FORMING COMMUNITIES OF RECONCILIATION
THE NATIVITY CENTER FOR PILGRIMAGE AND RECONCILIATION

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This project provides definition, structure, guidance and on-going evaluation for the new Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage ministry located at the Church of the Nativity, Episcopal, in Huntsville, Alabama. The Center was established in the spring of 2004 in order to promote the ministry of reconciliation and pilgrimage that is growing in scope at the Church of the Nativity. The clergy and lay leadership of the Church of the Nativity hope to build a community of reconciliation through the Center’s several facets of ministry. The validity of these efforts is substantiated by a $90,000 grant award from Trinity Church (Wall Street), New York City. The grant’s purpose is for the Center to train a core group of lay persons in the work of reconciliation who will then enable the seeds of the spirituality and the ministries of reconciliation to spread throughout the parish and into the world. Any parish or religious organization interested in the ministry of reconciliation and building a spirituality of reconciliation within the milieu of its community might find this information helpful.

The project begins with an examination of reconciliation and spiritual journey work and their connection to pilgrimage as important facets of parochial ministry in today’s diverse and pluralistic world. The work and ministry of reconciliation is critical to the faithful mission of the Church, as defined by the Prayer Book in the Catechism (page 855), is “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” This charge for ministry is verified in St. Paul’s 2nd Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 17-20.

The project documents the genesis of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation from its initial vision by the clergy (inspired by a small gift of $3,000 from a parishioner to expand lay pastoral care ministries) to its vibrant existence today as an important expression of parish life and ministry. Documentation of the work of two other parishes that have formed communities of reconciliation, Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati, Ohio, and The Cathedral of St. Mark in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is
included in order to broaden the understanding of how the ministry of reconciliation can be accomplished. These two parishes are Community of the Cross of Nails Centers and their ministries of reconciliation stem from their important connection to this well-established organization.

The project reviews the major creative avenues of reconciliation ministries established within the parish community of Nativity and outside the parish for the world through the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation. These different avenues include the important ministry of bringing people together to study and reflect upon reconciliation and pilgrimage through small fellowship groups, as well as opportunities for dialog in larger groups by means of the Church of the Nativity’s “Living In Communion When We Disagree” periodic series. The heart of reconciliation ministry centers in the worship and sacramental life of the church. Opportunities for worship that incorporate the spirit of reconciliation and pilgrimage are outlined, including a documented “Pilgrims’ Eucharist.” A sacred place for reconciliation is described as a visible signpost for this ministry. The importance and theological significance of the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent is also reviewed in Section Five.

One of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation’s defining elements is deep leadership training for lay people, thereby strengthening the commitment to mutual ministry of the laity and the clergy. The training materials for the laity’s participation in these ministries, as we are defining them at the Church of the Nativity, are outlined. In establishing our training materials, we have developed our own materials for Nativity’s unique ministries. Resources from the Caring Ministry of St. John’s Cathedral in Denver, Colorado, and from Stephen Ministry program are utilized.

Eventually, the Center’s plans are to create a social justice outreach component. The project reviews the theology of reconciliation and restorative justice. Our hope is to engage the work of restorative justice as a means of offering reconciliation to the larger society.

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To Tippy, Case, Sally
and the spirit of a Sewanee Dog named Pozzi, now living in Todi
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SECTION ONE

Forming Communities of Reconciliation
The Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation
Introduction

Today’s world offers more opportunities for people and nations to connect than at any other time in history. Technology gives us the tools to communicate rapidly, instantaneously, prolifically to just about anyone on the globe twenty-four hours a day. The media reports news, not exactly before it happens, but at least while it is happening. Cell phones, e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms and GPS make us immediately accessible. And we are allowing ourselves to be invaded constantly, responding with non-stop availability. The global economy and information technology are tying people together across the world in ways never before imagined. We are efficient, fast, and mobile.

But are we talking? Are we really connecting in ways that promote the common good, in ways that build the global community, our personal communities, or our sense of health and wholeness? Information overload and rootless mobility leave us lacking community rather than finding ways to build relationships and community. The world is a smaller place, but we are no better connected in supportive ways than we have been in the past. Some might say we are less connected to others in the human family.
There are more opportunities to exploit others and to fight over scarce resources. We pull back from those different from us in a desperate attempt to force community among those we think are exactly like us and who share the same ideologies. But in a world with exponential possibilities, there are rarely two identical world views and ideologies. New and broad understandings of science, technology, medicine, and human social issues serve to divide us while we grapple with how we can respond.

The followers of Jesus Christ can play a unique role in bridging these many things that are dividing us in the world and in the church. Claiming to be inheritors of the Abrahamic faith in which God forms a people through whom all the peoples of the world will be blessed and know and share God’s blessings of life, we have come to see our mission in the Church to be that of restoring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ (the Catechism from *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 855). Our brokenness and separation are a given. But this is not God’s desired purpose. God wants us to be one with God and each other, and Christians claim that our unity has been made possible in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 5: 17-20:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation: that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

The new creation Paul refers to in Christ is the life that is possible through our unity with the Triune God. We who were separated from God have now been united with God through Christ. This ministry of uniting that which has been separated is the ministry of
reconciliation. Paul further articulates the ministry of reconciliation to God in Christ in Ephesians 2: 13-22 (NRSV):

But now in Christ Jesus you who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

According to Colin E. Guntin, “Reconciliation is one of the few words deriving from the Christian theological tradition to remain in vogue in the secularized vocabulary of modern politics.\(^1\) The idea of reconciliation brings to mind the political situation in South Africa and Northern Ireland. Although reconciliation is about the relationships between human beings, for Christians, its theological roots deem its first importance the relationship between God and the fallen world, especially fallen humanity.\(^2\) It certainly has something to do with our salvation, as Paul notes. But its relationship to salvation is that of mediation. We are restored to a right relationship to God through Christ in a mediative way rather than through the idea of penal substitution.\(^3\) The theological understanding of Triune God is the basis of our reconciliation. Robert Jenson posits that we are reconciled to God and each other because we are invited through Christ’s incarnation into the life of the Triune God. We take on the ministry of reconciliation


\[^2\] Ibid.

\[^3\] Ibid., 2.
because the “the God in whom we live and move and have our being is this God who is
reconciled in himself.” Reconciliation enables our spiritual health and growth because it
restores us to unity with God and thereby to the source of spiritual life and wholeness.
Furthermore, the Catechism clearly states (page 855) that carrying on Christ’s work of
reconciliation in the world is the specific ministry of the laity and bishops and the implied
work of presbyters and deacons since they share the bishops’ ministry. In a word,
reconciliation is the mission of the church.

In a world where much is broken and divided; in a world in which we find it easy to lose
our foundation in anything that grounds us, particularly faith; in a world where home is
hard to know and find; in a world where we have many choices confronting us; we need
the ministry of reconciliation in our lives. We have all experienced alienation and
separation from God and the people we love, from what we want and desire in life, from
what we get. We need Christ’s redeeming and unitive love in our personal lives. But the
world needs reconciliation in many ways: racially, economically, sexually,
ecclesiastically, ecumenically, politically, technologically, medically, nationally, and so
on goes the list. There is much separation and much inequity out there in the nation and
in our global community. If we take God’s covenant with Abraham seriously, we must
claim that we are God’s people in order that God’s life and blessings may be shared with
the world. Jesus asked us to go and make disciples of all people. By his cross, he desired
to draw the entire world unto himself, to make all one with him in God.

4 Robert W. Jenson, “Reconciliation in God,” in The Theology of Reconciliation, ed. Colin E. Gunton
(London: T & T Clark, 2003), 164.
So Episcopalians claim that our mission in the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. Informed by the theologian Karl Rahner, the Roman Catholic Church sees the church as God’s sacrament of unity with the world. Reconciliation is at the heart of the second greatest commandment: love your neighbor as yourself. Reconciliation is at the heart of Jesus’ new commandment, to love one another as he has loved us. He loves us with the reconciling, unitive love that re-joins us to the Father.

*Reconciliation and the Church: The Ministry of Reconciled Reconcilers*

Being reconciled to Christ, we are to be ambassadors of Christ’s reconciling love. We are reconciled reconcilers. Our own reconciliation is accomplished as we claim Christ’s forgiveness, healing, and purposes for our lives. We claim Christ’s forgiveness because we have sinned against God and our neighbor by things done and things left undone. These sins have separated us from one another and from God. Reconciling forgiveness unites us to God and can bridge the gulf of brokenness that exists because of our sins. Reconciliation also enables us to forgive others, for we have been sinned against. Reconciliation can rebuild trust between individuals and groups of people who are separated through sins and sin.
Reconciliation brings healing in body, mind and spirit. It brings wholeness and God’s peace that passes understanding into our lives. Reconciliation also unites our direction in life with God’s purposes for our lives, enabling us to live in communion with the Triune God and with one another. When we are not aware of the Kingdom of God’s values and purpose, and live contrary to those values and purposes, we have separated ourselves from God and from others.

There are unlimited possibilities for reconciliation ministries in the church. Reconciliation can be accomplished through any ministries in the church that assist people in claiming God’s forgiveness through repentance and contrition. Through these ministries people may claim forgiveness for themselves and others, reclaiming dignity that has been stripped away through their own sin and through the sins of others. In this way they find respect for themselves and others. Reconciliation ministries assist with the healing of body, mind and soul, allowing for wholeness and wellness. These ministries bring peace, God’s shalom, that drives away fear: fear of dying, fear of scarcity, fear of brokenness, fear of diminishment. Reconciliation ministries break down barriers and bridge distances internally and externally with others and with the world, between the self and God.

- Reconciliation ministries claim forgiveness for ourselves and others.
- Reconciliation ministries nurture healing of self and of relationships.
- Reconciliation ministries provide purpose, spiritual guidance and renewal by aligning us with God’s purposes.
Reconciliation is a Process

But none of these things happen instantaneously. Reconciliation ministries take effort and involve process, rarely happening instantly, but over time. God undertook a process of reconciliation with the world. Many would say it began with God’s calling Abraham and forming the nation of Israel. God’s reconciliation of the world in Christ involved God’s journey to our humanity through emptying the fullness of the Godhead into our humanity—the process of the Incarnation. God made the journey to Bethlehem in Christ, and then on to Jerusalem through Jesus’ life and ministry. Finally God made the journey of suffering love to the cross and in dying completely gave up the divine prerogative for our deepest and most dreaded human condition, death. But that was not the end of this process of reconciliation. It was completed in resurrection and finally Jesus’ return to the fullness of divinity, taking our complete human condition into the heart and life of the Triune God. So if God’s reconciliation with us in Christ is a process, how much more is ours with each other. Reconciliation is a spiritual journey to wholeness through our unity with God in Christ. It is a life-long process of many reconciliations happening over and over again as we draw closer to God. Reconciliation is pilgrimage, a spiritual journey.

Pilgrimage Experiences

Pilgrimage is a profoundly incarnational symbol, extremely complex and rich in application, rooted deeply in our Christian tradition, yet an archetypal experience for
humanity. Pilgrimage appeals to both body and spirit, to the individual and the community.

Pilgrimages have an avowed spiritual dimension and take many forms, linking them to our above stated understanding of reconciliation ministries. Pilgrimages can be large, public events, or they can be private, individual or small group journeys. Pilgrimages are any intentional physical or spiritual journeys in which one hopes to connect to something outside of the normal course of day-to-day living for wholeness, rejuvenation or understanding.

Any journey from brokenness to wholeness is pilgrimage. Pilgrimage can be undertaken for as many reasons as there are pilgrims, including opportunities for renewal and rejuvenation, quests for understanding in which purpose and new direction is sought, acts of contrition and repentance, opportunities to reconnect with personal or more ancient spiritual roots—a homecoming of sorts. Pilgrimages are a form of worship through which we offer our lives to God and hope to connect to God. We depart upon these spiritual journeys, not merely to arrive at a destination, but rather to return home to a fuller, more complete, even reconciled, life.

