow! Felix, and then Osborn Elliot, the editor of *Newsweek*,

## ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

**Philippe Petit:**

*French-born tightrope walker and the only person who sky-walked between the twin towers of the World Trade Center*

**Paul Binder:**

*Juggler-clown and cofounder, with Michael Christensen, of the Big Apple Circus*

**John-Michael Tebelak:**

*Playwright and creator of the popular off-Broadway musical *Godspell**

**Abdel Salaam:**

*Choreographer (and his Afro-American dance company, *Forces of Nature Dance Theatre*)*

**Carla De Sola:**

*Dancer and choreographer (and her *Omega Dance Company*)*

**Paul Weingarten:**

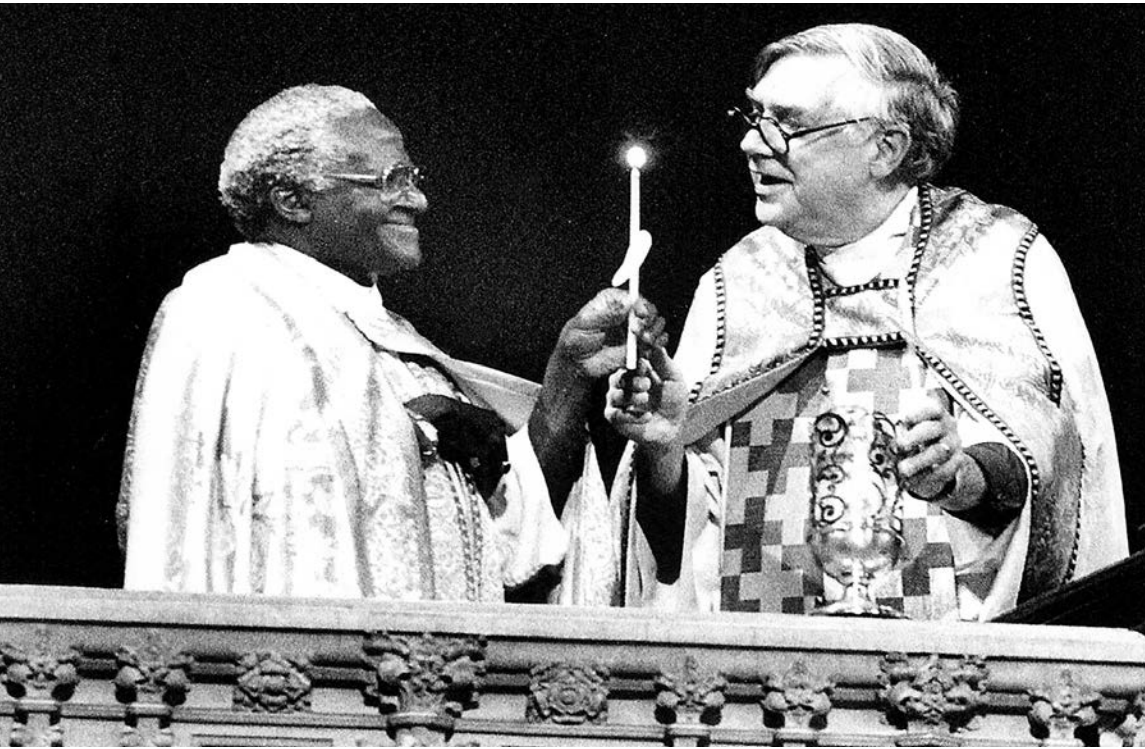
*Painter*

**Frederick Renz:**

*Musicologist and artistic director of the *Ensemble for Early Music* and the three 13th-century mystery plays of *Daniel, Herod, and St. Nicolas*, among others*

**Paul Winter:**

*The green musician and much-loved composer of the environment, of the *Paul Winter Consort* (and the annual winter solstice celebration, with wolves and sun and the earth's beauty)*



Welcoming Archbishop Desmond Tutu

photo credit: Mary Bloom

organized a group of prominent business leaders who met with Paul to “save the city literally from bankruptcy.” Felix Rohatyn and Jack Frey, chair of the Equitable, who had persuaded the huge insurance company not to leave New York, were the first honorees in the now annual Spirit of the City Award fundraising dinner. The bishop set the tone for the Spirit of the City dinners when he said: “The churches, synagogues, and temples of our city must continue to give the vision and the courage and the compassion which the Judeo-Christian tradition has always cherished and which comes alive when it is acted out in the grave issues of society. I salute you for being here tonight. Our beloved, tough, lively New York is by no means dead when such a group as this can come together to dedicate themselves anew to the spirit of our city.”

When Bishop Moore had first asked me in 1970 to consider being dean of St. John the Divine, I did not understand the depth of his next sentence: “The Cathedral has not had a dean for six years and really needs to be turned around.” When I arrived as the new dean in June 1972, the Sunday morning mass, with its beautiful music, brought only forty or fifty people to worship. Also, the liturgy itself was no longer at the high altar but, instead, 550 feet below at a temporary altar just inside the two monumental bronze front portals. The first steps in the turnaround would be the evidence of Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. The number of regular Sunday worshippers soon grew to between 300 and 600 people. (And, today, once again at Christmas and Easter services, there are close to 3,000 people.)

Sunday mornings were deeply spiritual: extraordinary music, challenging sermons<sup>1</sup>, and always a warm welcome. With the new community lunches, distinguished preachers, lively conversation, and fellowship, Sunday mornings once again became very popular and well-populated. The congregation was no longer seated at the front door. Instead, they were seated on all four sides of the altar under the great dome at the Cathedral crossing, the architectural center of the entire Cathedral, just below the great choir and high altar.

The noble marble pulpit soon became a true bully pulpit for great ideas and prophecy for the city from some of the most extraordinary men and women. The thirteen new honorary canons and Cathedral colleagues and nine Cathedral artists-in-residence often preached, lectured, and set the tone of intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual, interfaith, and environmental challenges. The Cathedral service on Sunday morning at 11 a.m. soon began to be known as one of the most stimulating places in New York.

<sup>1</sup> Swami Satchidananda; His Holiness the Dalai Lama; Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel; Rabbi Marshall Meyer; Rabbi Wolfe Kelman; Archbishop Desmond Tutu; Coretta Scott King; Fr. Daniel Berrigan; James Carroll; Buckminster Fuller; Dr. Lewis Thomas; Laurens van der Post, Margaret Mead, and Madeleine L'Engle; Chief Oren Lyons and Chief Jake Swamp; Tulley Spotted Eagle Boy; Tonya Gonnella Frichner

Our 1972 and 1973 sermons on anti-semitism produced in June 1974 a four-day international symposium called *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era*, led by twenty-six top scholars and opened by Bishop Paul Moore, who then introduced Elie Wiesel with his major address, “Art and Culture after the Holocaust.” The symposium produced a 469-page book of the same name, containing all sixteen addresses, which is still in print today.

A Lenten series in 1975 on fasting and poverty was opened by René Dubos, Cathedral colleague, environmentalist, and microbiologist. His sermon addressed the poverty of lichens, which produce the most exquisite forms only when fungus and algae mutually benefit each other through symbiosis—a metaphor for sharing, communion, and poverty.

The ten environmental Sundays were linked to the gospel of the day. The Cathedral became the “the Green Cathedral” and I became “the Green Dean.”

My passion for making the Cathedral a center of both spiritual inspiration and challenging social and environmental issues was matched by nitty-gritty community programs addressing the field of urban poverty—the legacy of my two stints of eight years in both Jersey City and Chicago. In November 1972, we held a six-hour free public conference on sweat-equity housing in Harlem, the Bronx, and the Lower East Side. The conference addressed housing for poor people who, with their own sweat, rehabilitate abandoned apartments and wind up owning them.

January 1973 saw the start of UHAB—the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board—with a director and staff of three volunteers who had been set on fire about sweat-equity housing at the Urban Training Center in Chicago. UHAB was legally established at the Cathedral in 1973, and at its thirtieth anniversary, in 2003, UHAB celebrated its record of 30,000 rehabilitated apartments.

#### EARTH'S SACRED VOYAGE ENVIRONMENTAL SERIES 1979

“Biosphere as a Single Organism” by James E. Lovelock

“The Wooing of the Earth” by René Dubos

“The Earth Our Kin” by Mary Catherine Bateson

“Who Pays the Earth's Bills” by Maurice Strong

“A New Heaven and New Earth” by Howard Thurman

“World Strategies” by Amory Lovins

“New Alchemy: Integrating Food Growing, Wind, and Sun” by John Todd

“The Politics of Reconceptualization” by Hazel Henderson

“Energy Alternatives: Reality or Wishful Thinking” by Theodore B. Taylor

“Earth as God's Body” by James Parks Morton



Forces of Nature Dance Theatre  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

From the beginning, the Cathedral had reached not only into its neighborhood, but across the nation and around the world. Bishop Henry Codman Potter, for example, used the Cathedral's pulpit and influence to seek a rapprochement between workers and capital, almost brokering a peace in the 1902 anthracite coal strike. In 1938, Bishop William Manning used the Cathedral space itself to make a dramatic point; as chair and host of the first-ever housing conference in New York City, he had a tenement apartment constructed inside the Cathedral's nave, so that people coming to church would have to pass an example of poor housing on their way.

The Cathedral was once more involved with housing. Only this time we were out in the neighborhood, rehabilitating abandoned buildings and converting them into decent housing—and the builders were the future tenants themselves. UHAB was my first endeavor in getting the Cathedral to venture once more into the world, and it thrust the Cathedral directly into the network of New York City housing activists and the staff of the Mayor Lindsay's administration. The problem was universally recognized. Housing abandonment, combined with lack of jobs and job training in the city's poorest areas, was ravaging neighborhoods.

The Cathedral stepped in, as a major institution and a catalyst, attacking all three problems in a single program. Joining with local banks and with federal and city housing programs, UHAB supplied the technical expertise and the community liaison to enact the renovation of more than 20,000 apartments, accomplished by the people who would live in them. So successful was UHAB that in the 1980s it became Housing and Urban Development's official national model for sweat-equity housing programs, which operated in ten cities across America. It remains the city's prime resource for residential apartment-management training, under the leadership of Andrew Reicher.

I remember walking into one of the first of these old tenement



UHAB members at work

photo credit: Cathedral of St. John the Divine archives

buildings on Amsterdam Avenue, a stone's throw from the Cathedral in a largely Dominican neighborhood. There was a list of people and tasks by the temporary staircase. If you stood where the new plumbing was to go, you could look straight up five flights to the ceiling. Out on the roof, Julio and Steven were tearing up generations of bad tarpaper. Below, Juanita and Terry were measuring up wall framing and ordering sheetrock. Rosemary and Ed were installing insulation. They all shared the rough good humor of construction workers anywhere, but here they had also the deep pride of creating their own homes.

As I look back on that time, it seems to me that it was a flowering of the liberal ideal. We accomplished more than anyone thought possible, and we did it without the paternalism and unwieldy bureaucracy that would come to characterize much of American urban policy.

THE CRISIS OF HOMELESSNESS peaked in the mid-1980's and was addressed with a new compassionate project. Homes for the Homeless was conceived in 1986 and was initially financed by the New York business leader Leonard Stern, with offices first at the Cathedral and with myself as vice-chairman. Today, it is the city's largest private organization providing housing, food, and schooling for some 500 homeless families each month (largely teenage mothers and their children) and with nearly 3,000 families each year.

The Cathedral AIDS memorial and the annual Cathedral AIDS concert were both powerful and deeply moving projects. The memorial is an elegant lectern supporting a large volume in which the name of every person who had died of AIDS is inscribed. Beside the lectern and memorial book is a tall memorial candle that burns night and day. All three are placed in the beautiful medical bay of the nave. The names of all New York AIDS victims are also honored in the annual AIDS memorial concert sung by the chorus of the bold Gay Men's

Health Crisis (GMHC).

The single largest Cathedral social-justice program was the Valley, a seven-day-a-week counseling center for teenagers in the Cathedral basement, started by John Bess and Alfonso Wyatt in 1978. At its peak, it served annually some 4,000 young people, largely from Harlem and Manhattan Valley, just south of the Cathedral.

The central action of all holy places is worship—the joining of earth to heaven, the communion of the human with the divine.

## The Liturgy

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The manifold gifts of artists and the serious wisdom of environmental, scientific, and spiritual leaders brought huge numbers of people from all walks of life into the Cathedral, and so many of them confessed to me, “This is the first time I’ve really felt religious.”

What does “really feeling religious” mean?

This is the heart of the matter—the deep heart of living itself. There are two major dimensions to “feeling religious.” First of all, the word “religion” ultimately means “inclusion.” It comes from the Latin verb *religare*, meaning “to connect, to join together.” Therefore, the basic function of every religion and every holy place—be it a mountain top, sacred river, temple, church, or mosque—is to make humans feel connected literally to all other human beings, to the earth, the cosmos, and, ultimately, to the divine.

The second dimension of “feeling religious” is the emotional response to feeling connected, which is gratitude, thankfulness, and joy. It is wonderful to be with my friend, my lover, my God and Lord. Therefore, the ancient religious word for worship is the Greek word for thankfulness, *eucharistia* (“eucharist” in English), or today’s more common English word, “communion.”

From time immemorial, religion’s major partners in bringing people together in gratitude and thankfulness have been the arts: music, poetry, literature, dance, theater, architecture, sculpture, and the visual arts, all of which throughout history have deepened compassion leading to personal involvement in working for peace and justice—and for experiencing the divine.

The central action of all holy places is, therefore, worship: the joining of earth to heaven, the communion of the human with the divine. And it is precisely the Cathedral’s spiritual and physical inclusiveness: rich and poor, prisoners and presidents, priests, scientists, activists and artists, the unemployed and the outcasts, the nitty-gritty programs for social justice and rivers and forests and wolves. The linking of the reading of scripture by members of the congregation, carefully overseen by Patricia and Robert Carey, with preachers from many disciplines which creates the context for this inclusiveness. All together these have made the divine worship of the Cathedral absolutely central to “feeling religious.”

For regular Sunday morning worship (not Easter or Christmas or major celebrations of the Diocese of New York, which are held at the high altar), the nave altar stands in the center of the great crossing under the dome, therefore allowing the worshippers to stand in a circle around the holy table in the architectural “center of the universe” to receive the Holy Communion, thus seeing the faces or their spiritual brothers and sisters—the holy community—rather than the backs of their heads! It has made a much appreciated spiritual difference.

*In 1975 Dean Morton brought Richard Westenburg to the Cathedral as director of music. Dick was at that time the pre-eminent choral conductor in New York City, having founded Musica Sacra, an all-professional ensemble of singers and players whose concerts of sacred masterworks at Lincoln Center drew sold-out crowds. He came to the Cathedral with thirty-two of his professional singers, among them Bruce Fifer, who later played a critical role in the development of the Cathedral’s music program. In 1977, I was hired as organist and master of the choristers, working alongside Dick. During this time, the Sunday morning liturgies were celebrated at the west end of the Cathedral, due to concerns about the brickwork in the “temporary” dome over the crossing. These liturgies, based on the Episcopal prayer book, also incorporated aspects of Eastern Orthodox and Jewish traditions, both dear to the dean’s heart. One of the most dramatic moments in the celebration was the “fraction” (breaking of the bread) when the world-famous state trumpets would sound. Since the service at that time took place directly beneath those powerful pipes, the effect was electrifying.*

*In the early 1980’s, the Sunday services were relocated to the crossing and chancel. Dick Westenburg, wanting to devote more of his time to conducting concerts, became conductor-in-residence and, with the assistance of Bruce Fifer, I took over the running of the music program. Thanks in large part to the generosity and funding skills of Lily Auchincloss, Dick had developed an annual concert series called Great Music for a Great Space, featuring an expanded version of the Cathedral singers and orchestra in performances of such massive works as the “Requiem” by Berlioz and “Christus” by Liszt. Bruce and I continued this tradition with a greater focus on the placement of groups of performers throughout the huge interior, affording the audience a sense of the size and majesty of the Cathedral as well as its extraordinary acoustics.*



*Under my charge, the Cathedral Choristers (comprising children from the Cathedral School with altos, tenors, and basses from the professional singers) took a more active role in all liturgies, including the weekday evensongs. They undertook an annual series of concerts and tours, as well as recordings. Meanwhile, Bruce formed and trained the Cathedral Chorus, an ensemble consisting of dedicated volunteers and alumni, and the two of us re-formed the Cathedral Singers (twenty professionals) with particular emphasis on serving the magnificent liturgies with the best of the choral tradition. At this point the larger celebrations of the Eucharist involved the Cathedral Choristers and Gentlemen singing from the chancel steps, with the Cathedral Singers and the Cathedral Chorus placed on either side of the crossing, thereby providing a true “surround sound” experience for the congregation. The repertoire ranged from Gregorian chant, through Renaissance mass settings (for multiple choirs) to the contemporary, often including music written in honor of the day’s guest preacher—including such luminaries as the Dalai Lama and the mayor of Jerusalem.*

*The dean was very clear that the Cathedral should harken back to medieval times, when cathedrals were the center of the cultural and artistic life of the city or town in which they found themselves. He invited all manner of artists, from poets and sculptors to West African dance ensembles and high-wire acrobats, to be “in residence” at the Cathedral. This generated a tremendous amount of amazing creativity in the form of performances, exhibitions, workshops, etc. The result was a cathedral that never slept! As a sort of antidote, particularly for those who actually lived on the grounds of the Cathedral, Bruce and I established a weekly service of vespers on Sundays at 7 p.m. Its intent was to offer a quiet, meditative, chant-based service as a counterpoint to the explosion of activity that comprised a normal week at the Cathedral.*

*The services at the Cathedral were frequently a rich commingling of the Anglican tradition with aspects of world traditions and contemporary creations as the occasion required. These liturgies worked remarkably well, having integrity and surprising cohesion. They were supported and held together by those great walls of stained glass and stone reaching almost to the heavens. The architecture of the great space was itself a mixing and mingling of different cultures and times.*

*The Cathedral’s magnificent pipe organ was a key component of the liturgies and overall music program. Such a glorious instrument in such a marvelous acoustic space inspired many organists, both resident and visiting, to offer improvisations during and after services. A program called *Nightwatch* was developed for young people. Each weekend a group of teenagers from a particular church in the diocese (and further afield) would come to the Cathedral to spend Friday evening through Saturday evening in meditative services, communal eating and general fun and fellowship. A major feature of this program occurred late on Friday nights, when the young folk, seated in the Great Choir in total darkness, would hear the great organ begin to play softly and over the course of a half hour build to a huge “blowout” improvisation on a theme they might be familiar with. Back in those days “Star Wars” or “Raiders of the Lost Ark” generated an appropriate amount of astonished whispering.*

*Out of the services of worship sprang some of the events that became integral to the yearly calendar. Bach’s “St. John Passion” was offered in a fully-staged version each Good Friday. On the Sunday nearest the Feast of St. Francis, all the Cathedral choirs were joined by two groups in residence—the Paul Winter Consort and the Forces of Nature—for the morning Eucharist, for which the dean had commissioned a setting*

*of the mass, called “Missa Gaia,” or “Earth Mass.” This new mass featured musical styles from around the world, as well as the voices of wolves, whales, loons, and other creatures whose melodies provided the themes for many of the mass movements. It was uniquely suited to the ethos of the Cathedral under Dean Morton’s leadership, where reverence for the environment and all creation had become part of the Cathedral community fabric. Also participating in the service was an elephant leading a procession of creatures great and small, including horses, wolves, monkeys, and snakes, all the way down to a jar of amoebas bringing up the rear. Over the years, word spread and the Cathedral choirs were joined by singers from all across North America. The Cathedral grounds were transformed into one large “ecology fair,” continuing to feed souls and bodies that had just partaken of the bread of heaven in the great Eucharist.*

*For the days leading up to the Epiphany the musical and dramatic forces of the Cathedral presented the Boar’s Head Festival. The Cathedral congregation boasted many creative personalities, including John-Michael Tebelak, writer and director of Godspell, who in collaboration with his troupe of actors along with Bruce and me, generated a Twelfth Night spectacle of astonishing range and variety. The huge cast included Ralph Lee’s Mettawee River Theatre Company (also in residence), Morris Dancers, and the Pipes and Drums from the New York State Courts.*

*Several of the medieval mystery plays were regularly performed by members of the Cathedral choirs and various instrumentalists under Bruce’s direction. Each year Fred Renz and his Ensemble for Early Music presented The Play of Daniel or The Play of St. Nicholas with period instruments and actor/singers in full regalia. Building on that tradition, Britten’s Noye’s Fludde, with a cast of over 250, drawn largely*

The great rose window, with the little rose beneath the state trumpets of the great organ, by Ernest M. Skinner Company, 1910  
photo credit: Alfred Mainzer, Inc., Long Island City

*from the Cathedral School, was presented to great effect. It's possible the size of that ark comprised even more cubits than the Biblical version, but it still fit handily into the world's largest Gothic cathedral.*

*In another take on church drama traditions, Ralph Lee took the medieval character of the wildman and produced an extraordinary theatrical spectacle for which the nave of the Cathedral was converted into a dark and forbidding forest containing a myriad mythical characters. The memory of the hairy wildman darting about among the pillar-trees of the gloomy nave still haunts me. Where Canterbury Cathedral had carved or painted images of the wildman, we had him in person!*

*To write of all the wondrous doings at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine under Jim Morton's leadership would require volumes. (I haven't even mentioned that Ascension Day when Philippe Petit slowly walked the wire, starting at floor level at the Cathedral's west end, arriving at the top of the vaulting at the east end, while I played Messiaen's "L'Ascension" suite for organ.) But clearly the dean's hope for a cathedral that spoke to and represented a city rich in all varieties of human expression seemed to have been truly realized during those heady days of sheer exuberance and exhaustion!*

*Paul Halley, 2021*

*(with significant memory-jogging from Bruce Fifer)*

Thursday morning at 7:15 was my own very personal weekly sacred time at the Cathedral. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann had worked with Pamela and me to create a contemporary translation of the Orthodox liturgy of St. John Chrysostom for our use at the weekly communion at the Urban Training Center in Chicago in the 1960's.