The Church could enrich the lives of our people by raising awareness of this pilgrimage metaphor that we all live into regularly. The Church could support the notion of life as a journey by being intentional about offering spiritual resources that tie an unknown pilgrimage into an ever-repeatable opportunity for spiritual growth. Reconciliation
involves spiritual journey—pilgrimage work. Pilgrimages and growing spiritually lead toward reconciliation. Two great ministries of the Church can work together to support our unity in God and our commission to be reconciled reconcilers.

The Church is the Community of Reconciled Reconcilers

As we grow into God’s gift of reconciliation, a community of reconciled reconcilers will develop in which we learn to live in communion with one another in all our diversity and plural ideologies. Communities of reconciled reconcilers will be intentional about unity and learning from each other. Taking the Body of Christ image seriously, we will assert that none of us can claim we have no need of another in the church in spite of differences. The Church community where reconciliation and spiritual growth is taken seriously will build opportunities to remain in dialog with each other. We will learn to respect each other’s spiritual journeys and the work of reconciliation occurring in our fellow pilgrims’ lives. We practice the art of reconciliation with each other and support each other as we move toward wholeness in God. We will talk “amongst ourselves” with graciousness and honesty. Communities that are built on trust and a commitment not to allow differences to keep us from worshiping together cannot be contained within the parameters of church buildings. This love and respect and desire for wholeness and understanding will naturally flow into the community around us. Reconciliation will flow like a fountain into those places in the world where divisiveness and discord keep people from unity with each other and with the source of life.
We Offer to the world that which we have received...

Being blessed with the gift of reconciliation and spiritual union with God, the Church will seek ways to share with the larger world the blessing we have received from God. We will be intentional about looking for places in our communities where brokenness is visible. We can offer the world reconciliation in those places where healing is needed by individuals and groups of individuals who have experienced the alienation of their sin and sins of others. It will not be hard to identify those areas in our own communities. They are numerous if we are paying attention. We will help others find their dignity, their self-respect, and the forgiveness that allows them to move on from a broken past to a future with possibility.

We will also build bridges of communication and understanding leading toward community and wholeness between individuals and groups of people. We will address issues that divide: economic inequity, racism, injustice, religious intolerance, sexuality, gender and political action. We will offer a place in the middle between peoples separated. We will reach out to the world in blessing as we have been blessed.

This work is mammoth. There is no greater task for the world today, because reconciliation gets at the symptoms of all the injustices and inequities and selfishness that keep people from knowing the wholeness and fullness of life and blessing God the Creator has ordained. Many parishes are beginning to claim the ministry of reconciliation as a priority. At the Church of the Nativity, Episcopal, located in Huntsville, Alabama in the Diocese of Alabama, these ministries are receiving priority as
they unfold. This prioritizing is coupled with the understanding that reconciliation is also a spiritual pilgrimage ministry. The parish seeks to be a place of reconciled reconcilers, a community of reconciliation in which the spiritual journey of every member is given credibility and attention. This parish seeks to hold out the model of reconciliation as a spiritual journey out to parishioners through the promotion of certain ministries that lead toward reconciliation and spiritual wholeness. The parish will make these ministries easily accessible and understandable. In addition, through worship and the development of groups that do the hard work of reconciliation through dialog in small intentional reconciliation groups an ethos of reconciliation will permeate the parish. With a reconciliation spirituality, the parish will reach out to the world in creative ways, offering the gifts of wholeness, healing and solidarity and unity to those who seek these things.

This ministry is unfolding, but remarkable things have already happened.
SECTION TWO

The Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation
A Community of Reconciliation Grows

The Church of the Nativity: A Thriving Parish with Significant Ministries

Since 1843, The Church of the Nativity in Huntsville, Alabama, has let the light of the Gospel shine from its corner of downtown Huntsville into the world in remarkable ways. Through the decades, the people and clergy of Nativity have shown leadership in the diocese and wider church. Two of her ten former rectors went on to be Bishops of the Church. Especially knowing her history in the last half century, it is not surprising that ministries of reconciliation are an important aspect of the life and mission of the Church of the Nativity. In the fifties, when the German rocket scientists were brought to Huntsville to initiate the success of the American Space Program, Nativity and Huntsville welcomed these people, who many considered “enemies” of the state, with wide-open arms of hospitality. Many of the Germans became a part of the Nativity community, including Dr. Werner von Braun. In 1959, the ninth Rector, The Rev’d Emile Joffrion, integrated the parish by officiating at the marriage of two African Americans. In the seventies, Nativity sponsored the first woman for ordination to the priesthood in the Diocese of Alabama. She was ordained at Nativity in 1977. In 1988, Nativity was the first parish in the diocese to call an ordained woman to parish ministry, The Rev’d Joy Phipps.
Early in the new millennium, the parish experienced an event of broken trust in the leadership that required extensive healing and reconciliation among differing groups which had different understandings (or no understanding) of the complexity of the situation. The parish was a badly fractured community as a result of serious issues some parishioners had with the previous clergy leadership, whom other members had passionately supported. Allegations were made of an inappropriate relationship between a member of the clergy and the staff. These allegations were made without evidentiary substance and no ecclesiastical action was taken initially, but not before damage was done to the trust level in the parish. Prior to these allegations, a law suit was brought against the parish by a parishioner alleging sexual abuse by a lay leader. The parish leadership at first had refused to respond to this situation. Finally, an undisclosed settlement was made to the parishioner and the case was sealed. But this was not before accusations were made by several different parties regarding past and current activities of certain lay and ordained leaders in the parish. This resulted in the continued depletion of trust. The Rector at that time decided to bridge his retirement with a sabbatical period and left the parish, taking early retirement. The initial interim rector did not work out.

Confidentiality and respect for the families involved do not allow for any more elaboration. The Bishop and his representatives were involved in the process of healing. Extensive work was accomplished among those parishioners willing to engage the process. The people of Nativity have had the opportunity to know, first hand, what it means to be reconciled in Christ. In response to this faithful history, the parish has claimed its role of being a community of reconciled reconcilers.
On May 5, 2003, I began serving as the tenth rector of Nativity. Immediately, I was impressed by the depth of the work of reconciliation the parish had accomplished internally concerning this painful event of widely encompassing yet divergently understood proportions. I was excited by the laity’s leadership in many of Nativity’s ongoing ministries, and I realized that Nativity is thriving because of the commitment by parishioners to significant ministries coupled with their participation in these ministries.

Reconciliation Ministries at the Church of the Nativity

A parishioner approached me in June of 2003 and explained how she and her family had experienced great healing in their lives over generational brokenness that finally surfaced when the family matriarch died. This parishioner and her family had been guided by the Rev’d Kerry Holder on a pilgrimage of healing over family issues that had caused division, anger, and frustration for many years. The parishioner offered a special thanksgiving gift of $3,000 to promote any ministries of the parish that have reconciliation as their goal. I soon discovered that Mother Holder has, throughout her ministry, offered creative pastoral care in which she normatively included embodied ritual as an aspect of whatever healing issues she would face with those requesting pastoral care. This was common in my own ministry, as well, but primarily around the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent. I would often include specific acts of contrition and especially penance that looked toward new beginnings. Confessions might be written
down and then burned after the rite. Water was used for its symbolic references to cleansing and new life (and reminiscent of baptism). For healing and as an act of contrition, I would sometimes send the Penitent to the geographic location of deep-seated sins of commission or omission. If I could link the brokenness in a person’s life to an event in which they had been sinned against, there might be some type of reclaiming of that location as a place of forgiveness, or of re-sanctification.

Further conversations revealed that Nativity had been requested to offer a workshop at the National Children’s Advocacy Center’s National Symposium that was being planned in Huntsville the following March. Nativity was asked to create a labyrinth experience for attendees at the 20th annual National Children’s Advocacy Symposium, the nation’s foremost training conference for those who work for the prevention and treatment of child physical and/or sexual abuse. The labyrinth has been used at Nativity as a spiritual resource for over ten years. Five thousand persons would be in attendance at this conference. The workshop’s goal was to teach advocates working with abused children about a uniquely developed use of the labyrinth as a tool for spiritual healing in an otherwise therapeutic and secular environment. This use of the Labyrinth was developed by Kerry Holder.

Over the past four years, a relationship had developed between the Church of the Nativity and the National Children’s Advocacy Center, headquartered in Huntsville, around healing and reconciliation of sexually abused children. The National Children’s Advocacy Center (NCAC) came to the parish requesting assistance on working with
these children's spiritual pain in a non-sectarian fashion. While the NCAC addressed multiple dimensions of child abuse, (law enforcement, social services, therapeutic approaches, etc.), they did not address the fundamental spiritual pain experienced by these young people. The bodies and the spirits of these young ones had been violated and damaged; consequently, both body and spirit needed healing and reconciliation. The NCAC requested that the Church of the Nativity design and present a non-sectarian model for spiritual healing and life transformation.

The parish provided the model of the labyrinth as a ritual journey from shame and pain into spiritual growth and physical confidence. The labyrinth, as an archetypal symbol that has been used across the globe for 5,000 years, is becoming a recognized tool for healing and spiritual wellness in hospitals and healing institutions (i.e. hospice) from coast to coast and an accepted part of patient care plans. The Church of the Nativity has its own labyrinth and had been making use of it for many years.

From 2001-2003, Kerry Holder, working with therapists at the NCAC, utilized the labyrinth as a tool for spiritual healing for several recovery support groups of children who had been abused. The children who participated in this healing work reported that the experience of the labyrinth was not only the most important spiritual experience of their therapeutic year, but of their entire course of therapy. After hearing repeatedly the profound experiences of acceptance and spiritual healing that the children reported, the NCAC tracked these comments and the children's subsequent progress. The results prompted the NCAC to ask the Church of the Nativity to present the labyrinth as a
symbol of healing to the participants at their national symposium to be held in Huntsville in March 2004. The NCAC realized that anyone involved in dealing with the toxicity of child sexual abuse themselves receive spiritual damage and emotional fallout. This harm is compounded by confidentiality regulations forcing caregivers to absorb the pain in silence. At the symposium, the labyrinth was presented as a tool for healing of both caregivers and their clients.

There are many approaches to the labyrinth. The one we selected for the symposium was the 11-path Chartres Cathedral (in France) model. Approximately 55 Nativity members created this new and large labyrinth (60’ x 60’) for the symposium. Nine Nativity members went through a two hour training so that they could act as facilitators and foot washers.

The metaphors used with labyrinth work are called the "threefold path" of Purification, Illumination, and Integration.

1. Releasing (Purification). From the entrance to the goal is the path of shedding or "letting go." There is a release and an emptying of worries and concerns.
2. Receiving (Illumination). At the center there is illumination, insight, clarity, and focus. It is here that we are in a receptive, prayerful, meditative state.
3. Union (Integration). Empowerment and taking ownership. The path out is that of becoming grounded and integrating the insight. It is being energized and making what was received manifest in the world.  

These are the three traditional stages of the Christian spiritual life, originating with Pseudo-Dionysius, and imported to the Medieval western Christian experience (Dr. Robert Hughes).
The labyrinth experience was selected by approximately thirty symposium attendees. As was expected, once they experienced the labyrinth with its healing dimensions, many asked how they could duplicate the experience at their own home center. The Church of the Nativity agreed to be available to consult, facilitate and provide support services for this ongoing work.