That text, combined with the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, became the liturgical basis of my weekly Thursday 7:15 a.m. Eucharist for twenty-five years. I always preached a short homily and involved lay members of the congregation in the readings and distribution of the Holy Communion. The service, with some twenty to forty regulars, always adjourned to a surprising and often raucous breakfast in Cathedral House, with a different member of the Thursday gang providing each week (once we had eel and champagne!). With the extremely busy schedule of life at the Cathedral for twenty-five years, I look back on our Thursday mornings as always a spiritual life-saver of serenity and profound renewal—which indeed is the meaning and purpose of all worship—the action of joining the realities of earth to the joys of heaven.

*James Parks Morton: A Remembrance*

*I wandered into the Cathedral for the first time one week before Dean Morton began his remarkable years at St. John the Divine. I was present for his last Sunday and the wonderful celebration of his ministry in December 1996, complete with a high-wire walk by Philippe Petit and a performance by the Forces of Nature dance troupe. As everyone probably knows, Dean Morton was both creative and charismatic. He was also funny and loving. The number of people attending Sunday services was pretty low when he arrived and grew dramatically over his tenure.*

*His passion for social justice was evident from the first. Just weeks after I began attending, he invited in the United Farm Workers for a special Sunday service. This was during the days of César Chávez and the lettuce pickers' strike. The iconostasis at the front of the nave was festooned with their flags. In February, just four months into his ministry, he*

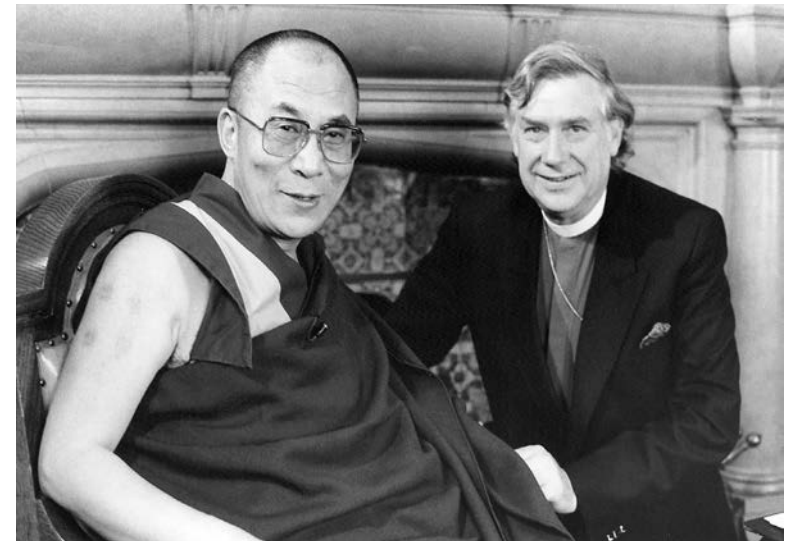
*invited Native Americans to the 11 a.m. service during the Wounded Knee incident. He retained a relationship with this community for years.*

*With rabbi friends and theologians he put together a conference on Christianity and the Holocaust. Elie Wiesel was one of the speakers. And this brings me to his work on interfaith dialogue and understanding. Dean Morton went way beyond ecumenism, and even beyond worrying about all the children of Abraham, to embrace Hindus, Buddhists, Native American shamans, etc. He went so far that some would question his Christianity. But it was the radical hospitality of the follower of Christ that he was embodying.*

*One story illuminates this perfectly. He had invited Elie Wiesel to preach at an 11 a.m. service. Mr. Wiesel was hesitant about accepting the invitation, because as an Orthodox Jew and survivor of Auschwitz, he felt he didn't belong in a church. So the dean compromised. He turned around all the chairs in the nave so that the congregation faced the west doors. A small table was set up for Mr. Wiesel right near the doors, and it was from here that he spoke. We finished the service with a Eucharist, using that little table as the altar. I believe this radical hospitality must have moved Mr. Wiesel. The next time he came, he spoke from the pulpit, and he even became a Cathedral colleague.*

*Beside his work on interfaith issues, to which he devoted himself after his tenure at St. John's ended, his passion, beginning in the 1970s, was for what was happening to the earth, the destruction that human beings were visiting upon this blue green ball we call home. St. John the Divine became know as "the Green Cathedral." Dean Morton's passion for both interfaith understanding and for ecology were certainly prescient. It is tragic that the world has only gotten worse on both counts.*

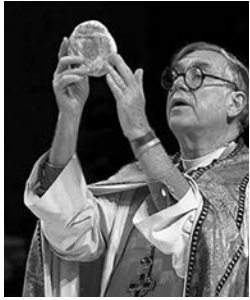
*I could write reams about the various exciting and moving things that happened during those twenty-five years: being invited to sit in the dean's office to meditate with the Dalai Lama, the support for the arts and the artists we were privileged to meet. With Dean Morton's support, the community that worshipped at St John's started a soup kitchen, men's shelter, and clothing closet. What went on in the undercroft was primarily social gospel-related, while upstairs in the nave mass was celebrated, and many famous artists, scientists, and religious leaders spoke to large crowds.*



A visit from His Holiness the Dalai Lama

photo credit: Mary Bloom

*But there was another side to Dean Morton that could get lost in all this: He was a great priest. He could and did relate to everyone, from the homeless or drug addicted to the Park Avenue matron and everyone in between. He was always ready to listen to the individual in pain, to give advice, to help. He would stay up all night at the Maundy Thursday vigil hearing confessions. He knew what was going on with so many of us. I personally was the recipient of his wisdom when my mother was dying, his comfort after her death, and his help*



The Eucharist  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

*when my career was caught in a political mess. Just knowing I could call and ask for a word was enough sometimes. He was very aware of what was happening with his flock. He built community in his own inimitable style, from the weekly Cathedral nights that began with yoga and ended with the Eucharist, and the very precious Thursday morning dean's*

*mass, where we used prayers from the Orthodox Church and finished with breakfast at Cathedral House before going off to work. I remember standing in a circle in St. Saviour's Chapel and thinking to myself: Don't forget this. You are being fed with love and deep connection.*

*Marsha Ra, 2020*

On the subject of “really feeling religious,” an amazing new Cathedral program was Nightwatch. From the time Richard Larom, known as Peter, was a relatively new seminarian at the Cathedral, I knew he was not only amusing and smart but also very imaginative. After his ordination, marriage, and a church job in Uganda, Peter was a curate in a prosperous suburban church outside of New York City. He told me he had a crazy idea. What if he brought a group of twenty to thirty of his teenagers after school on Friday afternoon, with their sleeping bags and their picnic supper and breakfast? They would first tour the Cathedral and its gardens, next have supper in the basement soup kitchen, and then play basketball in the Cathedral basement gym, where they would also sleep. At midnight, they would all troop upstairs into the dark Cathedral and, then, by candlelight have Holy Communion at the high altar—the culmination of Nightwatch.

Nightwatch became a huge success, with teenage groups from churches all over New York State and farther afield—even groups from Chicago to California. We had to hire a college student to administer what became a big program virtually every Friday night.

Parallel to Nightwatch for teenagers were equally popular Cathedral tours scheduled for New York City public school students with their teachers throughout the year and led by full-time Cathedral tour staff.



Buttresses at  
Cathedral of St. John the Divine  
photo credit: Polly Barton

*The public education team, educators from the nearby Bank Street College of Education and a historic group of thirty-some volunteers, provided tours for pilgrims of all sorts. My favorite tour will always be the one where we focused on how the Cathedral stands.*

*Many high school groups come as part of their European history course, and there was nothing like working with a group of teenagers in a historic setting. The architecture of the Cathedral has various styles of Romanesque and Gothic architecture throughout the chapels, the high altar, and the nave. We started the tour with a bit of historical context and then engaged the students with a literal hands-on demonstration of the strength of the Gothic arch and the flying buttress system. Two students were requested to stand up in front of their peers and create a rounded Roman arch by holding each other's hands and creating an arch. We asked another student to try to hang from that arch; the*

*arch inevitably crumbled with the weight. We then asked the arch-makers to crisscross and straighten their arms. Then we requested two more students to come up and support the backs of this human arch. Once all the students were in place, we could see a human model of a Gothic arch and the flying buttress system. We asked the student who broke the first arch to try again. Usually the student could actually swing from our human model.*

*This demonstration never seemed to get old with any of our tour guides. The delight was palpable, and the camaraderie was contagious. We started our walk exploring the various columns, archways, and vaulted ceilings that made the Cathedral so architecturally rich. If they had decided to take the “vertical tour,” we climbed an internal stone spiral staircase, up to the various levels of the nave, walked on a flying buttress and got an up-close view of the stained glass windows and the vaulted ceiling. Simply magical.*

*Andrea Yost, 2021*

contains the forty-foot stained glass windows that are among the most famous prized treasures of St. John the Divine. For many visitors to the Cathedral, these amazing tours created a genuine religious experience of a truly remarkable and sacred building.

Above all were the many scheduled and unscheduled visitors of all ages and from all countries who arrived every day from nine to five, 365 days a year. The commercial New York tour buses had their own tour guides, and many (not all) of them were excellent and sincerely dedicated. But the remarkable Cathedral Laymen’s Club developed their own dedicated army of tour leaders who created unique experiences of the Cathedral and its architecture and history. Very popular were Tom Fedorek’s vertical tours up the curving steps of the circular stone stairways of the nave leading to the different levels of the majestic space: first to the triforium gallery halfway up the side walls of the Cathedral nave (some fifty feet above the floor), and then continuing up another thirty feet to the clerestory level, which

A prominent cleric once remarked that the Cathedral was becoming a circus. Better a circus than a dusty tomb!

## Abundance

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Parallel to the traditional role of cathedrals as centers of spirituality, human compassion, intellectual and prophetic scholarship, and education is the Cathedral's traditional role as a patron and sponsor of great architecture and the various musical, theater, literary, and visual arts.

The American Poets Corner in the arts bay of the nave was begun in 1980 by the poet Daniel Haberman and functions with a selection committee of ten contemporary poets, chaired by the current poet-in-residence. Every year each newly selected poet's name is carved in the stone pavement of the arts bay and dedicated at a festival Sunday service of Evensong in November, with readings from the late poet's writing by fellow poets.



The American Poets Corner  
photo credit: Robert Rodriguez



Paul Winter with Theresa Thomason  
at the Feast of St. Francis  
photo credit: *The New York Times*

Initiated by Cathedral colleague Muriel Rukeyser in 1978, the poetry wall was located in the south ambulatory behind the high altar and exhibited poems written by children and prisoners from prisons all over the country. A sign invited readers to write to the poets; many did, and some important and compassionate relationships were born!

Paul Winter is the most well known of the musical artists-in-residence, beginning in 1980 with his first concert, *The Tao of Bach*, with Chinese dancer Chungliang “Al” Huang. We three had first met through the new Lindisfarne Association, of which both Paul and I were members. Also in 1980 the Paul Winter Consort began their annual concert *Winter Solstice Celebration*, which reflected Paul’s environmental passions and which continue to this day. Many of his group’s albums were recorded in the Cathedral, combining woodwinds, strings, and percussion with his saxophone—and just about everything from whale songs

to wolf cries, eagles soaring in the canyons of the Southwest and the creatures of Lake Baikal in Siberia. Paul Winter is truly a pioneer of “earth music.”

For the Feast of St. Francis, Paul Winter leads the specially

## AS OF 2020, THE POETS CORNER INCLUDES:

- 1985: Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe
- 1986: Robert Frost, Nathaniel Hawthorne
- 1987: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain
- 1988: Henry David Thoreau, Henry James
- 1989: Wallace Stevens, William Faulkner
- 1990: T.S. Eliot, Willa Cather
- 1991: Marianne Moore, Edward Arlington Robinson
- 1992: William Carlos Williams, Edith Wharton
- 1993: Stephen Crane, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- 1994: Hart Crane, Anne Bradstreet
- 1995: William Cullen Bryant, Elizabeth Bishop
- 1996: Langston Hughes, Ernest Hemingway, John Greenleaf Whittier
- 1997: Louise Bogan, E.E. Cummings
- 1998: Theodore Roethke, William Dean Howells
- 1999: F. Scott Fitzgerald
- 2000: Edna St. Vincent Millay
- 2001: Gertrude Stein
- 2003: Robert Lowell
- 2004: Robert Hayden
- 2005: W.H. Auden
- 2006: Emma Lazarus
- 2007: Robinson Jeffers
- 2008: Phillis Wheatley
- 2009: Tennessee Williams
- 2010: Sylvia Plath
- 2011: James Baldwin
- 2012: Katherine Anne Porter
- 2013: John Berryman
- 2014: Mary Flannery O’Connor
- 2015: Zora Neale Hurston
- 2016: Eugene O’Neill
- 2017: Jean Toomer
- 2018: Carl Sandberg
- 2019: Ralph Ellison, Harriet Jacobs
- 2020: Audre Lorde
- 2021: Muriel Rukeyser





The blessing of the animals at the Feast of St. Francis  
photo credit: The New York Times/Mary Bloom

## Abundance

commissioned “Missa Gaia,” which is performed by the Paul Winter Consort, visiting choirs, the Cathedral organ, and soloist Theresa Thomason. The music is an ecological and ecumenical liturgy celebrating the life of St. Francis. The climax at the end of this amazing celebration is the great procession led by elephant, camel, horse, pig, and American eagle. The people of New York are invited to bring their beloved pets for a blessing. A fair on the grounds of the Cathedral ends the day.

Frederick Renz in 1974 created the Ensemble for Early Music, continuing the tradition of the legendary Noah Greenberg, who introduced Early Music to America with the resurrected 13th-century *Play of Daniel*. The plays of Herod and St. Nicholas followed, with concerts of Early Music at the Cathedral throughout the year. Suited to the Gothic surroundings of the Cathedral with period instruments, those concerts have been loved by devoted audiences.

Another young devoted audience supported the Jazz in the Cathedral series, which was launched by Marietta Drummond together with four Columbia University students working at WKCR, the college radio station. Musicians could apply for grants from Meet the Composer or the New York State Council on the Arts, but in order to get a grant they had to present their work in concert. So this was a way that the series could help the musicians.

Larger performances included Charlie Haden and the Liberation Music Orchestra, Don Cherry and Nana Vasconcelos, Max Roach and M’Boom, a John Coltrane memorial concert, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and Sweet Honey in the Rock, among many others. All these events represented another way that the Cathedral functioned as a no-budget performing space that could reach new audiences in the city.

Carla De Sola’s Omega Liturgical Dance Company was our first dance-oriented artist-in-residence group, which was followed by Abdel

Salaam's Forces of Nature Dance Theatre and Alessandra Belloni's commedia dell'arte I Giullari di Piazza. Together, all of the Cathedral's residential dancers have played a major role in the annual Feast of St. Francis.



Carla De Sola  
photo credit: Beverly Hall

Maundy Thursdays were all-night vigils after the liturgy, which started with Carla De Sola's dance "The Passion According to Mary" or Sandra Rivera's moving saeta, a flamenco-based lamentation of women at the crucifixion. Then there were all-night readings of Dante's *Inferno*, led by the writer William Bryant Logan. Edwina Sandys's bronze female figure *Christa* was unveiled at the 1983 Maundy Thursday vigil, which featured women artists' interpretation of the Passion of Christ.

No single work of art at the Cathedral received as much publicity, from New York to London to Rome. Very positive dissertations have been written on *Christa* by Roman Catholic nuns.

John-Michael Tebelak's dramatization of the Lenten Sunday sermons preached in 1981 by the American hostages—who, in 1979, were held captive in Tehran for 444 days—was held in a chapel in which the entire audience was blindfolded!

The annual New Year's Eve Concert for Peace, which Caroline Stoessinger created in 1981 with Leonard Bernstein and the folk singer Odetta, is one of New York City's major free public events.

The fifteen-foot Peace Tree beneath the rose window at the front of the Cathedral takes its place at Christmastime with 1,000 origami doves of peace, each originally folded lovingly by Lore Schirokauer.

We gave the Big Apple Circus its first residence in 1977 in Synod Hall, directly behind the bishop's office. The Big Apple Circus was founded by Paul Binder and Michael Christensen, who were

inspired by small one ring European circuses. Its extraordinary artists and clowns perform in a beautiful tent in Lincoln Center in the winter holiday months each year. It has trained young people in the circus arts and created a clown-care unit to visit children facing medical procedures in hospitals. What a jewel in this city! The sustainer extraordinaire of the The Big Apple Circus is Mary Jane Brock—such a devoted friend to the Cathedral as well.

Contemporary art exhibitions in St. Boniface Chapel and the photography wall in the nave were both first organized by four artists: photographers Beverly Hall and Mary Bloom, my assistant Peggy Harrington, and sculptor Lorenzo Pace. There were also scheduled exhibitions throughout the year of painters-in-residence Harry Cosme, Paul Weingarten, Haydn Stubbing, Sonja Eisenberg, Harold Stevenson, and Mary Parriott.

Jonathan Borofsky's forty-five-foot electric sculpture *Fish with Ruby Eye* in 1987 was one of the most amazing Cathedral art projects: a modern interpretation of the ancient Christian symbol of the fish. Borofsky's fish—created from colored tubes of light—was suspended from the Cathedral vault 125 feet above the floor of the nave and required a very complex installation. The artist, fortunately, brought along his fellow artist Stephen Glassman, who was both an environmental sculptor and an electrical engineer.