Following the symposium, the National Children's Advocacy Center asked for the building of a permanent labyrinth on their new grounds effective as soon as funding is available. This model will facilitate use of the labyrinth as the spiritual modality for healing across the nation at over 600 Children's Advocacy Centers. The Church of the Nativity, through its reconciling and pilgrimage ministries, was asked to present the labyrinth workshop at another national symposium on child abuse June 23-25, 2005, in Nashville. The Children's Advocacy Center in Memphis, Tennessee, has expressed the need for a labyrinth consultation in facilitating a therapeutic year for non-offending parents of child abuse survivors. They need a model for parents in their therapeutic offerings and frequently experience interference from needy non-offending parents as well as lowered resiliency rates in survivors due to re-entry into troubled family systems. There is interest in a consultation in Portland, Oregon, for forensic examiners because of the secondary trauma they experience in their work examining child abuse victims. Since the spring of 2004, Nativity has presented five workshops around the country to groups working with child-abuse.
In addition, other types of organizations have begun to request information about the labyrinth. The Humane Society and the Department for Animal Services in the City of Huntsville have expressed interest in the labyrinth as a model for stress and wellness management regarding the grief and anxiety their employees carry over exterminating two dozen animals weekly in service to the community. There is a request for information about developing a labyrinth for use in consultation with Three Springs, a residential treatment agency for young people with emotional and behavioral disorders. Three Springs has 23 campuses in five states, and they are interested in outdoor therapeutic settings.

**Pilgrimage Ministries**

Concurrently, conversations revealed the Diocese of Alabama was also seeking additional support for its annual Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage held every August as a joint reconciliation event with the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. The Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage is an annual commemoration of the martyrdom of a Civil Rights hero and an Episcopal seminarian who stepped in front of a bullet intended for sixteen year old Ruby Sales in Hayneville, Alabama, August 20, 1965. Five years ago, few pilgrims came; however, the past two years have demonstrated a groundswell, with over one thousand participants from around the nation in 2004, including five bishops. There is currently no funding, housing or infrastructure to support this pilgrimage. It survives on faith alone. The diocese has asked Nativity to help with planning and logistical support,
development of educational material, and trust and relationship-building with the local community. This pilgrimage is an important tool for education and reconciliation around social justice issues as well as a journey providing spiritual nourishment for all those who visit the site of Daniels' martyrdom.

In the past few years, Nativity has partnered with the Diocese of Alabama to lead an overseas pilgrimage to England, Italy, and the 'Taize' community in France. The focus of these pilgrimages is forgiveness and healing. Pilgrimage is becoming an important part of our youth ministry and the integration of youth into the fullness of their baptisms around confirmation.

_An Idea Emerges_

Out of this history, the dream of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation emerged. Upon hearing of this dream of expansion, the initial donor then enthusiastically committed an additional $30,000, requesting that we dream about creative ways we could promote reconciliation and pilgrimage ministries. We immediately formed a planning committee that did the initial work of considering what the Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage would encompass. We assessed the emergence of new healing, reconciliation, and pilgrimage ministries and increasing participation in existing healing, reconciliation, and pilgrimage ministries. These ministries include Rites of
Reconciliation of a Penitent, the labyrinth, Anglican rosary, healing services, Stations of the Cross, Centering Prayer/lectio divina, sacred silence, sacred art/iconography, sacred music, the sacred feminine, Cursillo, the Enneagram, wilderness experiences, and pilgrimages. These ministries recognize that healing is a holistic experience encompassing mind, body, and spirit, and that spirituality is not only focused on pastoral care. Intentional and situational experiences can provide the means for God’s intervention. The Center would be an umbrella structure within the parish in order to coordinate and further promote these existing ministries, and also to determine ways to offer these reconciling and healing ministries to those outside the church.

In November 2003, the Vestry authorized a Task Force that would return to the Vestry in March with specific proposals. Their proposal to establish the Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage was met with enthusiasm by the Vestry at the March meeting.

The proposal noted that within the parish, increasing participation in spiritual journey and reconciliation ministries was demonstrated by recent developments of a third centering prayer group, increased Cursillo attendance, growing interest in Kairos Prison Ministry, the emergence of two women’s Bible study groups with a desire for more Bible study groups to form, a renewed commitment to Education for Ministry support from the parish administration, a strong desire for more “hands on” outreach ministries through the parish, two youth pilgrimages within the past year (one to Taize’ and one to New York
City), and an increasing utilization of embodied ritual and journey work with pastoral care.

At the same time, the parish’s reputation as a leader with reconciliation and spiritual journey work was being recognized by the wider community as a result of the NCAC workshop in March and by our participation in diocesan work with reconciliation and pilgrimage. Numerous requests had been made to consult in Children’s Advocacy Centers throughout the country, as well as by other organizations which were concerned with the health and wholeness of children. Inquiries were made by the Minnesota Juvenile Detention Center, The Diocese of Alabama for specific assistance with the Jonathan Daniels pilgrimage, the Diocese of Minnesota for a Civil Rights pilgrimage, the local Humane Society. At this time, an idea for a Trail of Tears pilgrimage is developing.

The demand for these ministries was strong and growing. The parish’s own journey toward reconciliation along with strong lay and clerical spiritual leadership in the parish, and the idea that Huntsville is an historic location where significant reconciliation and journeys have occurred (Civil War occupation, racial issues, Trail of Tears, German scientists’ presence, women’s ordination, etc.), led the vestry to authorize the establishment of the Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage in March, 2004. In May, a director was called who began work on June 1, 2004. Additional financial gifts and pledges have been made, bringing the total amount available for this work to date (outside of the parish budget) close to $100,000. In September of 2004 the Center
applied for a grant from Trinity Church, Wall Street, to support our work. At the May 2004 Vestry meeting, the Task Force was dissolved and a Board of Advisors put in place.

*A Dream Incarnate*

The summer dreaming of 2004 is taking on flesh and bones with the birth of the Nativity Center for reconciliation and pilgrimage. Its mission is straightforward and simple: *The Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage provides a variety of experiences designed to guide individuals and groups to spiritual wholeness.* Yet, there is much said between the lines. The space (what is not said) allows for creative and new ministries to be developed on almost any level: personally, parochially, corporately, individually, or in groups large and small.

The vision of the Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage speaks to the heart of Nativity’s desire to proclaim, embody and live out God’s reconciliation of the world to God’s self through the incarnation—the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The parish is committed to this ministry of God’s reconciling love within the parish, in Huntsville, the Diocese of Alabama, and any other place a need or opportunity is presented to which we can respond. The vision is as follows:

The Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage is a wellspring of healing rooted in the deep South. The Center serves as a bridge between brokenness and wholeness for the revitalization of the human spirit. At this holy site, we create journeys of healing for others, ourselves, and the
world through the grace of God. We are companions and guides as we walk this road together in a spirit of holy hospitality, with prayer and compassion for all.

The purpose of the Center is to respond better to a growing number of requests for Nativity's ministries of reconciliation by increasing their availability and effectiveness, both within and beyond Nativity. The Center will first help our parish family with internal wholeness and spiritual discernment. It will be a quiet, non-invasive tool for sharing Christ’s message of love and reconciliation, using our religious language where appropriate, but in the Spirit of hospitality and outreach, being non-sectarian (e.g. like Twelve Steps) when called for. So its purpose is both for evangelism and outreach. Finally, the Center’s purpose is to improve effectiveness of ministry delivery through accessibility, awareness, effective leadership training, efficiency and sustainability.

A Wellspring of Healing

The Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage is a well of God’s healing presence flowing from a natural center of hope and reconciliation. Barely two blocks from the Church of the Nativity bubbles up the Big Spring in downtown Huntsville. This deep flowing spring of clear, cool, refreshing waters flows from the side of a rock, offering its balm like the water flowed from the rock in the wilderness for the children of Israel journeying toward the promised land. Native Americans found its waters a source of healing and rejuvenation long before the European settlers moved west in the early nineteenth century. Through the middle of the twentieth century, Christians, white and black, were baptized in its waters. Big Spring flows from the city center into a large lake
and at one time fed canals that reached the mighty Tennessee River eight miles south of the city.

The Nativity Center surfaces from God’s presence, like waters running beneath the earth. It was discovered, not created. Yet the healing that bubbles up is older than the rivers that cut the mountains and gentle hills. This healing comes from the Word of God, older than the waters, the Word, through which the great seas and rivers of creation were made: the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ. The image of the well of Lourdes also comes to mind. Bernadette was inspired to dig deeper and deeper into the mud until the hidden healing spring underneath flowed clear. And so we have dug deep and will dig deeper still until the waters of God’s healing presence in Christ run clear and strong. These waters of life will flow from Nativity’s center into the world, forming pools of healing water and canals of passage to life in all its fullness for those who come here to drink.

*The Deep South: Hospitality, Graciousness, Honesty, Brokenness, Hopefulness*

We claim our geographic location in the deep South. Hospitality, an expression of both the Gospel and southern culture, will be a hallmark of this ministry. We will welcome all pilgrims who seek reconciliation and wholeness through the various ministries and resources the Center offers. People will be welcomed wherever they are on their spiritual journeys—whatever road they may be on, Christian or non-Christian; Episcopalian or Methodist or Pentecostal; Jewish, Muslim or even someone with no belief articulation. It has been said that in the South there are no strangers, only distant cousins we haven’t met yet. Claiming this deep South heritage enables us to welcome
people into our midst, not as strangers, but as fellow pilgrims. For Christians, we will offer the fullness of our rich sacramental life, using our language and symbols. But to others, we will use non-sectarian language, much like the Twelve Steps Program enables people from all faith backgrounds or no faith backgrounds to claim its healing process. An example of this is the way we have used the labyrinth with the NCAC. The language of purgation, illumination, and integration is easily understood by all without a specific Christian interpretation.

The place of hospitality that Jesus offered those to whom he ministered was a strong, stable presence with people, not so much judging the past, but allowing a future unfettered by the chains of the past to unfold. As with the woman caught in adultery, he does not speak from judgment, but from love, mercy and forgiveness. Jesus tells her to “go and sin no more.” His judgment was love and grace. He spoke the truth about her past, but a greater truth was available to her for the future: the truth of God’s life and love for the future. The present became alive and renewed because of Jesus’ desire to be with people in their brokenness or pain. The Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage will create stable, healing space in the middle between people who are divided or lives that are stuck between a broken past and a future that cannot be claimed because of the chains of the past. The Mandela is an ancient symbol of this sacred space in the middle. Just as Christ stands in the middle between our broken humanity and our divine potential, between human being and God, we will stand with people. This is the place of grace and of graciousness. Allowing another to stand when they can and lifting them up by our presence with them when they are falling is a part of the gracious
presence we desire to offer. We will build that southern trait of graciousness by encouraging people and complimenting them upon their strengths. And then we will be quiet, allowing them to tell the stories of their journey, allowing them to be who they are and to have experienced what they have experienced and to feel what they feel.

We will listen. But we will also speak honestly. Southerners are honest. We will speak honestly with those who seek reconciliation in their lives, speaking the truth in love should we need, just as Jesus spoke the truth. The process of reconciliation in South Africa has let us know that reconciliation cannot take place without the truth being spoken. But the goal is to speak the truth in such a way that we can move toward living the truth. But we will do so acknowledging our own need for truth and by acknowledging our own struggles to be whole and to know reconciliation for ourselves.

For Southerners also know brokenness. We have known brokenness and defeat. And we know our complicity in systems of oppression like slavery and Jim Crow. We will be the wounded healers that Henri Nouwen encourages us to be, claiming our place on the journey to wholeness that is yet incomplete.

But ultimately, we will speak words of hope. The deep South knows hope. We know of the hope for a better tomorrow and for a new beginning. Because the Center is located in the deep South, we will claim and promote the hope that God has in offering a new beginning for anyone who seeks it, no matter how broken the past.

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Creating Creative Journeys of Reconciliation, Spiritual Growth, and Healing

Reconciliation and Pilgrimage are complementary ministries that inform the other. We will develop a spirituality of reconciliation within the parish, among parishioners and in people’s lives. The Center will do this in seven ways:

1. By serving as an umbrella structure to coordinate and promote certain ministries already existing within the parish (and others to be discerned in the future) that offer spiritual resources for the spiritual journey, as well as providing structure and guidance for the path of reconciliation;

2. By creating for parishioners spiritual and physical pilgrimages that utilize embodied ritual along with other tools for reconciliation and spiritual growth;

3. By forming small groups and encouraging existing small groups that encourage dialog and communication in order to build community and discover how we can achieve reconciliation among us when there are differences;

4. Through worship and the sacramental life of the church;

5. By intentionally reaching out to the world with our reconciliation and pilgrimage ministries, offering God’s wholeness to any individuals or large or small groups who seek to experience reconciliation and healing (i.e. labyrinth work for those who have experienced trauma and abuse or creating pilgrimages that promote reconciliation and healing like the Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage);

6. By training the laity to participate in these various ministries, building the laity’s role of being reconciled reconcilers;
7. And, by making incarnate our reconciliation spirituality by adding a dimension of social justice that is a direct outreach project of the parish by working to promote restorative justice within the penal correction system in Huntsville and Alabama.

First of all, the Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage serves as an overarching support structure, or umbrella for certain identified ministries existing in the parish (and others that can be developed in the future) that promote spiritual growth, healing, reconciliation, and pilgrimage. These ministries are functioning and thriving at Nativity. Through these circles of ministry already in place people can find spiritual resources to support them on their journeys to spiritual wholeness and reconciliation.

These ministries include, but are not limited to:

- Rites of Reconciliation and Confession
- Labyrinth
- Centering Prayer, Silence, lectio divina
- Healing Services
- Cursillo
- Embodied Ritual and Pastoral Care
- Women’s Ministries
- Men’s Ministries
- Enneagram
- Anglican Rosary
- Stations of the Cross
- Wilderness Experience
- Sacred Music
- Sacred Art
- Pilgrimages for individuals and groups

An underlying goal here is to improve effectiveness of ministry delivery to parishioners. Many parishioners do not realize these spiritual resources are available. We desire more Accessibility & Awareness of these ministries. Inconsistency exists in announcing the availability of these ministries to parishioners. Many are loosely organized with no
points of referral for access in the parish. Unintentional barriers can exist by the timing of groups meeting (at times when working people might not be able to attend) or their informal structure that precludes public announcements about them. We hope to be more effective in ministry “delivery” through leadership identification and offering training skills for the utilization of these ministries. For example, the labyrinth is a great tool, but the uninitiated need to know its structure and various ways it can function. We will create utilization materials for these ministries. Economies of scale in the use of human and financial resources will increase the efficiency of these ministries because of the intentional, unified structure of the Center. Finally, sustainability to ensure continuance of healing ministries over time and through personnel turnover will be generated by the creation of marketing and training materials along with the identification of key volunteer leadership. The clergy will be deliberate about utilizing these ministries through pastoral care work.

This brings to light the second task we are undertaking: to offer and design journeys of reconciliation, spiritual growth and healing for parish members and others who are “on the inside” and who seek to utilize the reconciliation and journey ministries we have identified. The congregation will be made aware that pilgrimages and individually tailored applications of these ministries can be structured for their journeys. This is already a sought after component of pastoral care, but we will have a vehicle for promoting this type of integrated, embodied pastoral care that goes beyond the therapeutic model.
A caveat of caution should be inserted here. These ministries are not meant to take the place of quality therapeutic care that should be offered by licensed professionals. Cautious discernment will be taken to insure that these journeys of healing do not supercede professional care or the limited pastoral counseling the clergy may offer. Journeys of healing, these pilgrimages we will offer and design will not be offered if not appropriate (first, do no harm). They will be an additional resource when therapeutic care has been utilized or is needed. Studies have shown that therapeutic care alone is never enough to encourage the revitalization of the human spirit. Communities of reconciliation offering pathways of spiritual healing are an important addition.

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Pilgrimage: Connecting Memory and Vision

Participating in pilgrimage, one connects sacred memories and stories of the past to his and her own lived experience. This holy connection opens one’s eyes to a broader vision of life and the call to serve. For example, the Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage connects the memory of Jonathan Daniels’ courage and martyrdom to the pilgrim’s vision for enacting God’s justice and love in our lives. Remembering the injustices the Civil Rights movement sought to make right, one can renew her personal commitment to God’s purposes for the world today for justice and equality and unity. Pilgrimage connects sacred memory and place to our vision of God’s future: ...thy kingdom come, we pray as Jesus taught us. Going on pilgrimage, we are intentional about the deeper movement of
God’s Spirit in our lives and the world. So we pray with our feet. We pray in community with our fellow pilgrims. We pray with the saints in whose footsteps we tread.

Pilgrimage is an important aspect of our Christian lives. The Church has long been referred to as “God’s Pilgrim People.” We are in process of arriving at a destination of God’s choosing and the journey is as important as the destination. Those we journey with and the memories we invoke remind us that we have much to learn. Even the world at large is discovering the value of pilgrimage in claiming the enduring values that give a corporate vision or unite a community: in the summer of 2004, for example, the Mayo Clinic sent their leadership on an annual pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy, in order to explore their taproot values and to connect and discern ways to apply these principles to the world of 21st century medicine.8

Many of us think we have to go on a long trip in order to make a pilgrimage. But this is not the only way we go on pilgrimage. Any intentional journey, whether inward or outward, nearby or across the globe, is a pilgrimage. Pilgrimages are any intentional physical or spiritual journey in which one hopes to connect to something outside of the normal course of day-to-day living for wholeness, rejuvenation, or understanding. Any journey from brokenness to wholeness is pilgrimage (and a matter of reconciliation). Pilgrimage can be undertaken for as many reasons as there are pilgrims, including opportunities for renewal and rejuvenation, quests for understanding in which purpose and new direction are sought, acts of contrition and repentance, opportunities to

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reconnect with personal or more ancient spiritual roots—all are a homecoming of sorts.

Pilgrimages are a form of worship where one prays with the feet!

We depart upon these spiritual journeys, not to arrive at a destination, but rather to return home to a fuller, more complete, even reconciled, life. We return to the future. The return is made with a broader, fuller vision of life and perhaps even a call to serve others and participate in life in different ways. Patterns established on pilgrimage can re-wire our day-to-day existence into a more whole and holy consciousness and existence. We always bring new life when we return from a sacred pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage archetype symbol is so deep, we regularly go on pilgrimages without realizing it. Homecomings, vacations, and reunions are pilgrimages. We go hoping to connect to people, places or deep memories that bring joy, rejuvenation, and healing. Family reunions can be joyfully anticipated or dreaded events. But they can be opportunities for healing. Just one more bite of Aunt Effie’s Lemon Cheese Cake with the egg-white icing can give us a reminder of heaven, if not of better times past. Many people attend their college football games, some people going every weekend in the fall to these huge events with tens of thousands of other pilgrims. Many go in an attempt to relive the “glory” days of their youth or to let their classmates know that glory days have finally arrived for them. The weekend is a pilgrimage event—even if we do not leave home. Participating in gardening and in focused exercise and sports, or having cook-outs and dinner parties with family and friends, are all activities that bring rejuvenation and renewal. Every weekend is an opportunity for renewal, regardless of whether we leave
Once again, our goal is to develop within the parish community of Nativity a spirituality and ethos of reconciliation in which we are always aware of our journey toward God. Therefore, the third task we will undertake is to create small groups that focus on reconciliation work through honest, compassionate, open dialog. We will become an official Community of the Cross of Nails and utilize these resources for dialog and reconciliation within small groups. We will offer this model, the genesis of Foyer groups within the Church, to our existing Foyer groups as an option (these groups are now strictly social gatherings in order to build fellowship and have no agenda). We will also offer parish forums on reconciliation and living in communion when we disagree.

Fourth, we will establish special opportunities for worship that promote reconciliation. The Rite of Reconciliation will be available weekly. A special Pilgrim and Reconciliation Eucharist will be scheduled on Thursday evenings in order to advance the awareness of our spiritual journeys, giving people who travel out of town on the weekends an opportunity to commit their weekend journey on a deeper level to their spiritual growth and wholeness. The Rite of Reconciliation will be offered before the service for anyone needing intentional reconciliation in his or her life. The Labyrinth will also be available as an additional worship tool and spiritual resource.

Fifth, we will be a resource for developing spiritual healing and reconciliation models and spiritual journeys and pilgrimages for individuals and groups outside of the parish.
The labyrinth will certainly be a tool we can utilize in areas of trauma and abuse where we are currently using them. We will continue to promote this excellent model for spiritual healing and reconciliation, especially since specific requests for its local use and consultancy requests to help others utilize this healing approach are being generated.

Our work with the Diocese of Alabama on the Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage has resulted in requests by several groups outside of the diocese for racial reconciliation pilgrimages to be designed that take participants to those places where racial equality and the fight to end segregation took place: from Hayneville to Selma to Montgomery to Birmingham to Memphis to Atlanta.

The Center is a Pilgrimage Destination.

We also hope to create a small retreat center where small groups of people may visit, seeking reconciliation assistance. These groups could be families, businesses, or organizations where the leadership is torn by division.

The Laity will be involved and show leadership.

Sixth, we will train leaders from within the parish who can assist parishioner on their healing journeys. We will select leaders and offer training in several different capacities.
The first group will be people who can provide leadership and instruction to people seeking to utilize one of Nativity’s designated reconciliation and pilgrimage ministries.

Each of the circles of reconciliation and pilgrimage ministries will have at least two persons who will be available to pilgrims. They will be attentive to the pilgrims’ spiritual goals and needs and help incorporate them into the utilization of these tools offered. For example, some may see Centering Prayer as a viable path for their spiritual journeys and so this Centering Prayer Advocate will help incorporate them into the practice. Others may desire to go on a spiritual renewal weekend like Cursillo, and so our Cursillo Advocates will help steer them into this ministry. Still others may desire a Wilderness experience and so our Wilderness Advocate will help them find an appropriate experience.

A second area where the laity will be trained is to assist those who come seeking spiritual guidance and want a pilgrimage designed to help meet their desired outcome. These Pilgrimage Companions will work with the Clergy and our lay professional staff, much in the way Stephen Ministers assist with pastoral care. They will work in teams with clergy supervision. A special professional resource group will receive even more extensive training to expand the work of reconciliation outside the parish bounds to include groups of people who are divided by deeper issues.

A third area of training is for those who assist with the large group healing and reconciliation ministries such as the labyrinth use. They will be trained as healers who
listen and offer God’s words of reassurance and hope, perhaps symbolically washing feet and anointing.

**Reconciliation and Restorative Justice: An Outreach Component**

Reconciliation is needed in concrete ways in the world. Our spirituality of reconciliation will be embodied through our outreach ministries that seek to promote justice and peace in places where God’s justice can lead to reconciliation. Reconciliation is not without activity that both results in and shows forth new life. Our reconciliation with God came about because of Jesus’ death, but is given its fulfillment in his resurrection. He is the new creation and our reconciliation with God proclaims that we share in the new creation. Just as the rite of reconciliation looks not toward the sinful past but towards a fruitful future, a healed way of living (with self and God and with others), reconciliation will result in new beginnings because of restored relationships.

Justice is a part of the process of reconciliation because for Christians, God’s justice, which always has a bias toward the poor and the oppressed, results in restored relationships and a restored community. God’s justice is always tempered with mercy, but based upon love. God’s love is unwavering in the effort to include those who have, because of their own fault (sin), excluded themselves. Section Seven includes a review of the biblical and theological understanding of how reconciliation leads to an understanding of the nature of reconciliation ministries and how specifically the work of restorative justice as a means of reconciliation is an appropriate avenue of ministry for
the reconciled and reconciling community. Restorative Justice reflects the heart of God’s desires of reconciliation.