Stephen Glassman's wife, Sarah Elgart, a remarkable dancer and choreographer who had created dance programs with women



Jonathan Borofsky,  
*Fish with Ruby Eye*, 1987  
photo credit: Cathedral of St. John the Divine archives

prisoners in two women's prisons in California, joined Stephen in New York in 1989. Together they designed and produced in the Cathedral nave an astonishing drama called *Abundance*. Sarah had volunteered in a project of Homes for the Homeless in a former Holiday Inn in Staten Island and recruited her cast of eight homeless women from the new shelter. *Abundance* was spectacular theater, with Stephen's dramatic set for the production: a freestanding forty-foot square black platform, six feet high with one piece of scenery: a back wall of hundreds of stuffed black plastic garbage bags stacked up one upon another to a height of forty feet.

On the stage were six randomly placed stuffed garbage bags. The lights came up with music for about a minute—an original score by composer Ed Tomney. The music dimmed in volume, and the six garbage bags on the stage floor wiggled randomly. Eventually, out crawled six homeless women, each with a female rag doll pinned firmly to her waist. *Abundance* was a special star among many remarkable productions in my twenty-five years at the Cathedral: abundance of poverty—of homelessness—of art and of spirituality.

Artist-in-residence Ralph Lee's Mettawee Theatre Company's annual fall performances, held on the Cathedral front lawn, are modern reconstructions of ancient folk tales and original music, with Lee's delightful handmade masks, puppets, and scenery. Ralph Lee has also created a fabulous procession of masked ghouls dancing in the Cathedral nave at Halloween, and his Twelfth Night performance of the Boar's Head Festival (with its traditional mummers' play), takes place in the great choir.

Sculptor Gregg Wyatt's monumental bronze *Peace Fountain*, featuring St. Michael the winged archangel with giraffes, the sun, and the moon, crowns the Cathedral's expansive lawn and faces Amsterdam Avenue. Its miniature bronze animals encircling the pool were created first in clay by public school third graders for a jury

of distinguished New York artists, who selected the most delightful ones for casting in bronze. Wyatt's Cathedral crypt studio soon became a training center for high school students learning the ancient craft of bronze casting.

A great event at the Cathedral each year has been a free Memorial Day concert by the New York Philharmonic. It was first suggested in 1992 by Kurt Masur, the conductor of the orchestra at that time, who felt that there should be a time and a place for the people of the city to gather and remember.

Reflecting on my twenty-five years of often surprising Cathedral events, one truly extraordinary concert in 1991, *Grace for Grace*, was a powerful artistic and spiritual—indeed, religious—experience! Conceived, written, and directed by the brilliant artist and often controversial theater director Robert Wilson, *Grace for Grace* was financially supported by our equally creative and generous Cathedral trustee Lily Auchincloss. The evening concert was a dramatic event celebrating the entire 600 feet of the Cathedral interior from the high altar to the twin seventeen-foot bronze portals opening onto Amsterdam Avenue below.



Lily Auchincloss  
photo credit: family collection

*Robert Wilson explored his conception of the performance in an essay in The New York Times on October 13, 1991:*

*Last Spring, when I was asked to stage a performance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, I was excited for two reasons. First, working in Europe as much as I do, I am always grateful for an opportunity to work in New York, my home-*

town. Second, as an artist who directs and designs for the theater, I have long believed that new avenues must be sought for the presentation of theater, new spaces explored beyond the traditional venues. This is vital for the continual development of the art.

The theater world is undergoing hard times. With financing becoming more scarce, there are fewer and fewer places for artists to work. Where can young people come together to develop new work? When I started in the theater, in the mid-60's, the most exciting work for me in New York was taking place at Judson Memorial Church. St. John, like Judson, is committed to broadening its role in the community by providing support and a venue for cultural programs. In doing so, it serves as a model for a true social "center" for the city.

As a student at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, I designed a model for a city that consisted of an apple with a crystal cube in its center. This cube represented a window to a world wherein, ideally, people from all social backgrounds, regardless of political, religious or philosophical beliefs, could congregate to exchange ideas and learn from one another. People would assemble briefly, then return, taking the experience they had shared to their communities.

Theater can serve this function because it is a forum for ideas. It can have poetry, philosophy, politics, economics. What modern cities most need are centers—forums—from which all forms of expression can radiate.

This is a role St. John has strived to maintain for more than a century. Its founders insisted that the new Cathedral should serve as "a house of prayer for all nations." This vision has proved prophetic, as both the surrounding neighborhood and the city itself have become truly multiracial, multina-

tional and multilingual. Saturday evening's program will reflect this identity, bringing together artists from diverse backgrounds and disciplines who will reflect the culturally variegated audience that is New York.

Upon returning to the Cathedral last summer, I became fascinated with the opportunity of staging "Grace for Grace" so that the building itself becomes a participant. Its sense of space is enormous; the structure stretches over 600 feet from one end to the other; the equivalent of two football fields, and in the nave the ceiling rises 124 feet. The lighting will not only highlight the performers but also bring the architectural space into play: the rising piers, the curving arches, the stained-glass windows, the open spaces and the shadows.

The performance will take place "around" the audience, so that everyone attending becomes a participant, not just an observer. Clearly, what one person sees from the great choir in front of the high altar will differ from what another sees from the nave. Some things will be seen, others only heard. It may not be possible to know where the sound is coming from at any one moment.

What emerges from this collaboration between diverse performers and a monumental performing space is sure to include some surprises.

*Robert Wilson, 1991*

At the actual event, twenty-five transparent glass light bulbs suspended from the ceiling vaults seventy-five feet above the Cathedral nave's elegant pavement of green stone mystically lit the gigantic space. Two 150-foot rows of the Cathedral's simple brown wooden chairs awaited the audience, one row on each side of the 248-foot

nave. Below each of the twenty clear glass light bulbs was a low twenty-four-inch square wooden table with a white tablecloth and a fourteen-inch empty glass bowl. And twelve feet above each of the twenty-five low wooden tables was suspended in midair a large white ostrich egg. The Cathedral itself without any humans (clergy, musicians, or guests) was an architectural triumph of space and light and beautiful objects arranged in perfect harmony.

The evening program began not in the lower nave with its procession of suspended ostrich eggs but in the Cathedral crossing below the great choir and high altar. First, a cheerful homeless man in a sweat suit from the Cathedral men's shelter stood up from his front-row seat and welcomed everyone: "You're going to have a great time tonight, so just sit back and enjoy yourself. I'm your master of ceremonies, and I want to introduce you to our director, Mr. Wilson's son, who is going to read something from Shakespeare, the great theater man."

Then, Robert Wilson's twenty-year-old adopted son, who was born mute, quoted a lengthy passage from Shakespeare from the pulpit and bowed to the audience. The emcee then announced a very special treat and introduced the Silver Belles, a tap dance troupe from Harlem. There was thunderous applause for their act—then lights out, total darkness, and silence for two minutes. The lights came back on, and the emcee thanked the Silver Belles tap dancers and said it was time for a brief intermission so everyone could go to the bathroom and then move down to the lower nave of the Cathedral for the second part of the show!

Twenty minutes later, with everyone now seated in the nave, the next act began with crashing chords from the great organ and dim flickers in the clear light bulbs growing to full intensity as the organ merged into a stately Mozart fugue. Forty young men smartly attired in black trousers, long white aprons, and black bowties, all carrying clear

glass pitchers of water, stationed themselves at each of the twenty tables with the twenty empty glass bowls. The water bearers now began to fill the large empty bowls and continued to pour until their pitchers were empty. They were replaced by the second water bearers who continued to pour until their pitchers were empty. The bowls began to overflow, and the organ now roared with its loudest sound as the water spilled out of the glass bowls onto the stone floor of the vast Cathedral nave, and a rising river flowed in the center of the holy space.

Suddenly, total silence.

Then, from the high altar, the beautiful soft voice of the famous mezzo-soprano Jessye Norman hummed notes of "Amazing Grace"—the song from our country's Deep South slavery days that today every American of every color and condition knows from childhood.

Jessye then emerged in a glistening golden gown and walked very slowly down the center aisle of the Cathedral nave as she sang all the verses of that great anthem of God's divine freedom—and everyone in the Cathedral, with tears of joy in their eyes, joined the great artist in her beautiful singing.

Jessye Norman slowly bowed to the congregation in silence. Then with the organ very softly still playing the slaves' song of God's grace, the elegant singer continued her slow solitary walk down the central aisle of the Cathedral—now a river—and out the great bronze doors and into the night and her awaiting black limousine.



Angel Escobar  
photo credit: Robert Rodriguez

## The Stoneyard

The single project that received more national and international attention than anything in my twenty-five years was the trustees' decision in 1976 to continue building the Cathedral after the workmen had laid down their tools following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. What made it so particularly noteworthy was the decision to train young people to be apprentice stonecutters and carvers—particularly young minority men and women.

A major personal inspiration in my early years at the Cathedral was the Rev. George “Wick” Wickersham, who had made an appointment “to meet the new dean on his first day in the office.” Wick’s father had been a trustee of the Cathedral under Bishop Manning during the second building period that began in 1925. The resumption of construction was Wick’s great mission in life. One of his great memories as a teenager was walking through the last six-foot opening of the great western rose window (twenty-five feet in diameter) beside the Cathedral’s second architect, Ralph Adams Cram.

Wick had read in *The New York Times* about my work at the Urban Training Center, in Chicago, and my particular interest in job training for young people in the poorest neighborhoods of big cities. Wick then spoke to me in some detail about Liverpool's great unfinished cathedral and its unique program that trained young men to become apprentice stone masons and stone carvers—a dying profession even in England with its many 13th-century cathedrals. But at Liverpool, England's newest and still unfinished cathedral, the master builder was determined to restore the ancient profession of stone masonry.

In early March 1977, I went to England and met with the master builder of Liverpool Cathedral, James Bambridge, who had himself re-instituted the venerable tradition of training stoneyard apprentices. He agreed to come to New York and to meet with our fabric committee. Almost two years later, in December of 1978, we held a press conference at the Cathedral to announce resumption of construction, and once again we made the front page of *The New York Times*, with pictures!

In February of 1979, James Bambridge moved to New York, and plans began in earnest. Young people were interviewed and five were hired to begin training in June. The stoneyard shed was built in the Cathedral's north field by the architect John Barton, and on the environmentally propitious summer solstice, June 21, 1979, Bishop Moore blessed the first massive ten-ton block of limestone, assisted by four very distinguished trustees: Robert Pennoyer, grandson of trustee J.P. Morgan, who had generously supported the construction period beginning in 1892; Curtis Roosevelt, grandson of trustee and U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was chairman of the 1925 campaign to complete the Cathedral and remained a trustee until his death in 1945; and trustees Mary de Liagre and Lily Auchincloss, who, with scissors in their hands, cut the red ribbon that encircled the new

stoneyard building in the north field.

In 1980, Melvyn Kaufman, my new friend from the end of my Chicago days, came into my life a second time in a big way in New York. Mel was both an architect and the lead man in a major New York construction company, the William Kaufman Organization. Mel was fascinated by the idea of building a Gothic cathedral in stone in the 20th century and training young minority men and women to be stone masons. So in 1980, Mel volunteered to run the new Stoneyard Institute as his gift. Melvyn Kaufman thus became executive director of the new Stoneyard Institute of the cathedral.



Joseph Kincannon  
photo credit: Robert Rodriguez

*I first met Dean Morton while working in the Cathedral gift shop. It was 1979. I was 18 years old and feeling overwhelmed at just having arrived in New York City from rural New England. And I found myself in the world's largest cathedral, which in itself was another world. I felt as if I had just stepped back in time.*

*Soon after I arrived, there appeared a large block of limestone in the north field, right outside of the gift shop, and around it stood six people chipping away with hammers and chisels. This was the beginning of the stoneyard that would later house all of the machinery and work space required to produce enough stone needed to complete the southwest tower. The tower was one of two which had never been built due to the beginning of World War II.*

*I was captivated by this archaic trade and was fortunate*

*enough to have met and talked with some of the stonecutters on many occasions. My brother Jeep, who worked in the Cathedral mailroom, was hired on as an apprentice. He excelled in this work and paved the way for my entrance into the world of architectural stonecutting.*



Carol Hazel  
photo credit: Robert Rodriguez

*When the stoneyard buildings were completed, and with the machines in place, the task at hand was to cut and stockpile as many stones needed before actual construction of the tower could begin. Dean Morton insisted on setting up an on-site apprenticeship program. People of color from neighboring Harlem were trained under*

*British masons and stonecutters. Instead of finished stones arriving on flat beds to be craned onto the tower, huge quarry blocks were delivered. His dream was to accomplish the whole process under one roof by those trained on the spot, an unthinkable achievement in the middle of New York City.*

*The stone blocks' first stop was the frame saw, a mechanical two-man saw, which cut the stone into slices. Often the dean would pop in with guests to observe the blocks being tipped onto their sides for additional cuts to be made. This actually made the ground shake, much to the thrill of the onlookers.*

*The next stop was to cut the stones into more manageable sizes on circular saws. These saws had been salvaged from old quarries in Indiana. Most of us took our turns running the saws. On one occasion while I was setting up for a cut, the dean entered with a group of people, dressed much too nicely for this place, and gave me the nod. I knew the drill*

*and started the machine up. While rolling the stone through the sixty-inch saw blade, the machine roared, spewing water and slurry all over. Predictably, the visitors stepped back, while the dean beamed broadly. And you never knew who he would bring around. He introduced architects like Robert Stern and Santiago Calatrava—who had just won the design competition for the south transept. Another time, he brought in “Superman” Christopher Reeve, who we joked around with, asking if he could fly a couple stones up to the tower for us.*

*When the stones had passed through this phase, they were rolled into the banker masons' wing, where they were fashioned into intricate arch stones (voussoirs), quatrefoil windows, mullioned columns, and more. This is where the hand work began. The walls were strewn with zinc templates, and the work benches (bankers) were lined up with various stones at different stages of completion.*

*The dean delighted in visiting this place the most. This was, after all, where the bulk of the work was done. Here he became the student and was always excited and inquisitive about every step of the process, from the application of the templates to the cutting of the intricate geometric forms.*

*That goes for the carving shed as well, which had its own out building across the yard. This is where all of the ornamental work took place. I remember him entering with two people and nodding to turn down music. The sound of hammering was so loud, he had to shout while describing the details of the tower drawing on the wall. The drawing was color-coded. Each carver had his/her own color to keep track of the progress. To be honest, our hammering became more aggressive if guests were present, to avoid eye contact. It's a little unnerving to look up and find, say, Kurt Vonnegut watching you carve. We once*



*asked the dean if he preferred that we stop hammering while showing people around. "Don't you dare," was his response. He liked for people to see and hear what a real carving shop was like. The carvers' energy levels could be gauged by the rise and fall of hammer percussion, which always reminded me of cicadas.*

*Sometimes we would orchestrate his visits. I'd set up a stone on a banker with a large hammer and "pitching" chisel at the ready. Pitching a block required the use of heavy hammer and clunky chisel, with the goal of knocking off great huge chunks with as few blows as possible. If done right, a lot of time and labor could be saved. This was always a crowd-pleaser; and the dean loved it.*

*The last stop was the tower. The finished stones were taxied around to the opposite side of the Cathedral to then be lifted up 250 feet. We would set up the stones on planks and rollers to queue up for the elevator ride to the top. Those that did this work were called the "bull gang."*

*Alone on the elevator as it descended from the tower, I saw the dean and two men waiting at the bottom. Once landed, I rattled open the lift door, and they stepped aboard. One man was elderly with large black spectacles, the other younger and with a camera in hand. The dean was excited as he pulled out a roll of drawings and didn't miss a beat when the lift jolted into motion and wobbled from side to side, as was the norm. Most first-timers were a little nervous as the lift rose. And often as we topped the tree level, they would gasp and hold onto the cage wall. On this occasion, the younger man turned pale and knelt down on his hands and knees. The dean suggested we return to the bottom and, after helping the man out, we returned to the elevator. The older man was very friendly and explained the origin of the term "bull*

*gang," which harkened back before medieval times, crediting the beasts that did most of the pulling and hoisting of building stones*

*Topside, they both stayed for a long time watching the stones being jockeyed into place and talking with the masons. The dean introduced the older man as Philip Johnson.*

*For me, personally, the dean became a father figure. As he assembled people from completely different backgrounds to build a cathedral, the experience he created became the most defining of my life, as vivid today as it was then.*

*Joseph Kincannon, 2021*

The apprentices grew in number to twenty, and over the next three years enough stone had been cut and carved to begin the actual continued construction of the southwest tower of St. Paul, already 150 feet up in the air, to reach its ultimate completed height of 300 feet. The great moment took place on the auspicious Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, on September 29, 1982, with the street blocked off to traffic and hundreds of onlookers behind police barricades. In a formal procession, the trustees walked to the front steps of the Cathedral, where chairs with blue hardhats on each seat and a podium and loud speaker system were ready to go.

Paul Moore first introduced me to Cyrus Vance (a former U.S. secretary of state) and his wife, Gay, who had co-chaired the initial three years of fundraising that led to the day's great moment. Next, the noise of helicopters arrived over the crowd, and all heads looked up to the steel cable that stretched from midway on the south tower to 150 feet above us, where the new cornerstone from Israel (a gift of Jerusa-



The Stoneyard  
photo credit: Robert Rodriguez

lem's mayor, Teddy Kollek, inscribed in Hebrew, Greek, and English) awaited the bishop's blessing. The cable stretched all the way across Amsterdam Avenue and was anchored to the elevator shaft on the roof of Amsterdam House.

Suddenly, from behind the elevator shaft emerged a slight figure in white satin with a small red purse at his waist. Philippe Petit bowed to the assembled multitude, raised his right hand to honor the heavens, and picked up his twenty-foot balancing pole. Thousands held their breath as Philippe advanced to the edge of the parapet and placed his right foot on the cable, then his left foot, and slowly advanced to the middle of Amsterdam Avenue where he carefully knelt on the cable and then lay down to take a nap—his balancing pole across his stomach—just like his walk and nap between the World Trade Center towers.

The two helicopters with photographers buzzed overhead. Philippe rose, again saluted the heavens, and proceeded very slowly to the unfinished south tower, where the bishop and I thanked God and our angelic protector St. Michael and embraced Philippe standing before us. Philippe untied the red purse at his waist and presented to the bishop the silver trowel with which Bishop Manning had blessed the new cornerstone of the Cathedral nave in 1925. Paul then received the ceremonial trowel and incised the Jerusalem stone with the traditional trinitarian blessing that signaled the actual renewal of construction. Once again, St. John the Divine made the front page of *The New York Times*, with the now-famous picture of Philippe walking in midair as he approached the great Cathedral.

The extraordinary high point of cathedral building could never have been reached without a bit of history known only to the trustees present in June of 1972, when I first arrived on the scene. In 1971, two small chunks of mortar from the Cathedral dome had come loose and crashed on the crossing floor 150 feet below. The fabric committee was rightly alarmed and voted to demolish the “unsafe” dome and in its place construct a new “modern” tower designed by the then-Cathedral architect Frederick Woodbridge. It is also interesting to note that the Woodbridge design had earlier been thoroughly lambasted by Ada Louise Huxtable, the late architecture critic of *The New York Times*, when it was first made visible to the public in the paper.

Upon our family's arrival at the Cathedral on July 5, 1972, we



The setting of the Jerusalem stone  
photo credit: Robert Rodriguez

stayed in Paul Moore's apartment in Cathedral House, because Bishop Donegan had not yet moved out of the deanery. Paul said to me that our timing was perfect, because the next day the fabric committee was meeting to sign the final papers for the demolition of the dome. This was all news to me, and I asked if the decision about the famous Guastavino tile dome was irrevocable. Guastavino had also designed the tile dome at Columbia University's library, as well as the tiles for the New York subway stations and some of New York's most famous tile vaulting: the Grand Central Oyster Bar ceiling under the station, the Bridgemarket Restaurant under the Queensboro Bridge, Grant's Tomb, Carnegie Hall, and the American Museum of Natural History.