All of these tasks will help our parish family with internal wholeness and spiritual discernment while creating a spirituality of reconciliation that pervades parish life and thence the individual lives of our members. But as we have already noted, we are blessed in order to share God’s blessings with the world. Therefore, this work of reconciliation and pilgrimage will be a quiet, non-invasive tool for sharing Christ’s message of forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation. It will be evangelistic in nature. We will utilize the gospel tactics of the early church in Rome as it grew:

“See how they love one another....”

The work of the Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation can be summarized by using the descriptive action analogies of connect, converse, and companion. The Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation provides a variety of experiences designed to guide individuals and groups to spiritual wholeness. More specifically:

We Connect to God’s well springs of healing: through holy pilgrimages, healing drama, pathways of healing, Community of the Cross of Nails, Diocese of Alabama Reconciliation Task Force, Labyrinth pathway of healing, Worship and Prayers, Reconciliation Chapel;
We *Converse* to understand and grow: through Circles of Reconciliation, Living in Communion when we disagree, Veteran’s Day Conversations, Interfaith Dialog and involvement; and

We *Companion* to expand the work of reconciliation into the world: through training Pilgrim Companions and a Professional resource team; working with social justice issues like restorative justice, encouraging participation in Nativity’s existing spiritual resources for reconciliation; and through bulletin and newsletter information on reconciliation opportunities, and a Prayers of Reconciliation pamphlet.
Parishes and Dioceses around the country are paying attention to the work of reconciliation. The Presiding Bishop speaks eloquently of reconciliation often in sermons and articles published in *Episcopal Life*. Two years ago, the Diocese of Alabama created a Task Force on Reconciliation in order to provide models of dialog that could be used in any parish or group within the diocese where reconciliation is sought. All over the country, parishes are considering the work of reconciliation as we face issues that keep us from being in relationship with others, both within the church and in the wider communities in which we live and serve. In the last four years, two parish communities, who also happen to be Cathedral churches, have claimed their role as Centers of Reconciliation. A look at Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati, Ohio, and St. Mark’s Cathedral in Minneapolis, Minnesota, reveals important aspects of a parish’s faithful organization, development, and participation in reconciliation. Both parishes are experiencing remarkable energy and renewal around emerging ministries of reconciliation within their parish communities as well as in the wider community in which they serve. Conversations, on-site visits, and reflection of both parishes’ reconciliation work are useful in considering creating an effective community of reconciliation.
Both parishes reveal some common elements of organization and strategy that can be helpful in understanding how their role as reconciliation communities developed. First of all, both Christ Church Cathedral and St. Mark’s have identified with the Community of the Cross of Nails. This international, ecumenical fellowship of individuals and groups committed to the ministry of reconciliation grew out of the Cathedral Church of St. Michael in Coventry, England, after it was bombed and literally destroyed in November, 1940, during World War II. After the war, the English and Germans began the work of reconciliation growing from the ashes of the bombing which took place at both Coventry in 1940 and then the English bombing of the city of Dresden in 1945. The Very Rev’d H.C.N. Williams, Provost of Coventry, who worked tirelessly to show the world possibilities for peace and reconciliation through the foundation of the Community of the Cross of Nails, writes that the beginning of this movement actually began in 1326 when medieval craftsmen hammered into the oak beams of the roof of the ancient St. Michael’s Church in Coventry, nails hand-forged by unknown medieval town smiths. In 1940 that ancient church, then a Cathedral was burned in the anger and hatred of war. Those 14th century nails were strewed amidst the remains of the Cathedral. As if to make a grave of the mound of destruction, the Cathedral’s stonemason tied together two partly consumed beams into the shape of a cross and placed it among the rubble; a local priest, with the same intuition of death, made a cross of three of the ancient nails. Inevitably, the Christian response to the devastation was the utterance of Jesus from the Cross: ‘Father Forgive.’ The new Cathedral, built next to the ruins, now grows like a limb from the old, and the heart of the Christian religion is proclaimed in the rhythm of Crucifixion-Resurrection through Forgiveness.9

The Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN) is committed to the work of reconciliation with one’s self, one’s family, the local community, the worldwide community, and God. The CCN strives to promote this work of reconciliation through several specific avenues and understandings. First of all, the initial work of reconciliation has to do with creating a

safe space where people and groups can talk to each other. In other words, the establishment of dialog allows the work of reconciliation to ferment. The CCN approach to dialog is not to take sides in a conflict, but rather, "...the CCN sees itself called to enter the chaos, stand in the middle, and create ‘in-between space.’"10 This space can allow for common ground to be established so that reconciliation can occur between individuals and community maintained within individuals and groups. This desired outcome of reconciliation extends from one’s internal personal struggles to the hostility between nations.

In order for CCN members to enter this safe place, members subscribe to a common discipline called the Community Discipline. This discipline is developed from the Benedictine Rule of Life for lay persons and includes:

1. Contemplative practices of silence, prayer and meditation that encourages time being set aside daily or weekly for reflection and prayer, as well as consideration given to monthly reflection and annual retreats and periodic sabbaticals;
2. Study and theological reflection done through intentional reading of literature whose purpose is more than to entertain;
3. Intimate relationships which are deliberately developed with others utilizing time, energy and honesty;
4. Community involvement which is built in order for members to become less self-centered, more self-giving and open to God’s Spirit present in all creation.

5. Regular worship that includes weekly Communion for those in Eucharist-centered traditions; and
6. Service to the world through one’s faith community and other servant organizations.

The Foyer Group movement began out of the CCN, and these “porches of welcome” are important small groups that develop intimate relationships and community as well as provide encouragement for the exercise of contemplative and theological reflection disciplines.

Another common thread in Christ Church’s and St. Mark’s development of significant reconciliation ministries is creative, energetic, motivated leadership and commitment from their deans who have offered visionary leadership to this work. But this is not merely a vertical movement, but a horizontal movement that involves primary support and input from laity as well as other clergy and professional staff. Both deans recognized opportunities within the parish community as well as in the church that served and continue to serve as catalysts to their reconciliation ministries. What is interesting to note is that, although this commitment is needed, it does not necessarily need to begin with a “top down” approach. The work of reconciliation must “well up” from within the life of the community and its praxis and practice of ministry inside the parish and into the wider world.
Finally, both parishes saw a need to respond to specific needs in the wider community and/or the church. Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati was called to the work of reconciliation because of the major racial problems in that city that were making Cincinnati an untrusting, violent community. St. Mark’s Cathedral initially responded to the situation in the church and the world around issues of human sexuality and broadened their concept of reconciliation ministry to look beyond this arena of conflict and division in our church and society to the many ways we need reconciliation. Both parishes serve as models of effective articulation and organization of reconciliation ministries in order to develop a community of reconciliation that nurtures relationships, serving as icons of the church’s mission to restore all persons to unity with each other and God in Christ.

**Christ Church Cathedral: Building Relationships by Living Reconciliation**

When the Very Rev’d James “Jim” Diamond was called to serve as Dean of this downtown, urban Cathedral parish in 1999, there was much pride in the fact that the Cathedral had long been a member of the Community of the Cross of Nails. However, the symbolic Cross of Nails was long missing—thought stolen, since many believed that the nails were made of sterling silver. The only vestige of the CCN’s presence in the cathedral parish was the fact that Foyer groups were meeting regularly. However, these had evolved into primarily social gatherings. Although they were offering a model of hospitality, especially for newcomers to the Cathedral parish, none of the work of
reconciliation that the CCN desires to take place in Foyer Groups was taking place. Dean Diamond was initially skeptical that the Cross of Nails had been sterling. Checking into acquiring a replacement Cross of Nails to place in the Church, Dean Diamond discovered that the choices were nails of iron or of a shiny, polished steel. “Ah, ha,” he thought. “We had the polished steel version, not sterling silver!” But then, as he began the conversation with people at Coventry to renew their relationship, he discovered that indeed, in the late fifties and early sixties, one could have a sterling silver Cross of Nails and that, indeed, one had been at Christ Church Cathedral. This story inspired Dean Diamond to recognize the importance to this movement and its value to the parish’s vitality and its place in the city. On September 21, 2000, Dean Diamond proclaimed that Christ Church Cathedral would become a Center of Reconciliation. Shortly thereafter, the tension over racial injustice and even brutality, especially as practiced by the city police, became an important matter for the Dean and the Cathedral’s Chapter. Numerous conflicts between the police and the citizens of Cincinnati had erupted, with lawsuits brought against the Cincinnati Police Department. The city was a hotbed of racial contention. In May of 2001, Federal Judge Susan J. Dlott signed an order establishing a collaborative process to engage the community of Cincinnati in working on an alternative to a win-lose lawsuit that alleged a pattern of racial discrimination by the Cincinnati Police Department. Instead of a having trial on the specifics of the case, the collaborative effort would address broader social conflicts in the city by gathering the views of as many citizens as possible on improving the relationship between police officers and the community. Ultimately, over 3500 citizens shared their goals for police-community relations. On April 11, 2002, history was made when representatives of the City of
Cincinnati, its police officers and its citizens, including official representation of the Cincinnati Black United Front and the American Civil Liberties Union met together. At the same time, the city and the Justice Department reached a Memorandum of Agreement to improve police operations and establish policies and procedures in such areas of force, training, and discipline of officers.  

Christ Church Cathedral took an active role in the Cincinnati Collaborative, serving as one of several locations where groups of citizens could come together and meet about the issues facing them. Over that next year, and continuing after the agreement was signed, Christ Church became a safe place where the different players in the city’s racial struggles could meet and openly discuss the critical issues, facing them honestly and without outside interference and criticism before the process unfolded. Through this work, the Cathedral Reconciliation Ministry was established. Over the next few years, Christ Church has claimed its understanding of Reconciliation to be developing, nurturing, and healing relationships through the gift of love in Christ.

One of the biggest problems any community has to face in launching reconciliation ministries is to define “reconciliation.” In some ways, its use has become over-extended to mean many things. Some people shy away from it because they fear it has connotations of being the politically correct thing to do. One person approached the Director of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation, Ms. Zara Ranander, and told her, “Reconciliation is about your talking to me and talking to me and using

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11 Notes taken from a two day on-site visit to Christ Church Cathedral in June, 2005 from conversations with The Very Rev’d James Diamond and the reconciliation leadership of Christ Church Cathedral.
12 Christ Church Cathedral Reconciliation Materials
... and I will eventually think like you do!” This is NOT reconciliation, Zara told him. Reconciliation is about relationships. In the Church, it is first about our relationship with God, then with others in the Church and with those in the wider world. Reconciliation is about building a relationship in which we can disagree, yet sit at table together and find a way forward. In order for relationships to be developed, nurtured, and healed, one must first assume that either there was no relationship to begin with or one that existed prior has been fractured. In this case, if common ground has been lost, then reconciliation must include both truth telling and forgiveness.

Christ Church Cathedral’s reconciliation ministries build relationships in three ways: Extending (beyond my view), Conversing (to understand views), and Bridging (to another view). They have developed initiatives both within and beyond the Cathedral in order to promote their goals to Extend, Converse, and Bridge.

Through the work of extending their view, the Cathedral hopes to broaden their understanding of the work of reconciliation by associations that expand the notion of reconciliation beyond the immediate needs of the Cathedral community. Their first goal in extending beyond their views includes raising the awareness of the work of reconciliation that is taking place in other places. The Dean and the parish are committed to the work of the Community of the Cross of Nails, Dean Diamond serving as President of CCN-USA. Dean Diamond regularly attends CCN meetings in this country and around the world, conveying knowledge of CCN reconciliation projects in places like the Middle East, Germany, and Cuba. Not only does the CCN’s model of small groups and
community discipline inform many of their practices; they include CCN prayer cycle in their Sunday and weekday prayers. This parish is also committed to participating in diocesan and wider church work on Reconciliation.