Paul simply said he knew nothing about engineering, but that the Cathedral obviously couldn't have a dangerous dome. I agreed but asked if I could call an architectural friend in Chicago, a well-known historic preservation architect who, along with the best structural engineers in the country, had saved Louis Sullivan's famous Auditorium Building. Paul said, "Fine, go ahead." So I called the architect Ben Weese, who immediately called Fred Severud, the engineer of Saarinen's remarkable TWA (now Jet Blue) terminal at JFK and the equally famous Saarinen skating rink at Yale. Paul got a gracious delay on the decision.

Severud was hired. His report stated that it was not a big problem and that the tile dome itself was entirely secure. The simple fact was that the dome had never been insulated on the outside, and in hot weather the dome's thin tile construction heated up at a different rate from the vast granite piers on which the dome rested. This resulted in slight movement, which, in turn, caused the loosening of mortar between the tiles. The solution was equally simple: insulate the outside of the dome and attach an invisible nylon netting on its inside surface. It would be inexpensive, less than \$50,000. So the dome was saved.

Equally important, we saved the \$3 million of the building

fund, which had not been touched since construction stopped with Pearl Harbor in 1941. It was that \$3 million of the building fund that once again started the Cathedral's continued construction instead of the dome's destruction. And it was also that same financial cushion that allowed construction to proceed while trustee Ben Holloway, the chair of the new Cathedral building campaign, and his business partner Lewis Rudin raised \$17 million—with major help from Trinity Church, a host of benefactors, and the new Cathedral Board of Regents.

Work was begun on carving the great figures on the central portal of the west front. Simon Verity, the master carver of Exeter Cathedral and Wells Cathedral, was brought over from England to train the apprentice carvers, and the amazing array of thirty-two prophets and apostles on the Cathedral's central portal came into being. The beautiful new portal sculpture is even subtly polychromed, in true Gothic style.

At its peak, the stoneyard had fifty apprentices. David Teitelbaum, a Cathedral regent and historic preservation builder, joined the stoneyard staff to enlarge the total operation to include outside commissions for historic preservation projects, especially for several Victorian Gothic stone churches in the New York area that were in immediate need of masonry repair. The stoneyard was commissioned to remake the facade of the Jewish Museum to match the original facade of the Warburg Mansion.



Simon Verity carving at the west portal of the Cathedral  
photo credit: Robert Rodriguez

The stoneyard now needed an outside business department! A second stoneyard shed was built in the north field to accommodate the new apprentices and the new precision laser machinery for cutting large numbers of identical building blocks. This freed up master carvers and apprentices for the more intricate work of carving and “boasting,” the ancient name for the careful geometric patterns of chisel marks on the surface of each stone block—and the unique signature of each traditional stone mason.

The stoneyard was sadly forced to shut down in 1994, with the severe economic downturn in New York that closed so many building projects and businesses. Most cathedrals have been built in fits and starts, and Paul’s and mine was the third building period and lasted fifteen years (1979–1994). I look forward to the fourth, and hope I’ll still be alive!

What, in retrospect, is the most significant legacy of the Cathedral stoneyard? Of course, continuing the construction of an unfinished but religiously, culturally, and socially valued architectural monument is always important. But the way we did it is perhaps most important of all—and very relevant in today’s world of urban unemployment. Although stonemason apprenticeship is an ancient form of job training, in our modern world it is perceived as an innovative model. It offers training to young people who are provided with a personal sense of pride, self-worth, creativity, and social responsibility in our modern city.

# A House of Prayer for All People



Jake Swamp and his wife, Judy, of the Wolf Clan, Mohawk

photo credit: Mary Bloom

The Cathedral's commitment to being open to all people, not just Christians or Episcopalians, goes back both to the language of the 1873 charter "to be a house of prayer for all people," and also to the architectural and stylistic diversity of the seven Chapels of the Tongues (Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance) encircling the high altar. The saints to whom each chapel is dedicated echo their different ethnic and geographic origins: St. James, Spain, built in 1916; St. Ambrose, Italy, 1914; St. Martin, France, 1918; St. Columba, Ireland, 1911; St. Saviour, the Eastern Church, 1904; St. Ansgar, Scandinavia, 1918; St. Boniface, Germany, 1916.

This early commitment both to openness and to diversity became dramatically visible in 1925, when Adolph Ochs of *The New York Times* gave the Cathedral the two great bronze menorahs and Emperor Hirohito of Japan gave the two monumental Shinto vases. Both gifts were placed on either side of the high altar.

In 1979, the Dalai Lama made his first trip to America and spent his first two full days meeting with New York's Tibetan community in Synod Hall at the Cathedral. The Dalai Lama's first public address was on Sunday afternoon, October 14, 1979, also at the Cathedral, with Philip Glass at the organ and thousands of New Yorkers filling the nave.

By 1980, the Cathedral triforium gallery had long become a welcoming spiritual home for artists and for interfaith not-for-profit organizations. First in 1974 came Philippe Petit, followed by Dr. Kusunita Pedersen, director of the Temple of Understanding, both moving into offices on the north triforium wall of the Cathedral nave in 1975. They were followed by Keith Critchlow, from London, with his studio for sacred geometry, and by calligrapher Dennis Lund's scriptorium, on the south wall of the nave, along with David Hykes's Harmonic Choir (traditional overtone chanting practiced by Buddhist and Armenian Christian groups and by Sufi Muslims).

On the south triforium of the nave was the Native American legal support group in aid of federal prisoner Leonard Peltier, with an office manned by Oglala Sioux leader Steve Robideau. The Temple of Understanding's lawyer, the late Leonard Marks, Esq., organized an amicus brief for Leonard Peltier's freedom, together with the signatures of the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and our Cathedral's dean and chapter. Peltier's Washington judges rejected our petition (shades also of President Clinton's withdrawn amicus brief for Peltier on his controversial last night in office). Twice I have visited Leonard in prison. But with the solidar-

ity and respect of the total Native American community, he remains locked away. For years Leonard and I were in touch, with Leonard calling me each Sunday morning at 8:30.

Many years later Pamela and I attended the huge public fundraiser for Leonard Peltier on December 14, 2012, at New York's Beacon Theatre. My personal hope was that President Obama would see fit to intervene in Peltier's case, which would be the highest sign of solidarity and respect for the Native American community. Once again the petition was rejected, and Leonard Peltier is still in prison.

A FRIEND OF THE CATHEDRAL, Ann R. Roberts, came to me with a powerful idea to have a new service of Thanksgiving in tribute to Native Americans.

*The story of Thanksgiving at Plymouth Rock began in the fall of 1620 when a three-masted schooner christened the Mayflower set sail from England with one hundred Pilgrims aboard, seeking religious freedom in a new land.*

*Having set sail much later than planned, they encountered fierce winds that drove their ship far off course, and they finally arrived in the midst of a fierce December winter—much farther north than intended and also long after harvest time, so they had no means of gathering food to tide them over until spring. By the time they disembarked there were only fifty people left alive.*

*The Pilgrims would not have survived as a colony if it had not been for the generosity and intercession of the neighboring tribes who shared with them their own food over the rest of the winter.*

*Finally, as spring came on, the Pilgrims began building*

*homes and starting gardens.*

*One day, an Indian warrior walked into their village. To their astonishment, he welcomed them in English and told them he was a chief in a neighboring tribe. He also told them that he could introduce them to Massasoit, who was the great chief of the Wampanoag tribe nearby.*

*He came again later and brought a man named Squanto with him. This man also spoke English fluently from his years of capture in Europe. When he finally was able to return to his people, there was no one left. His entire tribe had been wiped out by a plague. Their land was the very spot the Pilgrims had taken for their own.*

*Squanto stayed with the Pilgrims for the remainder of his life. He shared with them his peoples' ways to plant, fish, and cook their native vegetables.*

*Squanto also introduced the Pilgrims to Chief Massasoit, and, as a result, he and Governor Bradford made a peace treaty that was honored between them for over twenty-five years. There was no trouble between the Pilgrims and the tribes as long as Chief Massasoit and Governor William Bradford were alive.*

*In mid-September of 1621, an extraordinary event took place between the settlers and the local tribes. For three days and nights there was feasting and celebrating between two cultures that barely knew each other and whose fundamental beliefs were distinctly different, if not antithetical. At that particular moment in time, they came together and shared a common joy and achievement and a common desire to give thanksgiving for the gifts of the earth.*

*For the Wampanoag, it was annual harvest that was celebrated yearly by feasting, ceremony, and thanksgiving to the Mother Earth for her life-giving gifts. For the Pilgrims, it was their first harvest in a new land and the first time they had felt free from the terrors of the sea and starvation since their arrival a year before. Their harvest was plentiful, and they were surrounded with the bounties of a bountiful land. They felt that their God had blessed them, too, and provided with a wonderful bounty for their needs.*

*Their gratitude filled them with exuberance, and they allowed themselves unusual freedom and gaiety. The ingredients of their feasting was essentially the same as our Thanksgiving is to this day.*

*There were wild turkeys, wild geese, and ducks cooked on spits over the open fire. Lobster, eels, clams, oysters, and fish of various kinds were roasted in the coals or stewed in iron kettles, as well as biscuits and bread of English wheat.*

*The Wampanoag brought five deer prepared and cooked, in addition to the abundant wild fruits of the summer that had been dried. They also introduced us to corn on the cob, popped corn, maple syrup, parched corn, roasted corn, hoe cakes, and ash cakes, and Indian pudding made of cornmeal and molasses boiled in a bag.*

*In addition to the feasting, there were games and the exercise of arms. The Indians competed in marksmanship with bows and arrows, and with the Pilgrims vied in leaping and jumping and racing. On the side, Miles Standish marched and countermarched his little band of soldiers, while discharging blank volleys and blowing their bugles.*

*During that tiny moment in time out of time, Indian and*

*Pilgrim came together as peers. They stood together in their strengths and respect of each other. However, that moment in time had never happened before and could not be sustained.*

*Forces that had already been set in motion years before the first Thanksgiving eventually tore apart all the friendship and balance that Chief Massasoit and his people and Governor William Bradford with his Pilgrims had so daringly established. After their deaths, Miles Standish broke the treaty and began centuries of dishonor and violence.*

*In 1988, my daughter Clare and I and a few others met with Dean Morton to discuss the possibility of having a Thanksgiving celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, with the intent of honoring this very first Thanksgiving. Dean Morton committed himself and the Cathedral to this giving of thanks—knowing that it was something special: a gift of unification to us all, from us all.*

*Over time, millions of people with ancestries from across the globe have been born, lived, and died on this land. Our bodies arise from this land and return to it. For many of us, just like the Pilgrims, the wisdom we were dying to find was found in the wisdom teachings of the First Peoples. The giving of thanks was an opportunity to express our gratitude, and also a way to have this wisdom presented by the First Peoples directly to those in attendance.*

*Ann R. Roberts, 2021*

And so, with the help of our friend Oren Lyons, faithkeeper of the Onondaga, we invited tribal leaders from across the country to a Thanksgiving tribute at the Cathedral, where they could give voice to their wisdom teachings.

NOTHING ILLUSTRATES THE CATHEDRAL'S OPENNESS and welcoming of important global events more than the remarkable cold rainy night of February 22, 1990, when the Cathedral hosted New York's public welcome for Václav Havel, the newly elected president of liberated Czech Republic. The great evening was orchestrated by the Cathedral's musical magician Caroline Stoessinger, who had equipped the congregation with hand bells to ring upon Havel's entering of the sacred space.

That was just the beginning. Caroline had organized a cultural extravaganza with musicians from the New York and Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestras, and with Zubin Mehta and Lucas Foss taking turns as conductor. It was truly an evening of the stars, with Paul Simon singing "Bridge Over Troubled Waters," and with readings from Havel's writings by Elie Wiesel, Arthur Miller, Ellen Burstyn, Harry Belafonte, Susan Sarandon, Gregory Peck, and Christopher "Superman" Reeve—among many others!

After giving his speech, Havel lit a candle, which he passed to Roberta Flack, who then passed the flame to her neighbor. It went on like that—from neighbor to neighbor and row after row—to symbolize the spread of democracy.

The new level of the Cathedral's vitality and presence that put St. John the Divine on the map in my twenty-five years as dean would have been impossible without the genuine enthusiasm of Bishop Paul Moore, the new trustees, and the commitment, loyalty, and hard work of my co-workers on the staff.

But it had not always been smooth sailing. In my third year, there was serious unhappiness on the part of three trustees and one staff member, stemming from my enthusiastic involvement, in October 1975, with the Temple of Understanding in the weeklong interfaith celebration in the Cathedral of the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations.





Hopi leader Thomas Banyacya with a message of peace  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

There had been Jewish, Christian, and Muslim prayers as well as reading of scripture, Hindu chanting, and Japanese Shinto offerings of fruit, vegetables, and grains. It came to a head one year later in the December 1976 meeting of the Board of Trustees, after which the four disgruntled gentlemen resigned and I was once again able to breathe deeply.

Canon West's loyalty and serious support of my leadership was fundamental and really delightful. He loved the legion of artists-in-residence, the new honorary canons, Cathedral colleagues, and the distinguished environmental leaders

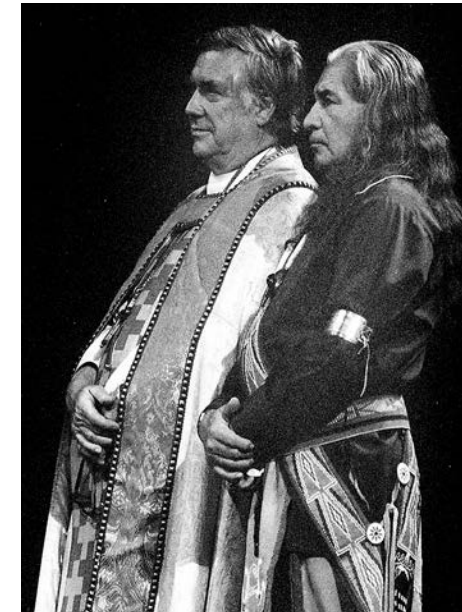
whose presence led St. John the Divine to be known as "the Green Cathedral." With the new stoneyard and its master masons and army of apprentice stonecutters and stone carvers, the Cathedral's administrative structure soon included both business and expertise. Likewise, the early community programs of UHAB for housing rehabilitation, plus the new youth and seniors programs, all grew to a scale that required additional management.

But it was the big audiences for the highly professional and beautiful concerts throughout the year generated by the artists-in-residence, with the arts and music departments—and especially with Paul Winter's annual winter solstice concerts, which brought 10,000 people to the Cathedral, and the St. Francis Day celebration with its 5,000 humans and their animals—that all together required a new level of business expertise. The large public programs simply put very heavy pressures on Cathedral security, maintenance, and office administration. This created a necessary and deeply welcomed

administrative decision by the trustees: The Cathedral must have an executive director! The two men who filled this new role—Wallace Mathai-Davis, followed by Charles Persell, Esq.—were brilliant, dedicated, and delightful. They not only made the Cathedral a much more efficient and human institution, but at the human, personal level were deeply loyal and creative friends.

My four personal executive assistants over the years were also remarkable. The first, Jeanne Lee, was the mother of an Episcopal priest, and the second, Odessa Elliot, was a priest's wife. Both knew the unique world of an Anglican priest's pastoral responsibilities. They were indispensable. Susan Cannon, a most devoted assistant, was first a vigorous tennis player, which must have given her the energy to continue in the dean's office to this day (two deans later)! The fourth, Peggy Harrington, joined Susan Cannon in my last two years as dean. Peggy was a professor's wife, a novelist, and wonderful literary letter writer. Peggy also joined me in my retirement in 1997 and the creation of the new Interfaith Center. A wonderfully gifted friend, Peggy died in 2008.

An important program was the new Cathedral gift shop—open 365 days a year and also nights for big concerts and lectures. Six extraordinary women and two extraordinary men made it all happen. The first shop manager, Marietta Drummond, was a pianist. At the shop she was a brilliant, cool manager of the big crowds and tourists who arrived in busloads. Dr. Anne Harrison, also a musician, became manager when Marietta moved to Texas. Two remarkable men were



Faithkeeper Oren Lyons, Turtle Clan, Onondaga Council of Chiefs  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

the stars of Cathedral security: the late Lt. Arnold Southerland and today's Lt. Keith Hinkson. A successful shop requires not only crowds of shoppers and a safe exchange of money but also the elegant brass buttons of uniformed security guards.

The four buyers created a treasury of books and gifts that would both celebrate and explore the themes lifted up in our liturgical and programmatic life at the Cathedral. My wife, Pamela, Penelope Daborn Halley, Lore Schirokauer, and Elizabeth Darnel brought together truly extraordinary and unusual resources for learning about the environment, social justice, and the beauty and wisdom of the world's many spiritual traditions—all of which were enthusiastically bought by huge numbers of tourists as well as Cathedral regulars. Even *The New Yorker* called the Cathedral shop “one of New York's surprising treasures”!

Another treasure of the Cathedral is the Biblical Garden, a quiet place for meditation, with plants of the Bible arranged as a cloistered garden. It was originally the gift of Mrs. Sarah Larkin Loening, a scholar of Biblical plants. Sue Allen, a graphic designer of museum publications, designed our beautiful catalog as a labor of love. Much of the garden's simplicity has been lost in a redesign, but it is a welcome retreat in a busy Cathedral close.

Another labor of love has been the work of the Cathedral's Garden Conservancy, a faithful guild of women of the Diocese of New York who are responsible for the beauty of the close, making the thirteen acres of flowering trees and beds of blossoms an oasis for the neighborhood.

Inside the Cathedral, the Pilgrims' Pavement is the remarkable gift of the Laymen's Club (which was founded in 1908) and of donors in 1934. This medallion series beautifully depicts events in the life of Jesus and prominent pilgrimage sites, such as Glastonbury and Santiago de Compostela. Every cathedral should be blessed with such service and dedication—and the Cathedral of St. John most certainly

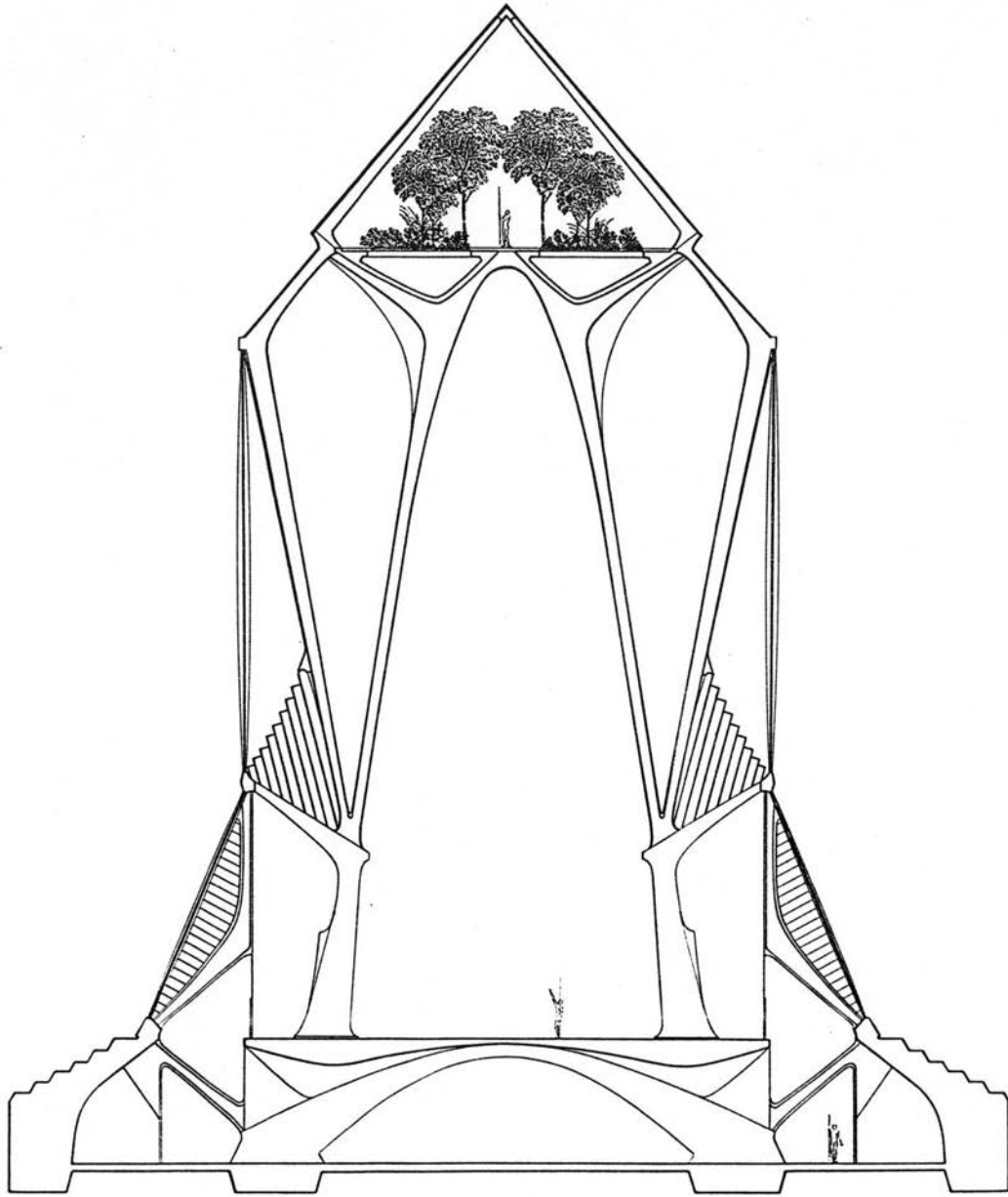


The Bethlehem medallion of the Pilgrims' Pavement

photo credit: A. Leonard Gustafson

is! The Board of Trustees is a remarkably devoted group of men and women, who, with their ever faithful support, have made so many Cathedral endeavors possible.

I wish that I could name them all.



Cross-section of the Cathedral Bioshelter  
photo credit: Santiago Calatrava

## Greening the Cathedral

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The single most unexpected gift from our new friends at Oomoto arrived soon after our return to New York from Japan in 1977. The gift, strangely enough, was environmental. I had received a curious request from David Kidd, the American art dealer of ancient Chinese, Persian, Indian, and Japanese art, whom I had met in January at Oomoto. A longtime customer of Kidd's (and a major collector of ancient Persian art) was Prince Shahram Pahlavi, the nephew of the Shah of Iran. The prince had told David that he planned to establish a foundation to "save the planet from environmental disaster," and he wanted David's advice on important and well-known American environmentalists.

Through our conversations at Oomoto, David had mentioned to the prince the Cathedral's and my own active involvement with several environmental leaders—including Prof. René Dubos, Dr. John



René Dubos  
photo credit: Beverly Hall

Todd, Fr. Thomas Berry, and Brother David Steindl-Rast. David then asked me, on behalf of the prince, for their full names and addresses in order to invite both them and me for a weeklong meeting at his private Indian Ocean island of D'Arros, in the Seychelles. The week in D'Arros in June 1978 was one of the most

informative events in my life. It also secured the financial involvement of the prince in the Cathedral's environmental work through his new foundation, enabling us to establish a vigorous department of environmental ministry with new staff members Canon Charles Carter, Paul Gorman, Amy Elizabeth Fox, and the writer William Bryant Logan—author (at that time) of *Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth* and *Oak: The Frame of Civilization* (and later of *Air: The Restless Shaper of Our World* and *Sprout Lands: Tending the Endless Gift of Trees*).

The D'Arros meeting was extraordinary on so many levels, from the purity of the blue sea surrounding the small island to the red coral from the ocean floor that was washed up on the beaches as a result of the ferocious tropical storm we were privileged to experience. In the early morning after the storm, I eagerly gathered up some twenty small egg-shaped coral masses and red coral-encrusted sea-shells. In my suitcase, wrapped in underwear, they escaped the eyes of customs at the airport. Today, on a celadon platter in our New York living room, they greet their modest sister waters of the Hudson River,

thirteen floors below. In addition to the ocean's gift of coral from the tropical storm was the parallel gift of fantastic tropical fish—immense and multicolored—with whom I swam fifty feet from Prince Shahram's beaches. A foretaste of heaven!

The prince's house was both simple and exquisite. All of our morning meetings from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. took place in a comfortable library, with one wall open to a large swimming pool sloping down to the ocean immediately beyond.

The prince's next environmental project in order "to save the world," the Threshold Foundation, gave its first award to my friend Dr. John Todd, chairman emeritus of the department of environmental sciences at the University of Vermont, whom the prince saw again in London a year after our first meeting in D'Arros. The new foundation was established to study first all of the environmental problems of agriculture and forests for the other islands of the Seychelles besides D'Arros. Over the years, John Todd has received virtually every environmental award in America, including the Buckminster Fuller Challenge Award in 2008. But Prince Shahram's award was his first.

Before 1973, I don't remember ever hearing the environmental word ecology, from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning "house." Today our house is the whole Earth, the green globe itself. I neither knew what ecology meant, nor was I aware of the beginnings of a very serious movement to avoid environmental disaster. Today, everyday Americans' "green thinking" could not be more vitally needed, even if in 1973 it was almost unknown.

In addition to the rich diet of green sermons as part of the Sunday morning liturgy, I also sought a powerful visual image of the late-20th century's cities where many different races, cultures, and religions all live together. I held the earnest hope for articulating human diversity together with the new scientific understanding of the physical world. The miracle that blossomed from this period of

green sermons, conferences, and concerts was the conceptual joining of these words: universe, global, world, environment, diversity, and green. Out of the crisis of the environment a new visual image and paradigm was born—green unity containing global diversity.

The green cosmos itself became easily understandable by the 1972 release of the NASA photographs of Earth seen from the moon, which immediately became the icon for every school child worldwide—the instant visual understanding of the earth itself as vast, personal, sacred, green, and our home.

The formerly abstract philosophical concepts of unity and diversity became instantly concrete with the NASA icon of Earth from outer space. It demonstrated before our very eyes the reality of unity composed of infinite diversity—powerfully displayed in beautiful blues and greens, whites, browns, and yellows on banners and posters and millions of t-shirts around the world. Just as the medieval rose window had become a recognizable symbol of the new cities of the 13th century, so the photograph of planet Earth from the moon made instantly understandable the scientific, the humanistic, and even the spiritual and aesthetic reality of our new planetary urban home of immigrants, from every island and continent with their infinitely differentiated cultures, races, and religions. The new Earth icon said, “We’re all in it together, in all our beautiful diversity.”

THE EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT and appreciation of the new Sunday eleven o’clock worship was impressive, with sermons not only by the bishop, dean, and Cathedral canons, but also the world’s greatest spiritual leaders of all religions, plus scientists, green environmentalists, artists, political leaders, and Native American chiefs. The response in numbers was truly amazing, and with such appreciation. The cry then arose: “Let us have lunch with these wonderful preachers! Questions and answers with them!”

GREAT SERMONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT WERE DELIVERED AT THE CATHEDRAL IN THE YEARS BETWEEN 1975 AND 1996 BY:

Thomas Berry

William Irwin Thompson

John and Nancy Jack Todd, with Greg Watson

Mary Catherine Bateson

Paul Gorman

Chief Oren Lyons

René Dubos

Maurice Strong

Paul Mankiewicz

Jeff Gollhofer

Amory Lovins

James Lovelock

Carl Sagan

Lynn Margulis

Chief Jake Swamp

Al Gore

David Brower

Medicine Man Tulley Spotted Eagle Boy

Matthew Fox

Margaret Mead

Fritz and Vivienne Hull

Gregory Bateson

William McDonough

Gerry Piel

Milenko Matanovic

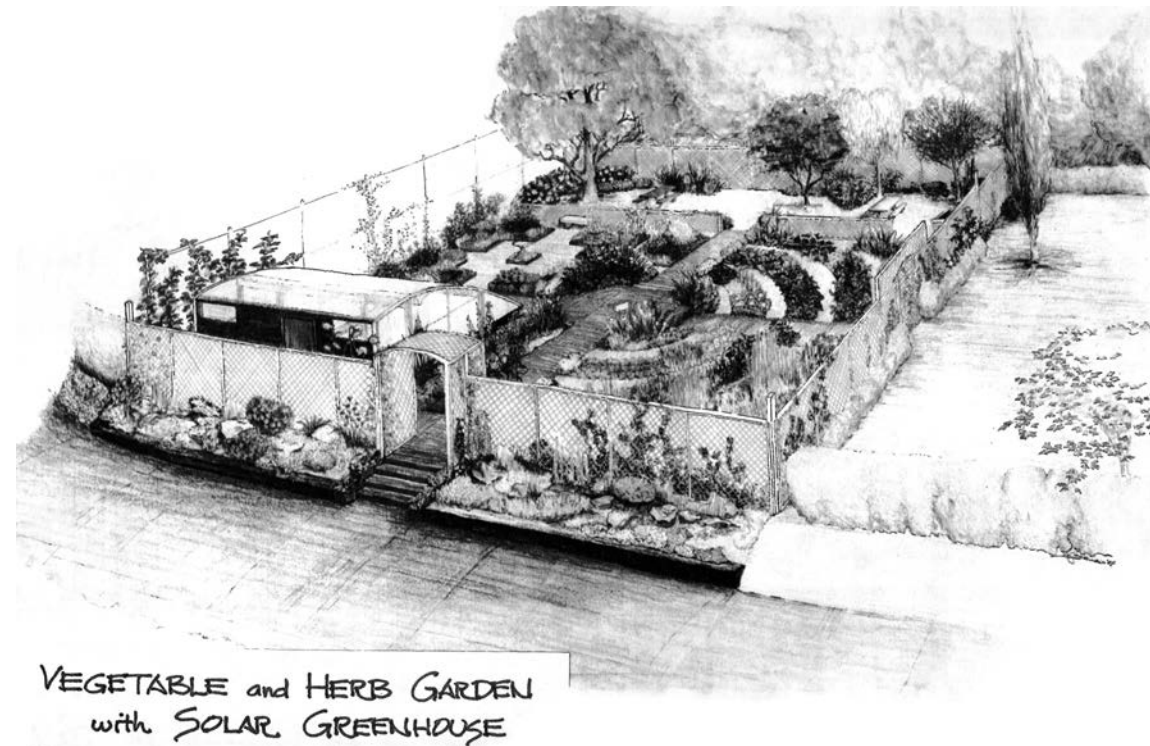
Lewis Thomas

Buckminster Fuller

Marc Greenberg, the chairman of the Cathedral's new environmental group, the Earth Community, gave the first answer: "We will provide lunch every two weeks in the conference room in Cathedral House!" Also, at least twice a month, we took over the back room at the V & T Pizza Restaurant, across Amsterdam Avenue. It was always Dutch treat (except for drinks—soda and Italian red wine—thanks to the dean's discretionary fund).

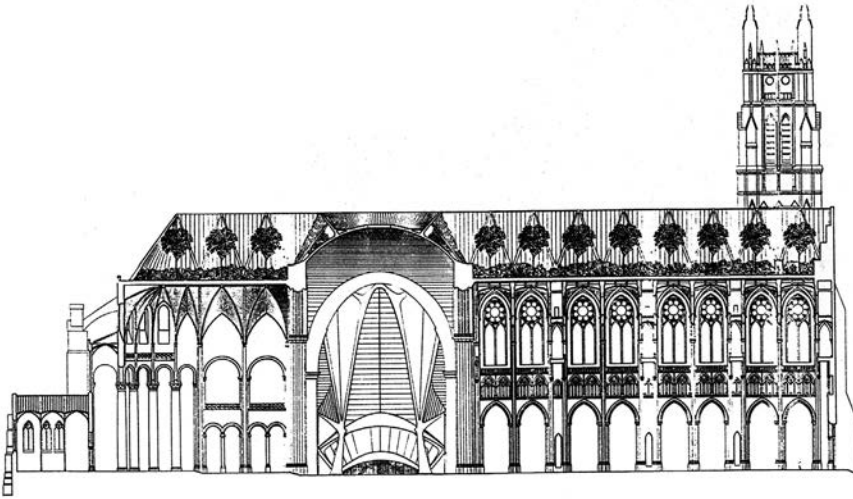
And while the Sunday morning sermons were inviting the congregation and guests to consider and celebrate new ways of engaging with the earth, exciting projects were developing on the grounds of the Cathedral. The urban bioshelter project on the south side of the close began when Carrie Maher and Jane Churchman, who cared for the Cathedral gardens, met together with architects Mark Greenwald and Bill Kinsinger, as well as Jeff Twine and Paul Mankiewicz, to build an urban version of John and Nancy Todd's New Alchemy Institute bioshelter in Falmouth, on Cape Cod. The bioshelter and its gardens were raising vegetables for food programs and also housed a fish tank with tilapia brought by John Todd. Jeff Twine established a recycling center on the south side of the Cathedral, which introduced to a large neighborhood what would become, in time, a model for city recycling regulations. And Paul Mankiewicz was developing lightweight rooftop soil for growing vegetables on urban roofs. In time he also designed and built, in the Earth Bay on the south aisle of the nave, an amazing small eight-by-fourteen-foot garden of long grasses with a six-foot tank filled with beautiful catfish swimming cheerfully inside the holy space of the world's largest cathedral.

Paul Mankiewicz founded the Gaia Institute at the Cathedral in 1985 after conversations with Prof. René Dubos, who believed that New York City should have an institute focused on basic restoration of the environment. The Gaia theory posits that the organic and inorganic components of planet Earth have evolved together as a single



The Cathedral garden with solar greenhouse, 1984  
credit: Mark Greenwald

living, self-regulating system. The hypothesis was formulated by the chemist James Lovelock and codeveloped by the microbiologist Lynn Margulis in the 1970's. Lovelock named the idea after Gaia, the primordial goddess who personified the earth in Greek mythology. Starting in 1985, and for better part of the decade, the Gaia Institute organized monthly seminars, workshops, and presentations at the Cathedral on the intersection of biology, ecology, and the living fabric of the city. With collaborators in major universities—as well as city, state, and federal agencies—the institute developed programs for composting of organic wastes and using water runoff to restore native plants on the Cathedral grounds, along the Bronx River, on rooftops, along streets, and in degraded green spaces throughout the city and the region.



Cross-section of the Bioshelter in the Cathedral

photo credit: Santiago Calatrava

*Jim Morton's interest in the "greening" of the cathedral kept evolving into the 1980's with conceptual designs for a larger Bioshelter to be built at the south transept of the Cathedral. The south transept had never been completed in the first Cathedral building campaigns of the late 1800's and mid-1900's. Working with environmentalists Mark Greenwald, John Todd, and Vermont-based architect David Sellars, Jim envisioned a grand greenhouse transept with water reclamation, food production, and air purification filters, enveloped in a Gothic Revival structure which would complement the rest of the Cathedral's nave and crossing spaces.*

*After a few years of gestation, in 1990, Jim and the Cathedral received a substantial grant to develop the Bioshelter project from the René Dubos Foundation. At this time, I was working as the Cathedral's architect-in-residence and was asked to be project manager for an international Bioshelter design competition using those funds. This competition was envisioned as a way to explore in further depth the concept of the Cathedral becoming a showcase for the burgeoning environmental movement. This Bioshelter was to have a spiritual home at the Cathedral, in the middle of urban New York City. We assembled a team of jurists for the competi-*

*tion, which included Lily Auchincloss, Philip Johnson, the Rev. Dr. Robert Ray Parks, David Childs, and John Todd. In mid-1991, sixty-five architects from around the world were invited to submit proposals. Of these, six semi-finalists were chosen to submit designs. These included Santiago Calatrava, Antoine Predock, and Tadao Ando. Calatrava's scheme was the unanimous choice of the jurists. According to Philip Johnson, "there wasn't a moment's discussion" to award the prize to Mr. Calatrava.*

*Calatrava's vision for the Cathedral Bioshelter was taken from the architecture of the Gothic Revival structure. His design was also inspired by the shape of bones and a tree's branch and root system. He proposed an elegant south transept for the Cathedral and imagined the entire nave attic also being incorporated into the greenhouse space of the Bioshelter. Calatrava went on to have a large scale model made of the Bioshelter design, including a tall tower over the Cathedral crossing! This spectacular (and expensive) model was exhibited in a show of Calatrava's work at the Museum of Modern Art in 1993.*

*John Barton, 2020*

A significant new organizational development—resulting from the years of environmental sermons and the five-way collaboration between Carl Sagan, Al Gore, Prince Shahram, Paul Gorman, and myself—was the creation of a new American organization, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. The offices were at the Cathedral, with Paul Gorman serving as executive director. The handsomely funded new nonprofit organization consisted of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Shinto, and Sikh religious leaders. Each of the American religious groups was to develop or assemble

its own environmental materials and hire its own program consultants to serve the thousands of local American houses of worship. Its legacy today is the multitude of creative, local, on-the-ground green programs all over America.

In 1988, we brought to the Cathedral U.S. Ambassador Angier Biddle Duke; Claus Nobel, grandson of the founder of the Nobel Prize; and Akio Matsumura, from the United Nations. Each of the three men had been deeply involved in global development and population issues. Their new goal was to create a first-class series of global conferences on the worldwide crisis of the environment, led by the world's most respected and creative environmental scientists and political leaders—and (perhaps surprisingly) with the active participation of the world's major religious and spiritual leaders. My first task, teamed with Akio Matsumura, was to secure the involvement of the world's most distinguished environmental and interfaith leaders.

The new project, named the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders on Human Survival, was created as a nonprofit organization to develop and sponsor a top-level series of four international weeklong environmental conferences with the new solar, green, interfaith focus. The modest Prince Shahram was invited and attended all four conferences.

The first Global Forum on Human Survival was held for 500 participants in April 1988, at Oxford's Christ Church College. This powerful first conference included spiritual leaders Mother Teresa, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Cardinal Franz König, the Grand Mufti of Damascus, several Anglican cathedral deans, Native American leader Chief Oren Lyons, and the High Priest of the African Rain Forest. Scientists included Carl Sagan, Fr. Thomas Berry, James Lovelock, and a large scientific delegation from President Gorbachev, along with current parliamentarians from twelve countries, including United Nations Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar and top staff from the UN.

The two joint co-chairs of the conference series were Senior Senator Sat Pal Mittal of India with myself from the Cathedral, representing the two political and religious constituencies.

The Soviet response to Oxford had been so enthusiastic that in 1990 President Gorbachev invited the forum to Moscow in ice-cold January for its second conference, the Global Forum on Environment and Development for Survival. This time 1,200 participants attended, with large groups from Africa and the Soviet Union. Vice President Al Gore's strong visual presentation, which later led to his documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*, impressed everyone, including the five U.S. Senators and the artists and scientists from Russia, Europe, and the United States. We also were able to include, to everyone's immense delight, six New York City public high school students, who were paired with six English-speaking high school students from Moscow!

All major sessions took place in the Hall of the Soviets, with a dominating statue of Lenin presiding above the podium. At the end of each working day, we were all treated to a magnificent cocktail party with vast quantities of iced vodka and caviar.