In 2003-2004, the Reconciliation Ministries Team from the Cathedral participated in the “Embracing Differences” National Episcopal Church reconciliation project held at the College of Preachers in Washington, D.C. This meeting brought reconciliation groups together from around the country in a format where information was shared about the work of reconciliation taking place in specific locations in places like the Diocese of Olympia, Washington, D.C., the cities of Staunton, Virginia, Lexington, Virginia, Charlotte, North Carolina, and the Diocese of Alabama. Christ Church is committed to fostering relationships with other centers of reconciliation ministries and to learn from others as well as share their work in Cincinnati. The concept of Extend enables them to discover new ways to implement local ministries of reconciliation; to analyze local challenges with the assistance of others from different places; to share their hopes for community transformation; to be in conversation with nationally known speakers and leaders of effective ministries for social change; and to learn from and contribute to global reconciliation ministries.

Christ Church sees their Foyer groups as a part of the work to extend their view, although these groups are also central to their task of conversing (discussed later). They have also discovered that there are three concrete ways that will help raise the awareness they hope to accomplish through the work of extending. They have designated a sacred space
at the Cathedral that serves as a Reconciliation Prayer Corner where people may go to pray for reconciliation. In this space they encourage people to pray for personal, local, national, and international concerns for reconciliation. It is a beautiful, quiet corner of the Cathedral that is accessible to all and includes resources to raise awareness about reconciliation concerns as well as tools to assist persons in their prayers. A second thing they have done that “incarnates” reconciliation into the lives of their people is the creation of a prayer pamphlet that includes prayers of reconciliation. This was widely distributed and available at the Cathedral. Another very simple “fleshed out” ministry is a monthly bulletin insert that lists reconciliation opportunities in the wider Cincinnati community in addition to any specific work the parish may be doing.

Christ Church Cathedral Converses to understand views. The conversation of reconciliation is something that most people need to learn. so tools and guidelines are established so that participants may enter conversations with others to create, nurture, and heal relationships. Through these tools, people learn how to speak thoughtfully in sacred spaces, listen deeply to hear each other’s message, offer affirmation by confirming that what was heard was meant, and embrace differences through understanding.

The Conversation Café was begun two years ago as their major tool of reconciliation dialog. The Conversation Café meets once a month after the cathedral’s main liturgy on Sunday. People may come and go as their schedule permits, but they are requested to make a reservation so that lunch preparations can be made. Participants are divided into groups of eight to twelve and are served lunch before conversation begins. At an
appropriate interval after the social interaction of eating together is over, the facilitator invites the participants into the sacred circle. The participants are reminded that the Conversation Café allows for an opportunity for deep conversation in order to listen and talk meaningfully with others about things that matter. The leader briefly introduces the topic for that day’s conversation and passes around a sacred symbol that serves as a “talking piece.” Only the person holding the talking piece may speak. A time-keeper keeps each person to three minutes. Although others may disagree with what the person speaking says, the purpose is to listen with intention and understanding, not to debate. At the end of each meeting, an evaluation is made of that day’s subject and process. Their covenant for the group is as follows:

- This is an all-leader group. We are all equally responsible for our time together. The facilitator and time-keeper are simply guides for today’s conversation.
- As a Christian group we agree that we must live into the values and example of Jesus.
- We listen with curiosity and compassion for wisdom, as an ally in order to understand.
- We speak with respect from a truthful heart and from our own experience.
- We speak one at a time, uninterrupted for a specified time, as noted by the time-keeper.
- We hold in confidence our conversation.

The Cathedral Foyer groups were restructured several years ago to dismantle the purely social gathering aspect and to reclaim the CNN model of dialog. Foyer groups at Christ Church are now small groups of 8-10 who meet for fellowship in homes with the primary aim of discussing reconciliation. They encourage newcomers to belong to a Foyer group in order to promote their goals of building a community of reconciliation, thereby allowing persons the opportunity to receive an early orientation to the work of
reconciliation and its community ethos. The Foyer groups are led by trained facilitators who help the group stay on task and end within the allotted 1½ hour time frame.

Finally, a third initiative in Conversing is the development of the Heart and Spirit of Leadership workshop, which all leaders of Cathedral ministry participate in, exploring together the Cathedral’s desired ethos and methods of reconciliation in order to:
- intentionally add compassion and relationship building to their agendas;
- respond to the yearnings, moods, and needs of others with whom they share their ministry;
- respond to conflict and disagreement when they arise;
- and create environments within the Cathedral that encourage security, love and understanding.

They are in the process of developing a "Best Practices Manual" for their committees and small groups that will serve as a guide to their leadership. This is in process and will be released late in 2005. Ultimately, Christ Church hopes this process will enable their leadership to love their neighbors more deeply and use their unique gifts within that particular body of Christ.

The concept of Bridging is an exciting and dynamic aspect of their work. This work includes two primary initiatives beyond the Cathedral that address the deep racial divides of the city of Cincinnati: The Cincinnati Racial Reconciliation Institute and the Cincinnati Racial Reconciliation Initiative. This concept of Bridge educates the parish on how to build bridges across racial boundaries by using a shared analytical framework and building common language skills to enable their understanding. Bridging to another view enables them to step out of their immediate situation and to access analysis and data.
that may reshape their perspective, look at the issue again with the benefit of this data and analysis; and learn how to reprocess their current modes of thought and action.

The Cincinnati Racial Reconciliation Institute, chaired by a dynamic leader, Dr. Merelyn Bates-Mims, is “the forerunner for the future development of the racial reconciliation movement in Cincinnati.”13 It serves to heal racial apartheid in Cincinnati by developing public truth-telling forums, much like the Truth and Reconciliation work done in South Africa. At these forums, persons are invited to tell their stories of racial injustice in a “listening only” model, with no debate. The forum is led by a Master Convener, a well known leader in the community whose public influence is respected and accepted. A roster of invited co-conveners consisting of leadership from religious, government, judiciary, social justice, private business and public interest organizations are present to witness these stories. These official “listeners” are people having legal, administrative, social, or moral authority to help remedy the situations of the tellers of the stories.

The format of the Institute is to convene on the evening before, for ecumenical and interfaith worship by those who choose to participate, and for fellowship. The next morning begins with plenary addresses and workshops led by distinguished scholars (participants have received materials to read prior to the event). The first of the Institutes took place in July 2004 in conjunction with the Union of Black Episcopalians meeting in Cincinnati at Christ Church. The Union of Black Episcopalians was among national organizations canceling their 2002 conferences in Cincinnati to honor the boycott that had been called because of the race situation. It was no surprise that the 2004 meeting

13 Quote from Dr. Bates-Mims in a meeting held with her on June 1, 2005.
was picketed by the boycotters in protest of their having their meeting in Cincinnati. In a grace-filled move, the Union respectfully acknowledged the presence of the boycotters and invited them to the opening Eucharist at which the Rev’d Mpho Tutu, daughter of Desmond Tutu, preached. The boycotters were invited to attend the workshops and to participate in the truth telling portion of the event. Episcopalians and boycotters attended workshop sessions together and chatted one-on-one. Questions were asked and e-mail and telephone numbers exchanged. Conferees found much in common between Cincinnati and their own cities and towns in issues around disparate health care in the AIDS pandemic, American education and the achievement gap, the Ohio Civil Rights report on discriminatory use of credit ratings for homeowners insurance, and the Dateline NBC report on the Cincinnati police.

This initial meeting of the Cincinnati Racial Institute launched their movement of faith-based reconciliation in Cincinnati and led to their planning the second institute in late October 2004. Christ Church Cathedral invited the leadership and people from Christ Emmanuel Christian Fellowship, an historic, downtown traditional African American congregation, to collaborate with them. The Mayor of Cincinnati declared October 29 Racial Institute Day in order to kick off this event for the citizens of Cincinnati to participate in a truth and reconciliation forum. The master convener of this meeting of the Institute was retired Ohio Supreme Court Justice Andy Douglas. Invitations were sent out to 1500 churches and organizations, with personal letters sent to business and government leadership. The letter of invitation to participants included this request: “In the interest of the common good, all persons of every race, ethnicity, gender, and faith
were invited to tell their story of perceived injustice because of race/ancestry, race profiling/redlining, race prejudice/attitudes, race discrimination/actions, words, and deeds, or a disparate treatment and exclusion.\textsuperscript{14}

In an essay offered to the Institute, Tara Kennon, a student at George Mason University articulated the value of telling our stories of truth.

The diverse act of constructing a story, the act of imposing narrative on a series of life events and transforming experience into a tale, is what Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps call a “characteristically human” thing to do. “Through narrative,” they write, “we come to know what it means to be a human being.” Though stories have traditionally been viewed as representations of real life, recent theorists have begun to argue that the telling of a story is itself a “real” event, that speaking or hearing narrative creates (rather than recreates) an experience as “actual” as any other. The power of creation in the hands of storytellers, then, is tremendous. The act of telling creates a dynamic event that involves both speaker and audience in a shared experience of reality. Some even argue that a narrative telling is the most “real” kind of lived event because “the chaotic and disorderly sensory world is organized and made manageable by symbols (words) that are devised to dominate it...language is a force through which the essence of a substance or an idea becomes known or “real” to us.\textsuperscript{15}

Telling our stories, telling our truth, is important to the work of reconciliation because the very act of this narrative event can bring someone else into “my reality.” It no longer is merely “my story” but has the possibility to become “our story.” Stories can change us because they kindle our imaginations to see the world differently from our own limited view. We are given the power in story to see ourselves, not as we are, but as we might be. Reconciliation must include this opportunity to tell stories of truth so that people of differing experiences can claim a larger vision of reality and can begin with pathos to hear their brother and sister’s hurt and brokenness. This is what Jesus did in telling


parables. His parables enable us to see ourselves in the story without judging or condemning us, but rather, inviting our participation. In the sharing of story by teller and listener, a shared event, understood as even a shared reality, can allow for a relationship to be built, nurtured, and hopefully healed.

A second dynamic initiative of Christ Church Cathedral’s Bridge work is the Cincinnati Racial Initiative that is a joint project with the Cathedral and the Harvard Center for Government. The goal of this initiative is to bring 100 persons of influence in Cincinnati together in both small groups and large gatherings on a regular basis both to tell stories and to work actively toward ending the racial injustices in Cincinnati. The idea is that persons of influence will exponentially affect the work that needs to take place. The criteria for persons is not necessarily position, but their recognized influence. This is an example of how collaboration with outside organizations like the Harvard School of Government can bring resources and energy to the work of reconciliation within the parish setting. These types of collaboration, like Nativity’s Trinity grant, bring excitement and definition to reconciliation work.

Christ Church Cathedral’s role as a Center for Reconciliation reveals several important concepts for any parish desiring to build reconciliation ministries and an ethos of reconciliation within the parish. First of all, the work should be articulated clearly and receive definition. One of the questions most frequently asked is “What is reconciliation?” Underlying this is a more specific question, “What does reconciliation mean for my parish’s life and ministry and how will it affect me?” Articulating the
vision in clear, concise terms with simple building blocks will give the leadership of the ministry and especially the parish community a clear sense of direction and purpose. Ownership cannot be built if the work is not understood. Secondly, Christ Church has implemented several tangible ways to allow people to grasp the idea of reconciliation: their membership in the Community of the Cross of Nails, their Reconciliation Prayer Corner, their bulletin insert, and their frequent attention to prayers of reconciliation all serve to engage persons easily and frequently with the work, even if they are not actively involved in the ministry. Finally, Christ Church has claimed an important vision for reconciliation for their parish that meets a deep community need: racial reconciliation in the city of Cincinnati. These things, coupled with strong leadership both vertically and horizontally, are enabling their ministry of reconciliation to build and flourish.