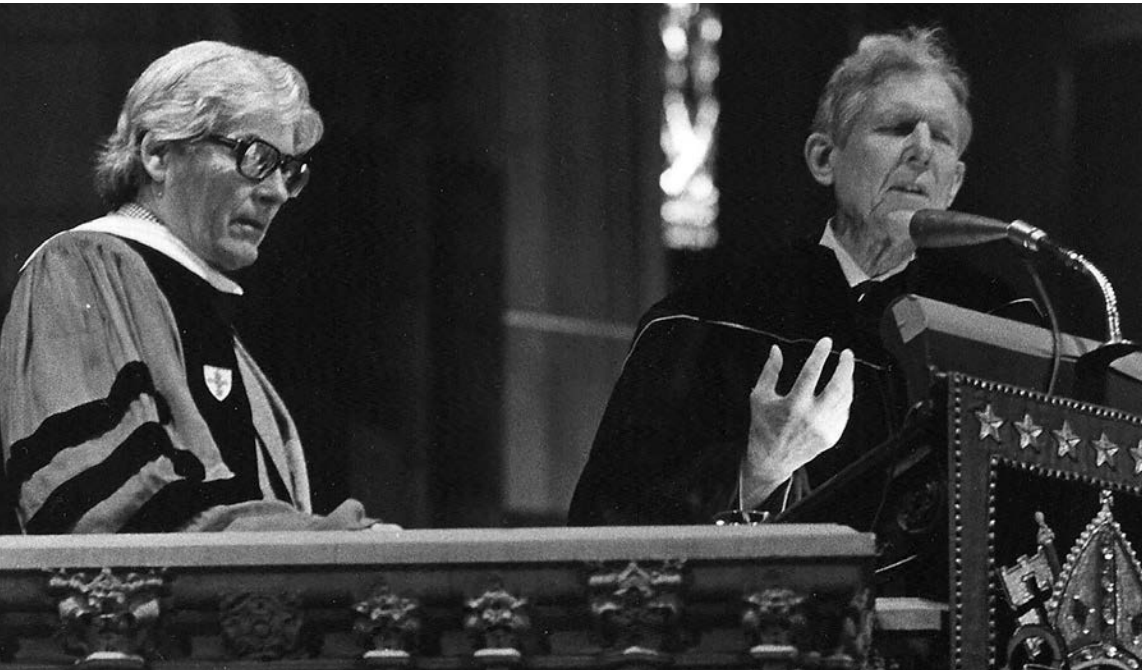
The third meeting of the Global Forum was held in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, in conjunction with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (also known as "Earth Summit"). The Cathedral's new environmental publication, *City and Planet*, was copyrighted in 1990 and distributed at the Rio conference in 1992.

Also in 1992, the fourth and final conference, Value and Change for Global Survival, was held in Kyoto, Japan, with far-eastern participation organized by Oomoto.



With Mother Teresa at the Oxford conference  
photo credit: Mary Bloom





James Lovelock and Fr. Thomas Berry  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

Wildness is the root of all creativity and spontaneity. We will recover our sense of wonder and the sacred only if we experience the universe itself beyond ourselves as the primary sacred reality, the primal energy that reveals the numinous presence from which all things come into being. The entire universe is comprised of subjects for communion, not objects for exploitation. The single community of life (human and non-human) is the central issue of the “great work.”

Therefore, our greatest discovery for the future will be human intimacy with other modes of being that inspire art and reveal the numinous.

Such is the great work that remains before us. Thank you, Tom!

“You and I are earth,” Fr. Tom Berry drummed into our ears and brains with his green sermons preached at the Cathedral. Our bodies and brains and spirits are the earth. Our food and air and water are earth. Everything we see and share—trees and animals and oceans and mountains and clouds—are earth. And everything we cannot see is earth, too, including our sense of mystery and wonder and “entrancement” (Tom’s favorite word).

*The story of the universe is now being told as the epic story of evolution by scientists. We begin to understand our human identity with all the other modes of existence that constitute with us the single universe community. The one story includes us all. We are, everyone, cousins to one another. Every being is intimately present to and immediately influencing every other being.*

*Fr. Thomas Berry, The Great Work, 2009*



Philippe Petit on the high wire  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

## The Farewell Celebration

The concluding description of the Cathedral's artistic, environmental, and spiritually universal commitment is a brief account of my last night as the seventh dean of St. John the Divine on New Year's Eve, 1996, a night shared by Boutros Boutros-Ghali's last night as UN secretary-general—with both him and his wife, Leah, in attendance. I officially retired as dean one week later on my birthday, January 7, 1997.

It was the annual New Year's Eve Concert for Peace, begun in 1980 by Caroline Stoessinger and Leonard Bernstein. This night, Lukas Foss conducted the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Ossie Davis read from Abraham Lincoln, Odetta sang "This Little Light of Mine," and, at midnight, the vast assemblage with lighted candles rose and sang "Auld Lang Syne."

The lights dimmed into total darkness. A drum roll from Abdel Salaam broke the silence and a spotlight focused on a strange bridge-like construction of bamboo under the dome—the work of Cathedral environmental sculptor Stephen Glassman. The wailing sound of Paul Winter’s soprano sax next joined the drumroll, followed by the crashing chords from Dorothy Papadakos on the great organ.

Then silence again.

The spotlight brightened along with the swell of the organ, sax, and drum, as the slim figure of Philippe Petit emerged from the bamboo thicket and slowly ascended a diagonal cable stretching upwards across the nave to the great pier opposite some fifty feet above the floor. Here Philippe fixed his balancing pole and then rappelled upward against the granite pier to a second horizontal cable stretching seventy-five feet above the nave floor to the north pier opposite. Philippe, with his second balancing pole, then proceeded slowly to the middle of the cable, where he knelt and then lay down for his traditional mid-course nap.

As always, everyone gasped in terror and delight. Philippe then sat up and sprinkled a handful of sparkling gold dust in the air. Next, he stood erect on the wire and saluted the congregation. The music swelled to a roar as Philippe completed his walk, which indeed crowned the evening—and also my marvelous twenty-five years as dean.



Last days at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1996

photo credit: Mary Bloom

*back row from the left:*

William Friedman, David Shontz, Sophia Morton, John Barton, Hilary Shontz

*middle row from the left:*

Polly Barton, James Shontz, Jeremy Barton, James Morton,  
our corgi Pepe, Pamela Morton, Maria Morton

*bottom row from the left:*

Sage Barton, Virginia Barton, Harry Shontz

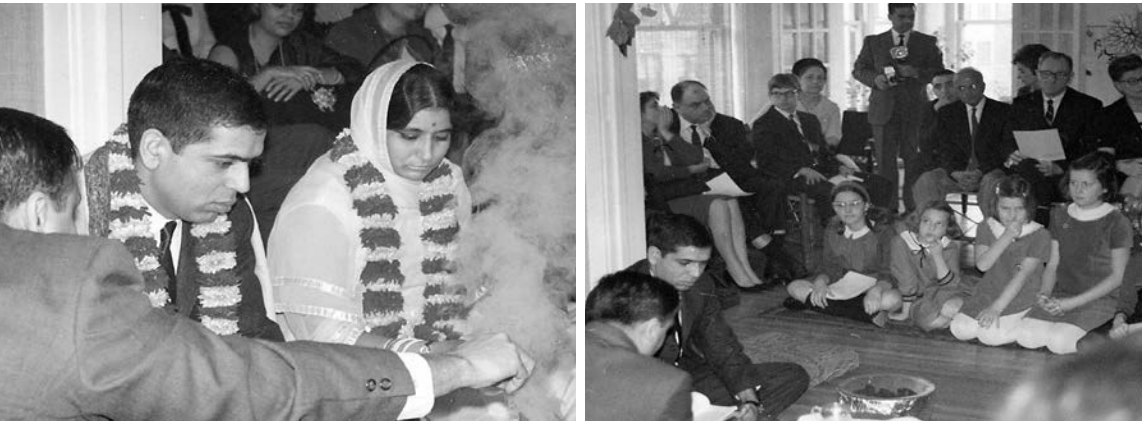


Call to prayer  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

# Safeguarding Diversity

Globalization and diversity are closely related. Globalization was a relatively new word in January 1997 when the Interfaith Center opened its doors, a word used first in the world of bankers and by climate and environmental scientists. After the political upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Russia, Ukraine, Central Africa, Afghanistan, and Iran—and back again to Syria—globalization underscores the planetary context of diversity itself in which many forms of difference in race, language, government, and religion all coexist.

We must learn to live peacefully and with respect for the diversity throughout God's creation. Diversity is God-given. But diversity in religion often seems hard to understand. Does the fact of many religions mean many corresponding gods? How many?



The wedding of Mira Bhandari and Brij Aghi, 1966

photo credit: family collection



MY INTEREST IN THE WORLD'S various religions beyond my own Episcopal life experience within the eighteen-fold banquet of Christian diversity—Anglican, Armenian, Apostolic, Baptist, Calvinist, Congregational, Eastern Orthodox (Greek, Russian, Serbian, Syrian), Episcopal, Evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Quaker, Roman Catholic—began most seriously in the 1960's with our family's eight years of living in Chicago. It began with Hinduism, thanks to our "adopted daughter" from India,

Mira Bhandari, who lived with us in Hyde Park while working on her PhD in psychometrics at Loyola University. Mira soon met Brij Aghi, also from India and studying at the University of Chicago's business school. They were married by the Rev. C.T. Vivian (Martin Luther King's Atlanta Baptist colleague) in our Chicago living room, festooned Indian-style with garlands of fresh flowers in ice-cold January. It was followed by a traditional Hindu wedding ritual, with a Hindu priest, complete with a blazing fire to invite Lord Krishna into the

ceremony! Since we didn't have a proper Indian wedding fire bowl, we improvised with our modest Japanese cast-iron hibachi grill, normally used in the summer for cooking over an open fire.

Pamela and I and our daughters have often stayed with Mira's and Brij's extended families in both Mumbai and Delhi. Mira and Brij's daughter Promila lived with us at the Cathedral in New York when she studied at Columbia University. Today Promila and her husband, Aseem, live in Northern California—as do Promila's sister Vasudha and her husband, Nakul. This felt like globalization and diversity close to home.

Moving from Chicago to New York in 1972, my first commitment was to make the Cathedral of St. John the Divine function like its medieval forebears: as the holy place for the entire city. But this commitment also demanded a reality check. New York by 1972 had become home to vast numbers of virtually all the world's many different religions, whereas the congregations of the great 13th- and 14th-century European and English cathedrals, like their cities, were largely Christian, with only small Jewish and Muslim minorities.

We honored St. John's Anglican heritage, but at the same time we also welcomed the world's most creative spiritual leaders of different religions as members of God's one family. It was through their offering of prayers that the spiritual treasures of Islam, Buddhism, and of the Japanese and Native American religions all became vital dimensions of my own personal interfaith life. Today I say my daily prayers in English, Hebrew, and Arabic every night—and even mornings while waiting for the No. 5 bus on Riverside Drive—wearing a black bear's tooth around my neck instead of a gold or silver cross.

When I retired from the Cathedral in 1997, that bear tooth necklace had been a farewell gift from my interfaith pal Tulley Spotted Eagle Boy, medicine man of the Micmac Nation, whom I first met through our mutual friend Ann R. Roberts. Tulley became a Cathedral

interfaith honorary canon, and on Sundays he would often join me at the altar; after I gave the sacred bread and wine to communicants, Tulley would gently bless each person with his sacred eagle feather, reminding us of our sacred connection to the earth.

ON OCTOBER 14 IN 1979, my seventh year at the Cathedral, and two hours after the Dalai Lama's first sermon in America, Juliet Hollister asked me to become the president of the Temple of Understanding. We had first worked together in 1975 when the temple and the Cathedral jointly hosted the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations at St. John's, but my serving for eighteen years as president of one of the world's earliest interfaith organizations really gave me some practical insight into how an organization devoted exclusively to New York City's own religious diversity might function.

Fifteen years later, in 1996, when I was planning to retire from the Cathedral, my friend Alan Slifka, president of the Big Apple Circus and my first Jewish trustee at the Cathedral, said to me: "New York, more than any city in the world, needs an interfaith center. After your twenty-five years at the Cathedral, you could do it!"



Opening the Interfaith Center, 1997;  
ICNY logo designed by Damon Torres  
photo credit: ICNY archives

So the Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY) came into legal existence on my sixty-seventh birthday, January 7, 1997, with Alan as the chairman of the board, myself as the president, and its earliest directors: Stephen Kellen (Unitarian); Joumana Rizk (Eastern Orthodox); Martin Tandler, Denise Rich, and Shelley Rubin (Jewish); Mary Jane Brock (Episcopalian); Carina Courtright (Roman Catholic); and Walter Beebe (Presbyterian)—all long-time Cathedral trustees and regents.

## The Mission Statement of the Interfaith Center of New York

*The Interfaith Center of New York seeks to make New York City and the world safe for religious differences by increasing respect and mutual understanding among people of different faith, ethnic, and cultural traditions and by fostering cooperation among religious communities and civic organizations to solve common social problems.*

My twenty-five years at the Cathedral, with many of the world's most interesting religious leaders of different faiths, United Nations officials, environmentalists and artists-in-residence, combined with my earlier sixteen years of community organizing in Jersey City and Chicago, all together served as useful preparation for the Interfaith Center's first years of operation.

The new center's first home in 1997 was on the twenty-fifth floor of an office building on Lexington Avenue at 51st Street. It was both spacious and, mercifully, rent-free, thanks to the generous contribution of Lewis Rudin, the building's owner. He was a regent of the Cathedral and business partner of Ben Holloway, Cathedral trustee and chairman of the Cathedral's building campaign.

Our earliest staff members (besides myself and Peggy Harrington, my assistant from the Cathedral) were Lorraine Mai, a community organizer from the staff of the New York Open Center, and Ted Pardoe, an old Cathedral friend and New York banker who served as a part-time intern. Our first Muslim staff member was Timur Yuskaev, a graduate student from St. Petersburg who had written his Russian college thesis on African-American community organizing. Timur had just arrived in New York and had, miraculously, read the jobs section of *The New York Times* about the new Interfaith Center looking for interfaith staff.



Prayer for the work of the United Nations General Assembly  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

My long-time relationship with the large Shinto community in Japan created enthusiastic financial support for the new center, as well as one Japanese program staff member and two Shinto interns, one from Oomoto and one from Shumei.

An enthusiastic board member and early supporter of the new center was Kusumita Pedersen, professor of history of religion at New York's St. Francis College—a scholar of the interfaith movement and the first staff officer of the Temple of Understanding. She introduced me to Matthew Weiner, a student at New York University. Matt and I became friends, and he decided that interfaith work was his future. After completing graduate work in interfaith studies, Matt is now an

associate dean at Princeton University's office of religious life, and Timur directs the Islamic studies program at Connecticut's interfaith Hartford Seminary.

In February 1997, the new center held its first public program, *The Poor are Credible*, with an address by Prof. Mohammed Yunus, founder of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, one of the world's first micro-finance institutions. That first program on poverty was also, ironically, held on Park Avenue at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, one of the best-endowed churches in New York City.

At St. Bartholomew's Church in September of 1998, the new Interfaith Center of New York held its first large public event honoring the international interfaith work of the United Nations and its secretary-general, Kofi Annan, together with representatives from New York's Native American, Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian faith communities. The September opening of the UN General Assembly became the occasion for the new center's annual fall program celebrating the interfaith presence of the United Nations.

In the spring, ICNY held its first public interfaith panel discussion, *The End of Absolutism? Religion after the Holocaust*, at the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries on East 79th Street, chaired by the author James Carroll (his bestselling book *Prince of Peace* was inspired by the heroic anti-war protester Fr. Daniel Berrigan) with panelists Elaine Pagels, Prof. Talât Sait Halman, Fr. Daniel Morrissey, O.P., and Dr. Bernard Avishai.



Kaicho Sensei Hiroko Koyama,  
of the spiritual organization Shumei,  
chanting a prayer for peace  
photo credit: Shumei America

In May at St. Bartholomew's Church, ICNY held an exciting and important public artistic celebration of interfaith poetry and music, *The Golden Age of Spain Before 1492: Jews, Christians and Muslims Together: A Shining Example*. The sharing of ideas in song and poetry illustrated life together in Spain before the fall of Constantinople.

The Interfaith Center cosponsored with the Temple of Understanding the Interfaith Awards Dinner. The three awards were presented to the Dalai Lama, Nobel Peace Prize recipient; Mary Robinson, a former president of Ireland who also served as the high commissioner for human rights at the United Nations; and world-renowned musician and peace activist Ravi Shankar.

BEGINNING IN 1998, the center's second year of operation, our small paid program staff, together with consultants and seminary interns, launched an intensive three-day-a-week schedule of visiting and personally getting to know the major religious leaders of the vast communities of recently arrived immigrants. The new communities of Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Afro-Caribbean congregations were located citywide, but predominantly in the Bronx, Harlem, Brooklyn, and Queens. The most important fact we discovered was the diversity within each tradition based on geography, language and culture: Zen (Japanese) Buddhism and Theravada (Sri Lankan) Buddhism and Saudi Islam and West African Islam. Our staff also soon recognized the unique resource that the religious leadership of the new immigrant communities could become if we created programs that were important both to them and also to the secular leaders of the city of New York.

A large grant was given to the Interfaith Center in 1998 in honor of my old personal friend Rabbi Marshall Meyer, whom I had met in 1979 for just such a program of social justice and interfaith

partnerships. Rabbi Meyer was an American whose first synagogue was in Buenos Aires, where he saved hundreds of lives during the Argentinean military dictatorship. He returned to the United States in 1985 to shepherd Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, in New York City, and did so for the rest of his life.



Interfaith Center participants  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

*If we are to guarantee a democratic process, if we are to guarantee a democratic society, we must re-educate ourselves to respond to the injustices of our society. We must commit ourselves to the welfare of the polis within which we live. In short, we must be responsible citizens of our society. We must maintain civilized discourse with those who hold contrary views.*

*Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer (1930–1993)*

The first two-day Rabbi Marshall Retreat brought together eighty-five religious leaders on the subjects of immigration and police brutality. We launched the website [interfaithcenter.org](http://interfaithcenter.org) to announce the forthcoming Marshall Meyer Retreat about incarceration. The second retreat was held both at Sing Sing and at the women's prison at Bedford, New York. For most of the participants, both men and women, that experience was their first time spent in a prison all afternoon in conversation with prisoners.

Since 1998, the retreats have provided opportunities for more than 1,000 local New York grassroots religious leaders of diverse faiths to develop strategies for addressing common social justice concerns and to build support networks. Mealtimes and



spontaneous conversations late into the night in the cabin lounges of the Stony Point Center gave participants a chance to get away from the hectic pace of the city and to interact and build relationships in a relaxed and friendly environment. By 2014, the Interfaith Center had organized twenty-nine Marshall Meyer retreats both at Stony Point and at the Interchurch Center in Manhattan, each of which has served between eighty and one hundred participants.

ICNY was joined by interns from the Shumei Community of Japan, working for three- to six-month periods.

IN FEBRUARY 1999, our third year of operation, the center held its first interfaith art exhibition in the gallery section of our Lexington Avenue office. The exhibition was Jan Yoors's photographs of the Roma (Romanian Gypsies), with a lecture by Jan's son, Kore Yoors, who in 1998 collaborated with his father on the book *The Gypsies*.

An all-day conference, Religion and Ecology: Discovering the Common Ground, was moderated by Bill Moyers at the American Museum of Natural History. Among the speakers were Fr. Tom Berry and Brian Swimme, and music was performed by Inca Sun.