St. Mark’s Cathedral: A Diverse Community of Reconciliation

“St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral is a welcoming faith community called by God to peace and reconciliation through inspiring worship, spiritual growth, passionate hospitality and service to others in the love of Jesus Christ.”16 The Very Rev’d Spenser D. Simrill brought a vision of St. Mark’s Cathedral living into God’s call as a community of reconciliation when he became Dean of the Minneapolis Cathedral in 2002. Dean Simrill wanted St. Mark’s to be a center for hospitality and reconciliation, celebrating diversity

16 St. Mark’s Mission Statement
and the inclusive, healing love of Jesus Christ in Minneapolis and the world. He believed that the Community of the Cross of Nails was the appropriate vehicle through which to frame and to make incarnate this vision. During Lent of 2003, St. Mark’s made a decision to join the circle of reconciliation begun at Coventry by becoming a center of the Community of the Cross of Nails. In the fall of 2003, St. Mark’s was designated a Cross of Nails Reconciliation Center. In their Community of the Cross of Nails mission statement, St. Mark’s claims actively to promote spiritual harmony among self, community, creation, and God through the practice of the Common Discipline of CNN. They claim that reconciliation begins at home—within ourselves, our families, and our fellow St. Markans and God.

Reconciliation begins at St. Mark’s.

Reconciliation for St. Markans begins with the individual through the personal spiritual quest and commitment for healing and wholeness. A special chapel of reconciliation has been established in the entrance to the Cathedral nave where prayers for healing and reconciliation are offered at each major liturgy. Individuals come together in community to build this work in their lives and within the broader life of the cathedral through hospitality and reconciliation circles. Through the work of the hospitality and reconciliation circles (another name for the traditional Community of the Cross of Nails Foyer groups), the work of reconciliation spreads throughout the cathedral. The mission of St. Mark’s Community of the Cross of Nails is to seek to restore spiritual harmony between God, and individuals, within communities, and throughout creation sustained by the practice of the Common Discipline inspired by the Benedictine Rule of Life for lay
people. These circles are the center of their work of reconciliation and help individuals be reconciled with God, themselves, and others by listening and sharing in a safe place. They follow the Common Discipline of the Community of the Cross of Nails for a balanced time for prayer, study, work, family life, relaxation, worship and personal growth.

Their circles of hospitality and reconciliation were introduced during Lent of 2003 with groups meeting for the five consecutive weeks of Lent (excluding the weeks of Ash Wednesday and Holy Week). A participant’s guide for the five-week series was provided and group leaders given basic training. Each week followed a general pattern that has continued to be followed in the fall of 2004 when new groups were formed that met monthly. The pattern is simple and flexible:

- Candle lighting and group prayer
- Check-in time with each other (introductions first week, then check-in from previous week in subsequent meetings)
- Readings, case study and discussion
- Guided meditation
- Closing prayer and collect

Participants were asked to come prepared by reading the material in advance. They were also asked to be flexible, understanding that not all material might be covered (they discovered that they had more material than was needed). Flexibility was also to be offered to the leader. Participants join in the discussion only as they are able, where individual input is understood to be essential to successful group work, but no one should
feel uncomfortable sharing. Good listening is as important as sharing in the discussion. Participants were asked to make a practice of: prayer, mindfulness of others and how our actions and words affect others, development of listening skills and of seeing the best in everyone in the group. Finally, being on time was important. All the discussion was framed in confidentiality among the group members.

The topics for this initial five-week offering were:

- Suffering and Stillness: Laying the Groundwork
- Personal Reconciliation: The Power of Prayer and Forgiveness
- Family and Close Community Reconciliation
- Racism, Oppression and the Role of Privilege
- Global Reconciliation: Mission in the Midst of Suffering

These excellent materials are written mostly by lay volunteers (the staff and clergy have written or contributed to a few). Other topics explored beginning in September of 2004 include:

- Reflecting Together: A Summer Meditation
- Pilgrim Paths: The Way of Purgation
- Weaving the Fabric of Community
- Becoming the Change We Seek
- The Incarnation Season: The Birth of a Saving Hope
- A Merton Sampler
- Easter: Being Alive
- Spiritual Friendship
- Angels and Archangels

St. Mark’s has produced two excellent resources for groups, *Handbook for Hospitality & Reconciliation Circles* and *Open Your Hearts: A Journey into Reconciliation; Prayer, Reflection and Action Guide*. These are attached as appendices.
St. Mark’s Community of the Cross of Nails provides a structure it suggests individual members adopt: the Common Discipline, based on the Benedictine Rule of Life for Lay Persons. This is shown in the Cross of Nails’ adaptation that follows.

**Silence, Prayer, and Meditation:** Members regularly devote time to silence and solitude. Such withdrawal from one’s world is a basic source for the spiritual life. Finding a rhythm for withdrawal and involvement is an individual responsibility. Time for prayer and meditation might be as little as ten minutes four times a week, or as much as an hour a day. A day a month for reflection, an annual retreat of several days, or a sabbatical leave of several months may also be part of this practice. Members also follow the CCN Cycle of Prayer for devotions.

**Study and Theological Reflection:** Members regularly are involved in the study of some serious book. They may seek the help of study groups or a spiritual friend for this portion of the discipline. Study should involve understanding the text from the writer’s point of view, probing its meaning for oneself and one’s world, and evaluating the work overall from a theological perspective. Such theological reflection allows members to change the way they see the world and to respond to its needs as God calls.

**Intimate Relationships:** Members regularly set aside the time, energy, and honesty necessary for intimate relationships, for it is within the openness of this kind of love that the transforming grace of God begins to show itself in change and growth. For those who are married, family members along with special friends and colleagues will be the focus for intimacy. For those who are single, an intimate circle may encompass a larger group
of persons who touch their lives daily. One may also seek support from a small group or spiritual friend.

**Community:** Members involve themselves in the life of a community in order to become less self-centered, more self-giving, and open to the Spirit of God in all creation. The communities begin small with a church, a Foyer Group, or a neighborhood, and widen into larger circles.

**Worship:** Members participate in the life of the church community, recognizing that personal prayer is fully realized only when it pours over into the corporate worship of a church. For those who are part of churches in Eucharist-centered traditions, members partake in the weekly communion that nurtures faith.

**Service:** Members respond to Christ’s call to a ministry of service: “... whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:43-45) The local church is one place where members get in touch with outreach ministry and opportunities for reconciliation.

In October, 2004, CCN St. Mark’s sponsored a weekend retreat open to all parishioners who were interested in conflict resolution. Opening Friday evening and continuing through Saturday afternoon, the retreat named *Conflict: Reconciliation, Resolution, Restoration*, drew in a broad range of people who were taught peace-making skills for
their personal lives and in their broader relationships in the world. Dr. Jean Greenwood, a well-known reconciliation coach, was the facilitator of the retreat with materials she developed. The hoped-for outcome was to learn practical ways of communicating, resolving differences, and transforming conflict as well as to learn ways to live out our Christian calling as peacemakers by “being/doing” peace in the participants’ lives.

The Spiritual framework grew out of the values the various participants brought to the retreat and developing a safe, nurturing environment where personal truth could be spoken through developing a relational covenant of behavior for the weekend. Worship and meals together were integral to this process. On Friday evening the main topic was understanding conflict and its causes by looking at biblical examples and personal situations people felt comfortable sharing. After looking at various approaches to problems and conflict, primarily by focusing on “power over” others and then moving to the focus on relationships, restorative ways of dealing with conflict were introduced.

Saturday focused on restorative justice issues and the ways our stories, principles, and values help us find common ground and bring us into relationships, thereby helping find another path to conflict resolution. Specifically, participants looked at creating space where healing and reconciliation can occur and learned listening skills; learned and practiced negotiation skills by getting underneath problems and exploring common ground; and reviewed problem-solving processes. They practiced with tough issues and looked at applications for their families, outreach, and all of life’s relationships. An important aspect was to stress personal restoration and self-care while tapping into
individuals’ passion and calling. Reconciliation must begin with the individual and then reach out to others through personal wholeness developed and acquired.

The Community of the Cross of Nails builds on current ministries of contemplative prayer, worship, outreach and formation, but also now emphasizes the integration of its message into the on-going life of the Cathedral. That is why they emphasize the monthly circle meetings and community-building. Visible symbols of the programs, such as the Cross of Nails itself; the banner; a Hospitality Room and Reconciliation Chapel at the entrance to the Cathedral, and Cathedral goals that emphasize and reemphasize the goals of the Cross of Nails are critical to their mission. For newcomers it makes clear what and who they are. The ministry of reconciliation and its content are clear. The Hospitality Room is a place for parishioners to gather before and after services to greet one another and newcomers in the informal setting of a coffee shop atmosphere. The “third sacrament” of coffee—espresso drinks included—is celebrated!

The Community of the Cross of Nails helps to focus many aspects of the community’s life. However, CCN is not strictly a program, although it has many programmatic effects. St. Mark’s intends CCN as the focus of intentionally applying the Common Discipline upon which the Cross of Nails is based through all of the Cathedral activities. The application is in many areas in which they already operate, but in a more intentional manner, within this framework. Christian formation or contemplative prayer and meditation are strong examples. In some areas, such as the need for reconciliation within people’s relationships at home, in church, in community, and at work, it provides new
insights or tools in living the Christian faith. And in the further reach of CCN International, it provides a mechanism for outreach on the broader field of the world around.

*Reconciliation then invites in...*

Reconciliation through the Community of the Cross of Nails unfolds in welcoming all who come to St. Mark’s, wherever they are on their spiritual journey. St. Mark’s deliberately welcomes persons of all sexual orientations. They are deliberate in welcoming gays and lesbians into their community. Persons of all ethnic and racial backgrounds are also welcomed. Speakers, musical events and writers’ forums highlighting the contributions of various ethnic groups, especially minority groups, are held regularly. St. Mark’s welcomes persons needing mediation. They offer mediation training in an effort to offer mediation to anyone seeking this ministry. Inviting others also includes deliberate acts of welcoming persons in need, so they invite anyone needing a meal to a monthly Sunday night dinner. A most remarkable weekly meal inviting troubled and homeless youth of Minneapolis on Monday nights has been widely attended and supported by parishioners.

Another important aspect of inviting others into the work of reconciliation is through hosting speakers from other faith traditions as well as government leaders with the intention of building bridges and sharing viewpoints and struggles. In 2003, the Cathedral welcomed The Rev’d Canon Andrew White, International Director of the Community of the Cross of Nails and Middle East Peace Envoy of the Archbishop of...
Canon White was a primary negotiator of the “Alexandria Declaration,” which was signed by Israeli and Palestinian Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders. Canon White has also been instrumental with work in Africa concerning peace and reconciliation efforts. In November, 2004, the Cathedral hosted the Bishop of Jerusalem, the Rt. Rev’d Riah Abu El-Assal, for a week of conversation and prayer. And in October, 2005, the Cathedral hosted acclaimed writer Karen Armstrong. Armstrong’s provocative and popular writing has recently focused on fundamentalism in the world religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Reconciliation at St. Mark’s reaches out...

St. Markans recognize that the work of reconciliation is present in their outreach ministries as they reach out to the homeless and poor with hands-on helping ministries like Habitat for Humanity, the Covenant Program for families and by sponsoring immigrant families in the Twin Cities area. The parish reaches out to the Somali community through tutoring students and sponsoring a newly formed Boy Scout Troup for Somalia Mai boys. The parish also tutors and mentors young women from the Hennepin County Home School, the largest juvenile detention center in the Minneapolis area.

St. Mark’s reaches out to other faiths in the work of reconciliation. The parish helps sponsor and participates in an annual interfaith forum held weekly for five weeks every
fall at sponsoring congregations in Minneapolis from the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. This rotating event gets parishioners to many other congregations and faith communities in Minneapolis, bridging the work shared in common.

St. Mark’s deliberately reaches out to other Christian congregations through their sister parish work, both internationally and locally. They have a sister parish relationship with St. Andrew’s Anglican Church in Moscow and are aligning with several African American congregations in the Minneapolis area for support, mutual ministry, and fellowship. St. Mark’s has had a longstanding relationship and support for the All Saints’ Indian Mission in Minnesota. They regularly go on mission trips and pilgrimages to support their native American brothers and sisters.