THE INTERFAITH CENTER'S CROWNING EVENT OF 1999, to celebrate the eve of the new millennium, took place in August—and not in New York, but in Salzburg, Austria. Earlier in January I had received a telephone call from Philip Glass, my Cathedral good friend of many years. Philip had just received an invitation from the executive director of the Salzburg Festival to compose a choral symphony for that highly esteemed annual musical event. As this was on the eve of the millennium, the music must be a choral symphony with texts reflecting the history of planet Earth, and indeed the history of creation itself.

What an invitation! What a project! So I immediately called the distinguished Dr. Kusumita Pedersen, my Interfaith Center board

## TOPICS OF THE MARSHALL MEYER RETREATS 1998–2010

1998

*Immigration, Police Brutality, Identity, and Youth  
Patterns of Incarceration and the Prison System*

1999

*Youth and the Search for Identity  
Roots of Violence and the Re-imagination of Community*

2000

*The Contribution of Religious Communities to the Education of Children and Youth  
Transformative Justice*

2001

*Youth Leadership and Social Action: An Intergenerational Retreat  
Immigration and Immigrants' Rights*

2002

*Post 9/11 Challenges to New York Religious Committees  
Poverty in New York City*

2003

*Poverty and the Justice System*

2004

*Religious Diversity in New York's Public Square: Religious Accommodation, New  
York's Public Schools and Hospitals; Getting Health Care Access in New York City*

2005

*Religious Communities and Domestic Violence  
Religious Communities and Conflict Mediation*

2006

*Mental Health*

2007

*Faith as a Force for Recovery: Substance Abuse and Addiction  
Cultivating Hope: Planting Seeds of Environmental Justice in New York City*

2008

*Growing Older and Wiser in an Aging City  
Investing in our Future: The Health of Children and Youth*

2009

*Confronting Hate Crimes  
Immigration: From Estrangement to Engagement*

2010

*Building Economic Resilience in Faith Communities  
Building Sacred Space in the City: Religious Freedom in Bricks and Mortar*

member, and asked if she would work with Philip and me on this truly historic project. She agreed. Philip described our work:

*My plan has been for the symphony to represent a broad spectrum of many of the world's great "wisdom" traditions. Working together we synthesized a vocal text that begins before the world's creation, passes through the earthly life and paradise, and closes with a future dedication. We are looking at the moment of the millennium as a bridge between the past (represented by the requiem and embodying the first nine movements up to the moment of death) the present (the bardo, representing the "in between") and culminating in nirmanakaya (the future manifestation of enlightened activity).*

*We have elected to present the original texts (Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Indigenous languages) in one language, English, to show the commonalities with which all these traditions resonate. For a work of this scale it seemed fitting to add chorus, children's choir, and soloists to the usual symphonic ensemble, thereby giving it ample breadth and dramatic capability.*

*Besides being a compendium of reflection on the process of global transformation and evolution, it is hoped that the work will serve as a strong and positive celebration of the millennium year.*

*Philip Glass, 1999*

For several weeks we met together at Philip's studio, and the text slowly came into being in twelve sections:

## TOPICS OF THE MARSHALL MEYER RETREATS 2011–2020

2011

*Creating Safety, Preserving Faith: Religious Leaders Respond to Domestic Violence*

2012

*Together in Service: Building Interfaith Partnerships for Social Action*

2013

*The Challenge of Homelessness: Strategies to Provide Support and Restore Hope*

*Widening the Lens on Community-Police Relations: Comparisons Across Cities*

*Child Welfare and Foster Care*

2014

*Harnessing Spirituality and Religion in End-of-Life Care*

2015

*Coming Home: Faith Communities Supporting Successful Re-entry*

2016

*Youth Speak Out*

2017

*Hospitality in a Time of Hate: Religious Leadership for an Inclusive City under the Trump Administration*

*Faith-Based Lending and Economic Empowerment: Helping Diverse New Yorkers Build American Dreams*

2018

*Multifaith Strategies for Nonviolent Direct Action*

2019

*Welcoming the Stranger: Taking Action Together for Immigrants' Rights*

2020

*Faithful Responses to the Overdose Crisis: Building Congregations and Communities of Care*

*The Climate Crisis and New York Faith Communities*

## LECTURES HELD AT THE CHAPEL OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH AND THE SALANDER-O'REILLY GALLERIES INCLUDING:

*Sensei Bernard Glassman on Buddhism*

*Margaret Leeming on Islamic gardens and city planning*

*William Irwin Thompson on globalization and culture*

*A roundtable discussion on Indigenous rights with United Nations officer Sir Paul Reeves, of New Zealand, and officers of the American Indian Law Alliance, Chief Oren Lyons and alliance founder Tonya Gonnella Frichner*

- I Before the Creation**
- II The Creation of the Cosmos**
- III The Creation of Sentient Beings**
- IV The Creation of Human Beings**
- V Love and Joy**
- VI Evil and Ignorance**
- VII Suffering**
- VIII Compassion**
- IX Death**
- X Judgment and the Apocalypse**
- XI Paradise**
- XII Dedication**

The world premiere of his extraordinary “Symphony No. 5 (Requiem, Bardo, Nirmanakaya)” took place on Saturday, August 28, 1999, in Salzburg, with conductor Dennis Russell Davies and soprano Dawn Upshaw, mezzo-soprano Dagmar Pecková, tenor Michael Schade, baritone Eric Owens, and bass-baritone Albert Dohmen. It was first performed in New York in 2000 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

THE 1999 LECTURES AT ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S CHAPEL INCLUDED:

Dr. Hans Küng

“Human Responsibility for Human Rights”

Dr. Eugene Linden, critically acclaimed *New York Times* journalist and author  
*The Future in Plain Sight: Nine Clues to the Coming Instability*

Ursula Goodenough, professor of biology and one of America’s leading cell biologists  
“The Sacred Depths of Nature”

Jean-François Revel, French philosopher, and his son Matthieu Richard, Buddhist monk  
“The Monk and the Philosopher”

Author Jeffrey Potter and Jungian analyst Ethne Gray  
“The Painter Jackson Pollock: The Man and His Faith”

Author Lorene Cary and sculptor Lorenzo Pace  
“Over Burning Fields of Truth: The African-American Experience”

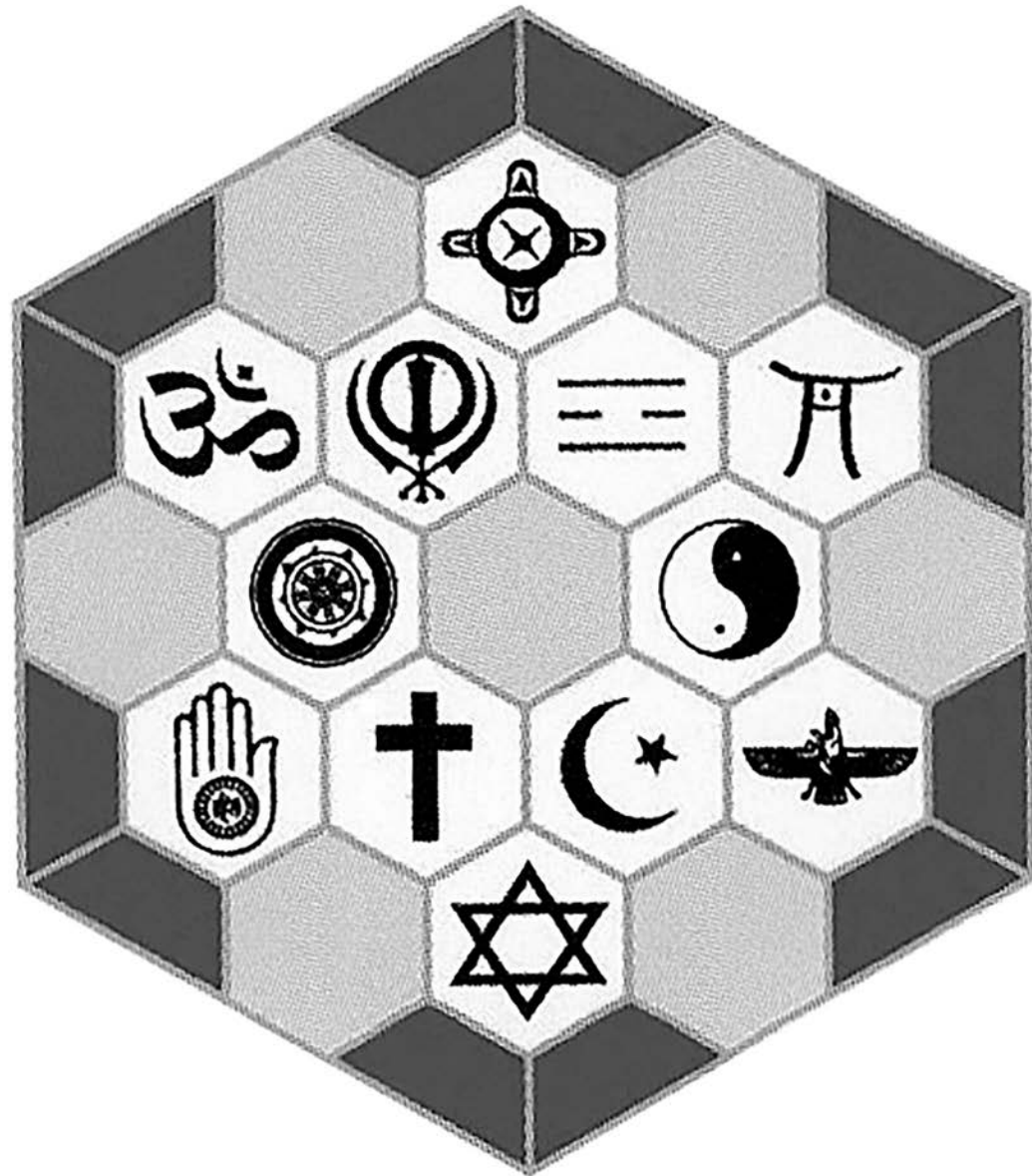
Imam Ahmed Kostas  
“Spirituality in Islam”

THE SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE

Dr. James Cone

“A Dialogue for Today: Martin and Malcolm”

The Lincoln Center fountain plaza was the site of an outdoor Japanese drumming concert by the Shumei Taiko Ensemble.



ICNY logo designed by Damon Torres

# Toward Transformative Justice: A Chronicle

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In January 2000, in honor of the new millennium and with generous grants from the Oomoto Foundation of Japan, as well as the late Robert Tobin (a new Interfaith Center trustee from San Antonio, Texas), the center moved to 40 East 30th Street. The space was a large street-level, former Persian rug store located on two levels. This allowed the center to have a gift shop, art gallery, lecture hall, eighteen offices, two conference rooms, and a meditation room.

In June of that same year, the center presented an all-day conference called The Muslims of New York, the first in a series on the historical, cultural, and theological diversity within each major religion in the city. Several different Muslim religious leaders led the new conference format for the audience of 150 non-Muslim religious and community leaders.

In August of 2000, the United Nations cosponsored with the World Council of Churches and the Interfaith Center of New York the weeklong Millennium Interfaith Peace Conference for 1,000 international religious leaders. The meetings took place at the United Nations General Assembly and at the nearby Waldorf Astoria hotel.

In September of 2000, the center's new Onisaburo Art Gallery (named in honor of the cofounder of Oomoto) opened on East 30th Street with generous grants from the Oomoto Foundation and the New York Foundation. The gallery was designed by Stephen Glassman, one of the Cathedral artists-in-residence. *Objects of Joy*, the new gallery's first exhibition, featured twenty-five extraordinary ancient and contemporary works of art from many religious traditions, ranging from classical Greek and Chinese sculpture to a 20th-century, black-and-white ink drawing by Matisse. *Objects of Joy* was curated by Alexandra Munroe, then-director of the Japan Society's gallery and today the senior curator of Asian art at the Guggenheim Museum. The new Interfaith Center on East 30th Street had a very elegant and well-endowed beginning!

In January 2001, the center held a book party in honor of James Carroll, who had chaired the center's first literary panel discussion, *Religion After the Holocaust*, in April 1997, our first year of operation. Carroll's book party for *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* was an urgent conversation between Elie Wiesel, Mary Gordon, and Cynthia Ozick.

Continuing the series on the religions in New York in 2001, there were two all-day interfaith conferences: The Hindus of New York followed by The Eastern Orthodox Christians of New York. The young Interfaith Center became "information central" for New York's Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews, and Christians. The center held two press conferences on September 13 and 15 at the new street-level welcome office.

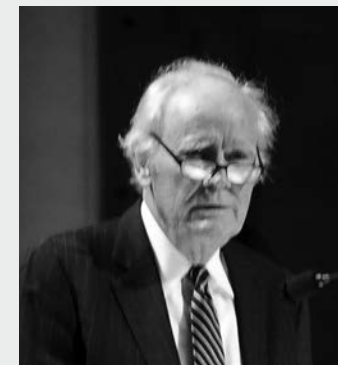
## INTERFAITH AWARDS DINNERS AND HONOREES 2002–2005

2002

William J. Clinton  
*42<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States*

Alan Slifka  
*Interfaith philanthropist*

James Carroll  
*Author*



James Carroll  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

2003

Daniel and Nina Libeskind  
*Architects and winners of the master plan design for Ground Zero*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu  
*1984 Nobel Peace Prize recipient and former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town*  
(Harry Belafonte and Ossie Davis served as the event's lively twin masters of ceremony)

2004

Santiago Calatrava and Robertina Calatrava  
*Spanish architect / administrator and lawyer*

Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee  
*Actors and civil rights activists*

Judge Shirin Ebadi  
*2003 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Muslim judge, lawyer, and human rights activist*

Philippe Petit and Kathy O'Donnell  
*World Trade Center high-wire walker / partner*

2005

No award—a celebration for the Very Rev. James Parks Morton's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday

The events of 9/11 represented a dramatic wake-up call for America and, indeed, for the world. Overnight, the word “interfaith” had a taken on fresh meaning, and by 2002 the term itself had entered many people’s vocabulary for the first time.

In February of 2002, the center held its fourth all-day conference, Afro-Caribbean Religions of New York, cosponsored with the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute.

The new national visibility of the Interfaith Center led its board to conclude that the time had come for the center to hold an annual first-class fundraising event. Therefore, in June 2002 at the New York Hilton, the initial James Parks Morton Interfaith Awards Dinner reached for the top and honored President Bill Clinton, philanthropist Alan B. Slifka, and author James Carroll. It was, indeed, a new day for the Interfaith Center. James Knowles was the sculptor of ICNY’s James Parks Morton Interfaith Award.

The name and work of the Interfaith Center was brought for the first time into the daily world of many organizations and newspaper readers (not only in New York but throughout the country) by the the events of 9/11, the two nationally televised press conferences held immediately following 9/11, and the fundraiser honoring President Clinton.

Therefore, starting in January 2003—and in response to its new name recognition—the center began seriously collaborating with major civic institutions from both New York City and New York State. First came the New York State Unified Court System, with the goal of fostering good working relationships with the center’s staff, the varied staffs of the city’s community leaders, religious leaders, and the New York State Unified Court System itself. Judges, court officials, and religious leaders from Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan also engaged in roundtable discussions designed to serve the justice needs of all New York’s diverse communities.

## INTERFAITH AWARDS DINNERS AND HONOREES 2006–2007

2006

The Hon. Stephen Breyer

*U.S. Supreme Court Justice*

Dr. Mohamed Elbaradei

*Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and 2005 Nobel Peace Prize recipient*

Richard Gere

*Human rights activist*

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf and his wife, Daisy Khan

*Founders of American Society for Muslim Advancement*

Mata Amritanandamayi (Aamma)

*Spiritual leader and humanitarian from southern India*

2007

Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell

*Environmental, human rights, and interfaith leader and President of the National Council of Churches*

Rev. Kyotaro Deguchi of Oomoto

*Japanese global environmentalist*

Nicholas D. Kristof

*Pulitzer Prize-winning op-ed columnist for The New York Times and global human rights advocate*

Steven Rockefeller

*Educator and global environmentalist, creator of the Earth Charter*

Carl Sagan

*Posthumous award for pioneering work in astronomy, the environment, and interfaith activities*

Paul Winter

*The world’s premier environmental musician*

The Hon. Fern A. Fisher, of Manhattan's Civil Court, was the first justice to address the Interfaith Center's religious leaders and present the many legal topics about housing codes and tenants' rights, and how to navigate the civil court system itself. Later, the center held the first daylong conference, Interfaith Religious Communities and the Court System.

The center held its first weeklong intensive course, Religious Diversity in America, for school teachers and educators in the summer of 2003. The course, now called Religious Worlds, NYC: A Summer Institute for Teachers, is held semi-annually in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities, led by the Interfaith Center's director of programs, Dr. Henry Goldschmidt. With a different tradition studied each morning, and afternoons and evenings in that traditions' shrine or temple, it provides a valuable introduction to the religious worlds of which New York City has so many.

Beginning in September of 2003, the Interfaith Center devel-



Mitsutaka Inui of Oomoto performing Japanese tea ceremony  
photo credit: Oomoto Foundation

oped a new subject format for the three-month training programs on specific international issues, opening with Sacred Waterways, in honor of the United Nations program Year of Fresh Water. There were lectures on water rituals in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and the two Afro-Caribbean religions, Vodun and Santeria. Also very in-

teresting in the Year of Fresh Water was the surprising contribution of our Japanese friends from Oomoto, who sent their Shinto student Mitsutaka Inui (who had lived with us in the Cathedral deanery) to offer Japanese tea ceremony daily at the Interfaith Center. Most delightful of

## INTERFAITH AWARDS DINNERS AND HONOREES 2008-2012

2008

Dr. Vartan Gregorian

*President of the Carnegie Foundation*

Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp

*Rabbi of the Jewish Community in the Hague and Dutch interfaith leader*

His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje

*Spiritual leader of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism*

2009

Thomas Cahill

*Author of How the Irish Saved Civilization in the Hinges of History series, for his book A Saint on Death Row*

Hon. Judith S. Kaye

*Chief Judge of the State of New York*

2010

Philip Glass

*Composer and musician*

2011

Wynton Marsalis

*Composer and musician*

2012

Leymah Gbowee

*2011 Nobel Peace Prize recipient from Ghana*

Abigail Disney

*Filmmaker and philanthropist*



Wynton Marsalis, Chloe Breyer, and her husband, Greg Scholl

photo credit: Mary Bloom

*Your organization's dedication to increase respect and mutual understanding among people of different faiths, ethnicities, and cultural traditions is exactly the same as my ministry through the art of jazz. I was uplifted and encouraged by your recognition of our common interest in this endlessly challenging enterprise. The award itself is beautiful and embodies the Interfaith Center's identity: gritty, sturdy, and elegant. It is eloquently displayed on my dining room table.*

Wynton Marsalis

all was the fact that several of our Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Christian trainees became serious students of Mitsutaka's tea ceremony.

The three-month program in February of 2004, titled The Catholics of New York, celebrated Roman Catholic pluralism. Three pioneering Jesuit theologians—Fr. Jacques Dupuis S.J., Fr. Dan Berri-gan S.J., and Fr. Brian Heir S.J.—gave lectures about Catholic social teaching. Lectures were also presented by Alessandra Belloni, the traditional Catholic artist, dancer, and founder of I Giullari di Piazza, and the historian Dr. Joseph Sciorra, on the living legend of the Black Madonna.

In September of 2004, the three-month program celebrated women's contributions to interfaith work and empowerment. Lectures



Alessandra Belloni,  
of I Giullari di Piazza,  
singing of the Black Madonna  
photo credit: I Giullari di Piazza, Marguerite Lorimer Photo

included the Hon. Ruth Messenger, a leader in New York City's politics, and Dr. Azza Karam, of the United Nations Development Program. Performances included the "The Hair Party" by Urban Bush Women and "Dancing the Goddess" by the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble. The program was completed with Interpreting Our Feminine Symbols (a conversation with Mary McGee, Elizabeth Johnson, and Carol Meyer) and Women, Health, and Healing: Mothers and Daughters, an Intergenerational Dialogue

(with Helen Epstein, our dear Chicago friend Ronne Hartfield, and New York's Anna Blythe Lappé).

The center's opening fall lecture in October 2004, by William Irwin Thompson, was entitled "The Cultural Phenomenology of

## INTERFAITH AWARDS DINNERS AND HONOREES 2013–2016

2013

The Rev. Dr. Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian  
*Civil rights activist*

Sister Pat Farrell, OSF,  
*Past President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious*

Russell Simmons  
*Chair of Foundation for Ethnic Understanding*

Judith Davidson Moyers  
*President of Public Affairs Television*

Bill Moyers  
*Journalist and host of Moyers and Company*



C.T. Vivian receiving his award in 2013  
photo credit: Mary Bloom

2014

Al Gore  
*The 45th Vice President of the United States*

Peter L. Zimroth  
*Senior counsel at Arnold and Porter, LLP, author of Perversions of Justice*

Gaetana Enders  
*Humanitarian*

His Holiness Sri Swami Satchidananda

2015

The Rev. Jesse Jackson  
*Founder and President of Rainbow PUSH Coalition*

Bob Abernathy  
*Editor and host of PBS's Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly*

Jimmy Venturi  
*Founder of ReThink NYC, documentary filmmaker, and urban planner*



Literature.” Bill Thompson had been a powerful intellectual, and even prophetic, force in my twenty-five years at the Cathedral—as well as during the first year of the new Interfaith Center in 1997. A month later, a lecture by New York University President John Sexton, titled “Fire and Ice: The Future of New York City,” finished the year. Little did President Sexton or we at the center know how darkly prophetic his words were regarding the immediate future of the Interfaith Center itself.

The lecture title “Fire and Ice” became painfully accurate in December 2004, when the annual Rabbi Marshall Meyer Retreat focused on the topic of “getting health care in New York City.” But now it was the center itself that was the sick patient. It could no longer pay the expensive monthly rent at 40 East 30th Street. The sad fact of the matter was that this situation hinged on the November death of the center’s principal benefactor, Robert Tobin, of San Antonio, Texas. I was honored to conduct my friend Bob’s funeral in my birth state of Texas, but the trustees of his foundation soon thereafter stopped paying the center’s monthly rent beyond December 2004.

Therefore, in January of 2005, the center was legally (and very painfully) homeless. The center’s reduced staff—consisting of Matt Weiner, Timur Yuskaev, and myself, plus our two volunteer interns, Jimmie Venturi and Whitney Smith—moved the center’s office to the three rent-free rooms in the apartment building of our generous Korean interfaith colleague, Abbess Venerable Myo Ji Su Nimc, on West 96th Street and Central Park West. We also rented storage space in the Bronx for the center’s works of art, office furniture, files, legal documents, and important records of programs.

On Monday, February 21, 2005, together with the Buddhist leader the Venerable Maha Ghosananda, our board member T.K. Nakagaki, and our staff member Matt Weiner, we held a silent Central Park walk for peace through Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s public art installation *The Gates*. A gong accompanied the procession.

## INTERFAITH AWARDS DINNERS AND HONOREES 2017–2021

2017

Preet Bharara

*Former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York*

Anne Rockefeller Roberts

*Founder and president of the Fund of the Four Directions*

The community of Sant’Egidio

*A Roman Catholic global movement of lay people based on prayer, ecumenism, solidarity, and dialogue*

2018

Amina J. Mohammed

*Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations*

Ryan Deitsch and Chris Grady

*Parkland students and cofounders of March For Our Lives*

Mary Jane Brock

*Honorary board member and former board chair, ICNY*

2019

The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry

*Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church*

Dr. Ruth Westheimer

*Sex therapist and author*

2020

Marian Wright Edelman

*Founder of the Children’s Defense Fund*

Anna Deavere Smith

*Award-winning playwright and performer*

2021

Diana Eck

*Professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard University and founder of the Pluralism Project*

Congresswoman Grace Meng

*U.S. House of Representatives, 6th District of New York, sponsor of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act*

*The Gates*

Walk Through the Gates  
photo credit: Hans Li

*The idea for a Walk Through The Gates came when we first saw Christo's Gates unfurled, filling Central Park. We noticed instantly that their orange color was that of a traditional Buddhist monk's robe. Robes are understood as the sign of the Buddha, the sign of peace and possibility and sacredness.*

*Monks we knew had been doing peace walks as a way of calling for peace and moving toward internal peace. Why not invite people to join a silent walk through The Gates as a way of pointing to peace, together as New Yorkers, and engaging the beauty of nature and art?*

*We chose a route and let all of New York know, and, in spite of it being a frozen day, hundreds of people gathered in anticipation. We did not mention the connection to Buddhism but simply invited people to walk in silence and in community with us. With this we were off. We walked slowly, both because of the snow and to enjoy and deepen the silence we shared. Dean Morton and Rev. T.K. Nakagaki led us; Ratan Barua, our Bangladeshi Buddhist leader, and Fr. Stephen Chinlund were there as well. The great Cambodian Buddhist patriarch Maha Ghosananda joined, pushed by a fellow monk, in a wheelchair. Ghosananda had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his monthlong peace walks through Khmer Rouge territory in the early 1990's, and this would be his last walk. There is a photo of Dean Morton smiling at him as they walked together.*

*We walked gently, in silence, under the majesty of trees, bright snow, and The Gates, one after another, ushering us*

*into a new world that we created as we walked. From time to time Rev. T.K would pause, and we would all pause. He would strike his giant bell that was being carried by two disciples, and its sound seemed to come out of the gates themselves. Twilight deepened our silence, as we finally arrived at the pond, which was our destination. We regathered in a half moon to hear blessings from our religious leader friends, including Erol Juase, a Hougan Vodun priest. With this, and as gently, the group dispersed in silence.*

*Matt Weiner, 2021*

Later that year in June, I was invited to the first interfaith colloquium at the Festival of the World Sacred Music in Fes, Morocco. The city of Fes, a very old center of crafts and Moroccan culture, as well as guardian of traditional musical groups performing sacred music, was a discovery for me. The festival continued for several years, involving many countries and continuing to share in interfaith dialogue.

In November, I was part of a delegation spending one week in interfaith dialogue with religious leaders in Damascus and Aleppo, both in Syria, and in Beirut, Lebanon. The delegation met with Greek Orthodox, Armenian, and Catholic leaders, Sunni and Shiite leaders, and the grand mufti of Syria, a remarkable person in a country that was experiencing political turmoil. The delegation included the Rev. Dr. Joan Campbell, Sister Joan Chittister, Dena Merriam, and Swami Premeshananda. The conversations were open and memorable, and the opportunity to see Damascus and Aleppo was unforgettable.

In the next year, 2006, mediation training for religious leaders was established at the center, in collaboration with the Office of Court Administration and the Center for Court Innovation. The following

year, at the invitation of UNESCO, Matt Weiner conducted a presentation of the center's mediation training program in Lleida, Spain. We had finally found a home for the center at the Interchurch Center, a large building at 120th Street and Claremont Avenue, across from Riverside Church and Union Theological Seminary. It was a great opportunity to meet and work with many not-for-profit and religious groups of all traditions.

In August of 2007, the Rev. Chloe Breyer was elected the new executive director of the Interfaith Center. A person of many gifts, she will be a superb director.

And then September 11, at Pier 40 on the Hudson, the Rev. T.K. Nakagaki led a floating lantern ceremony co-hosted with the New York Buddhist Church and New York Disaster Interfaith Services, to commemorate the victims of the World Trade Center tragedy on September 11, 2001. It was a quiet and serene ceremony. Participants inscribed paper lanterns with names of loved ones and other messages. After prayers, music, and mediation by religious leaders, the lanterns were lit to float down the Hudson River. The floating of inscribed lighted lanterns in the waterways is an ancient custom, symbolizing the respect for the lives that have gone before. They can also represent hope for peace and harmony and a world in which no one will suffer.

In January of 2008, the center partnered with the Queens Mediation Center to train Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu youth leaders in conflict-resolution skills. The youths were encouraged to train their peers and to use the training in their own personal familial and school lives. According to one participant, high school junior Prasanna Chittampalli, "I have a lot of fun in role playing as a 'bringer of peace.' I am thinking if it's worth changing my career goals from a marine biologist to a lawyer." In addition to youth mediation, the center held mediation training sessions with religious in Manhattan and the Bronx.

In April, an interfaith vigil titled Prayers for Peace in Tibet was held at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew in New York. There were Tibetan prayers, readings of eyewitness accounts from Tibet, and the reading of a statement from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom urging the Chinese government to respect religious freedom in Tibet.

In 2009, I was invited to a ceremony at the American Indian Community House, at which I was one of several people given a community service award. I was wrapped in a special spirit bear blanket, which I treasure.

Also in 2009 we launched a new Interfaith Center program, Sister Cities International Visiting Fellows. After ten years of strengthening interfaith dialogue on the urban frontlines of one of the most religiously diverse cities in the world, the center has expanded its horizon to share its successful methodology with interfaith organizations doing work in Europe. An exchange of best practices in interfaith work between New York City and sister cities with common cause promises to benefit all participants.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Fund, Inc., the center completed the first stage of surveying interfaith organizations in European urban centers that share with New York City similar religious demographics, security concern, and immigration and globalization challenges.

In the summer of 2008, ICNY staff members visited interfaith leaders in Glasgow, Birmingham, London, Rotterdam, Paris, Frankfurt, and Barcelona who expressed a desire to collaborate. They also invited many faith communities in European cities, including Buddhist monks celebrating Buddha's birthday in Frankfurt, Germany.

After extensive interviewing and mapping out their interfaith activities, ICNY has selected the first two sister cities to participate in the inaugural program. In June, the Dean Parks Morton Visiting Fel-

lows Program welcomed religiously diverse delegations from Glasgow and Barcelona to participate in ten-day seminar that included exposure to the center's programs. This New York-based seminar was then followed up by similar events in Barcelona and Glasgow, in 2010 and 2011. These information exchanges and learning that results from them are building blocks in the eventual establishment of a network of sister cities in the northern hemisphere that share best practices and goals.

IN A LETTER SENT TO BOARD MEMBERS, Chloe Breyer and I explained our stand with the proposal of our board member Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf and how the center could be of use.

#### Letter to the ICNY Board

*In 2010, The Interfaith Center met its greatest challenge since September 11, 2001, with the controversy surrounding our Board Member Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's proposal to build a Muslim community center and prayer space near Ground Zero. The Center's staff and board made media appearances, published op-ed articles, spoke out at community board meetings and presented at public panels in support of Cordoba House.*

*Locally, we found opportunities to highlight interfaith cooperation in favor of mosque projects underway in Sheephead's Bay, Lower Manhattan and Staten Island. We took to the streets and linked arms with faith and community leaders at cosponsored events such as Unity Walk, Liberty Walk, and Building Bridge Coalition Interfaith Walk. Joining top faith leaders at Governor's Island, we stood by Mayor Bloomberg when he delivered his speech supporting religious freedom and the right to build houses of worship. We have had the opportunity to listen to 9/11 families, first responders, and*

#### Towards Transformative Justice: A Chronicle

*neighbors about their fears and concerns provoked by Cordoba House. As of late, we have been asked by the staff of the National September 11 Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center to help secure donations of memorial artifacts to the Museum from families of 9/11 victims who may be underrepresented in the Museum's current collection, including those from Muslim and immigrant families.*

*The debate about constructing sacred spaces gave rise to selecting "Religious Liberty in Brick and Mortar" as the theme of this fall's Rabbi Marshall T. Meyers Retreat. Leading zoning and planning experts, historic land-marking specialists, first amendment rights attorneys, and religious leaders were invited to inform 70 religious leaders on best practices of turning vacant lots or unused religious properties into welcoming houses of worship.*

*Serving as a constructive agent of change, the Center is pairing Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York with local Muslim organizations in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island, and helping to birth lasting relationships based on trust, amicable co-existence, and real benefits to the community. Catholic and Muslim representatives from social service organizations have come together to collaborate on a mutual community-based project. Sharing best practices for food pantries in the Bronx, rehabilitating houses of worship in Staten Island and accessing local services for immigrants in Manhattan are just some examples of projects that have already launched.*

The Very Rev. James Parks Morton  
Founder and Chair Emeritus

The Rev. Chloe Breyer  
Executive Director

THE YEAR 2010 STARTED for me with a celebration of my eightieth year. It was a glorious chance to come together with people with whom I had worked and with old and dear friends. Among them were two lifelong friends who had also been ordained in the 1950's, Ledlie Laughlin and Stephen Chinlund. We have in common a precious legacy from Jersey City days, which has shaped the work we have done in the church and in the world.



Lifelong friends Stephen Chinlund and Ledlie Laughlin  
photo credit: family collection

And there are so many dear friends who have journeyed with me: English friends, Chicago friends, generous and creative trustees and the worshipping community of the Cathedral, the pioneering board members of the Interfaith Center, and the new communities we have come to know: musicians, artists, and writers, all wrestling with the urgent concerns we share.

What a gift to be in the company of these friends!

We had enormous concerns in the spring as our daughter Hilary Morton Shontz became less and less able to sustain her valiant struggle with the effects of Hodgkin's disease. She died in July 2010, leaving her husband and two wonderful sons. Such a terrible loss for us all.

I am the very fortunate grandfather to eight grandchildren; three were born in the new millennium.

And I am in the emeritus period of my life, present at the Interfaith Center and witness to so many important issues and projects.

And the hope that I might complete this memoir.



Baptizing Theo Friedman with Madeleine and Luca Friedman and friends  
photo credit: family collection

*Jim died peacefully at home on January 4, 2020.*

# Afterword

---

I THINK OF MY FATHER at his favorite “perch,” looking out the window, the sun setting beyond the Hudson River. He peers over his collection of rocks, crystals, and corals, icons and statues of the Virgin and the Buddha, each one brought home from his travels carefully stashed in his suitcase. He loved to tell stories about these treasures. They were the memory triggers of his life and beloved friends as he gradually lost his memory to Alzheimer’s.

My father embraced people and spaces, as well as the precious details. He taught me to arrange a bouquet of daisies and black-eyed Susans from our Labelle field. He loved a delicious dinner and a glass of good wine, Oriental carpets, and always beautiful things to look at on the walls. He seemed to find room to love all of God’s creation.

My heroic mother was his anchor. She still is for my sisters and me. How fortunate we have been to have her unfailing memory in helping complete this memoir. I am grateful for the honor of going through these pages with her, as it has reshaped my mourning.

Polly Barton

WITH COMPANIONS FOR THE JOURNEY is the memoir which Jim had written with great attention and affection over a good many years. As his memory failed him, it became difficult for him to continue writing. The memoir had been lost and then found, and he didn’t live to see it completed. After his death in 2020, it seemed important to our daughters and to me that we make it available to his friends and colleagues and family. He so loved the work he had done (whether in Jersey City, Chicago, or New York), his travels abroad, and the companions and mentors with whom he had made the journey of his life. The added vignettes have taken us inside the narrative. Hence, it has become an annotated memoir. May this chronicle of the interests and joys of his work and life be a celebration of the person who wrote it.

Pamela Morton

# Acknowledgements

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ALSO WE ARE GRATEFUL that Jim could share notes from Rabbi Marshall Meyer, Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, and Fr. Thomas Berry.

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TO THE PHOTOGRAPHERS whose work enriches this memoir—Mary Bloom, Beverly Hall, Hans Li, Robert Rodriguez, Ulli Steltzer—we thank you for your generosity. We were sad to learn of Mary Bloom's death on September 28, 2021, yet she knew that her photographs, and those of the other photographers, would be a strong visual presence in the book.

AND OUR VERY SPECIAL THANKS to those who have designed and produced this book: Sarah Hewitt, Eve Tolpa, and Margaret Moore Booker.

WITH OUR LOVE AND ALL OUR THANKS to Sophia and Maria and all the family for their encouragement, as this story is also theirs.

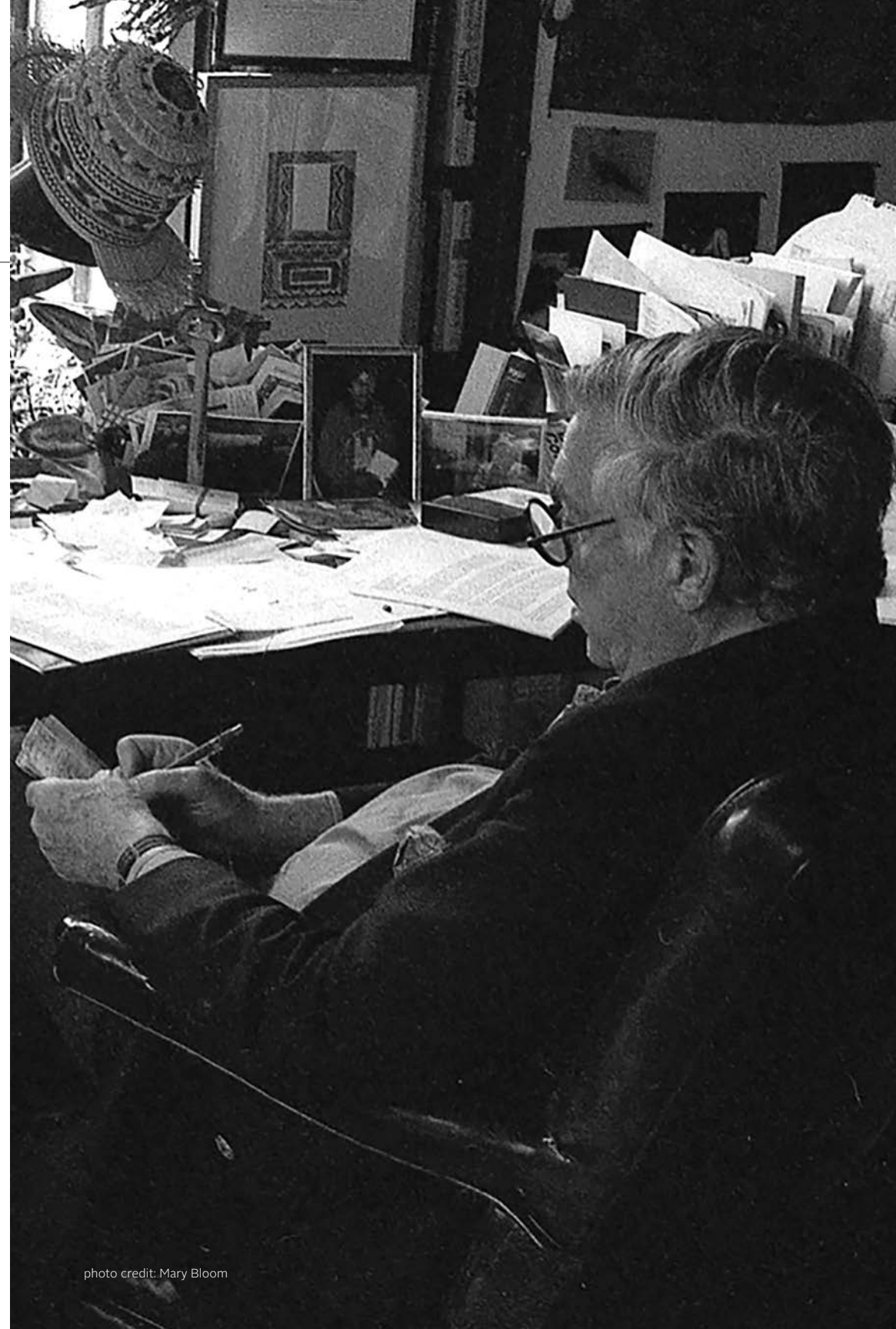


photo credit: Mary Bloom

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