Finally, pilgrimage is an important aspect of how the reconciliation ministry of St. Mark’s reaches out into the world to other spiritual centers through trips that sometimes are spiritual journeys and others that include a strong mission component. In addition to regular visits to the All Saints’ Indian Mission, in the past couple of years, the parish has taken almost sixty parishioners on pilgrimage to Iona and other holy places in the north of England in spring of 2005. A group went to South Africa in the winter of 2005, and another group joined with other Episcopalians in the Community of the Cross of Nails and went to Havana, Cuba, at the invitation of the Bishop of Cuba. Paul Strickland, Chair of the Community of the Cross of Nails at St. Mark’s, relays four reasons St. Mark’s offers pilgrimage and mission opportunities:17

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1. To place our individual spiritual journeys in a global frame, *i.e.* to be receptive to a world beyond ourselves by fusing our horizons with others.

2. To discover what can nurture our true self, what transforms our souls.

3. To broaden our ability to be present to ourselves and others.

4. To enrich our commitment to our ministries.

Their Iona pilgrimage was an intergenerational trip combining Cathedral youth and adults, traveling to Iona for four days, then to Lindisfarne, Durham, Whitby, York, and Manchester. The pilgrims explored the context of Celtic spirituality and the roots of our Anglican faith that were planted in the north of England and Scotland.

The South Africa pilgrimage was attended by a group of four of the leaders of the Community of the Cross of Nails, and the itinerary set by HOPE Africa and Episcopal Relief and Development. These pilgrims went to places of extreme poverty to be with the people who were suffering in the aftermath of apartheid. In the tradition of HOPE, they “went to the people, lived with them, loved them, learned from them.”[^18] The trip to Cuba had more of a mission trip component, where 21 pilgrims worked on the grounds of the Cathedral in Havana. They cleaned, painted, scraped, weeded, scrubbed the building and grounds of the Cathedral. But they also worshiped and played together as well. Both the South Africa trip and the Havana, Cuba, trip took pilgrims to places where there is tremendous spiritual wealth in the midst of unbelievable poverty and complicated political arenas. And there they met God in some new ways and brought this learning

back to Minneapolis with renewed vision and passion for Christ’s ministry both at home and abroad.

Organizational Structure at St. Mark’s
St. Mark’s has an excellent organizational structure for the Community of the Cross of Nails that integrates this ministry well into the life of the Cathedral, offering a system of accountability and review. Paul Strickland provided this information from Cathedral approved procedures. This information is helpful to anyone considering developing a community of reconciliation.

Primary Functions

- Pursue the goals of Christian Hospitality and Reconciliation. Hospitality refers to the Benedictine tradition of receiving all guests as if they were Christ and seeing Christ in them. Reconciliation is a process of restoring spiritual harmony and balance. It requires creating a safe place for dialogue where we each have a chance to speak, we each feel heard, and we each truly listen to one another. In that safe place, we can meet one another no matter how great our differences and find common ground so reconciliation can begin.
- Sponsor and support CCN Circles in the Cathedral and the Diocese.
- Foster Sister Parish relationships locally and globally.
- Lead adult and youth pilgrimages and missions focused on expanding the local and international reconciliation ministry of St. Mark’s Cathedral.
- Develop intercultural and interfaith relationships within the Twin Cities community and globally.
- Provide ongoing education and instruction opportunities in various spiritual formation practices related to the restoration of spiritual harmony.
- Maintain an active, open dialogue with other Cathedral, Diocesan, National and International organizations involved in hospitality/reconciliation ministry and collaborate on specific projects when appropriate.
Leadership

- CCN is a parish committee. It is funded from the Cathedral budget based on an annual request and approval process. An annual budget request is submitted to the Parish Administrator by September 1 of each year.
- The Chair of the CCN Committee serves a two-year term and is appointed by the Dean of the Cathedral in consultation with the Canon assigned to the CCN Committee and the Dean’s Advisory Committee (DAC).
- CCN Committee members will serve on at least one sub-committee.
- CCN Committee members may be referred or recommended by the Chair, but must be approved by the Dean in consultation with the Canon assigned to the CCN Committee. Removal of a committee member also requires the Dean’s approval.
- The out-going CCN Committee Chair will serve for one year in an advisory capacity.
- A Vice Chair for Reconciliation and a Vice Chair for Hospitality report to the CCN Committee Chair and are appointed by the Chair for two-year terms in consultation with the Dean and the Canon assigned to the CCN Committee. Sub-committee chairs report to the appropriate Vice Chair:

Vice Chair for Hospitality

- CCN Circle Sub-Committee
- Education and Development Sub-Committee
- Interfaith/Intercultural Sub-Committee
- Materials Development

Vice Chair for Reconciliation

- Sister Parish Sub-Committee
- Pilgrimage/Mission Sub-Committee
- Friday Noon Liturgy
- National/International Conference Planning

The CCN Committee Chair will assign ad hoc projects or sub-committees as appropriate.

Decision Making

- An annual plan including goals and objectives will be submitted to the Dean’s Advisory Council (DAC) by February for review and approval and distributed to appropriate Cathedral Committees.
- The CCN Committee has decision-making authority for plans approved by the DAC. Projects or activities outside the scope of the annual plan require DAC approval.
- As appropriate, certain decisions will be referred to the Executive Committee for approval, input, or information.
Communications

- The Committee Chair will be a member of the Cathedral Council of Committee Chairs (CCC).
- The CCN Committee Chair will author a quarterly article for Outlook including upcoming CCN events and activities.
- CCN Committee representatives will staff an informational booth at the annual Diocesan Convention.
- The CCN Committee will work closely with the Diocesan Communications Officer, and the Cathedral’s Communications Director to publicize CCN projects and events.

Accountability

The CCN Committee will perform an annual self-evaluation and submit accomplishments and missed opportunities to the DAC by February 1.

Meeting Schedules

The CCN Committee meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Cathedral from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM. Agenda items are solicited by the Chair at least one week prior to the meeting. In the absence of the Chair, a Vice Chair will lead the meeting.
Can we talk? Creating opportunities for people to converse with others is essential to the work of reconciliation. Reconciliation is about building, nurturing, and healing relationships by truth telling and forgiveness. Relationships do not simply happen. They evolve from a given context of intersecting histories. They are broken by abuse, misunderstandings, or apathy. Creating a community of reconciliation in which persons claim their work of restoring all people to unity with each other and God in Christ implies a conversation between persons about that which needs unifying. In this conversation, there are always at least two sides and understanding cannot begin unless all views are heard. So, conversation in regard to reconciliation is first about listening with the intent to understand our neighbor whom we are called to love and to whom we are called to be in relationship.

But we don’t listen too well in today’s world. Part of our problem is the ingrained individualism pervasive in our culture today. We live in a culture that teaches us to consider our own needs and desires first. It’s my life, my rights, my body, my experience. Our political institutions are so divided today that there is little bi-partisan cooperation as Democrats and Republicans demonize one another. The prevailing attitude is, “If you do not agree with me then you are against me. Even worse, you are
not informed, misinformed and perhaps even evil and selfish.” Persons given to this attitude seem blind to the self-serving and selfishness implied by this line of attack. At a forum in October 2004, Living in Communion When We Disagree: Republicans and Democrats in the Church, (a timely event planned just prior to the November presidential election), many of the attendees were cautious in expressing their political views outside of their known colleagues of similar persuasion. Although thirty persons were present, many people in the parish said they couldn’t attend such an event because it would just be too uncomfortable. One attendee, a woman who holds a moderate political affiliation with the Republican party but whose intimate circle of friendship is primarily liberal Democrats said she learned very quickly in her circle of friends that she could not question their political positions. She was berated by her liberal Democrat friends for which her positions, which made her feel less than human. So she keeps quiet, although she is occasionally chided for her known party affiliation. She found great comfort in our forum by being with persons of similar and distinctively different political persuasion who had agreed to listen without judgment. She said she wanted to host a dinner party for her friends and have one of our facilitators show up and surprise the group with our methodology of dialog!

Part of the problem is that we are bombarded by so many sound bytes of information at such a rapid pace that we don’t have time to process what we hear. So we really don’t know how to listen, really listen, anymore. In some ways, we need to learn how to listen with care and with a desire to understand. Listening is a skill we cannot take for granted that most people know anymore. Listening is a skill that must be practiced. But like my
Republican friend above encountered, there are not many spontaneous moments to practice this skill. Small groups and other avenues that encourage dialog in which persons can learn listening skills and practice them in a non-threatening and safe environment are an important building block to creating a community of reconciliation.

As we have seen at Christ Church Cathedral and St. Mark’s Cathedral, CCN Foyers and Circles of Reconciliation are the building blocks for the work of reconciliation within the parish. Before people can reach out to the world, they must learn to be reconciled within themselves and among their brothers and sisters in Christ. The Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation sees small groups as a critical component to our work.

The Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation’s two avenues for dialog in small groups

We have established two venues for people to gather for dialog in small group settings that encourage the kind of listening and story telling that promotes reconciliation. We have begun an open forum, “Living in Communion when We Disagree,” that meets several times a year and we have established intentional small groups, Circles of Reconciliation, based upon the Community of the Cross of Nails’ format of Foyers. Reconciliation will be promoted as people learn to listen to different views and
experiences beyond their own and build community even when differences are strong. Reconciliation will occur within people's personal lives as they enter space that allows them to reflect with others about their own lives. Reconciliation will be promoted in a larger way as people take the skills and practices they gain from these small group settings into their wider circles of relationships.

**Circles of Reconciliation**

Our Circles of Reconciliation are new to Nativity in 2005. Although the Church of the Nativity has long had Foyer groups meeting monthly in parishioners' homes for purely fellowship purposes, we will not replace these groups as they did at Christ Church Cathedral. There is strong support for these groups to remain in their current format. The existing groups were asked to consider following the CCN format this past Lent for their gatherings and most declined. The one group that chose to follow the format did so only for two meetings and then chose to remain a purely social gathering. In a large parish like Nativity, these fellowship Foyers serve a need to provide a social outlet and an important community of connection to the parish, so they will continue to exist even as we have added our new reconciliation small groups.

Our Circles of Reconciliation will begin meeting in Lent with a hope eventually to run them from the early fall through late spring. We are forming groups of eight to ten persons who will meet monthly in the homes of the members. The groups follow a Benedictine model of spirituality and are dedicated to common reading, study, contemplation and hospitality. Meetings will last an hour and a half. Each group will
have a trained facilitator whose purpose is to convene the group and decide where and when they will meet. Simple hospitality, not necessarily a meal, consisting of beverages, fruit, cheese, crackers, etc., will be offered by the host. The facilitator may decide to host all the gatherings in his/her home, or the meetings can rotate to various members’ homes.

The following format for the gatherings is observed:

- A brief period of fellowship and hospitality begins the meeting.
- The Facilitator calls everyone into the circle, where a candle is lit as a tangible ritual of gathering. Other simple forms of gathering may be used such as the chiming of a gong (common to centering prayer practices), asking people to remove their shoes (as a symbol of leaving the world behind and walking on holy ground).
- The Circle is opened with the CCN Litany of Forgiveness.
- Group members “check in” with each other briefly.
- A five minute period of silence and prayer follows as we hold one another in our hearts and open ourselves to God’s presence.
- The evening’s topic is introduced by the facilitator and the brief stories that have been sent to each participant in the Pilgrim’s Path monthly guide are discussed, perhaps read again first.
- Using the questions offered, open discussion takes place. People are free to bring up whatever touches them from the stories.
• At the end of each session, questions to reflect upon over the next month and suggestions for prayer or service or change are offered. The facilitator will remind the group of these matters and ask for clarification.

• The Circle ends promptly on time, closing with prayer.

• People may remain for another brief period of fellowship.

Participating in a small group entails creating a community of mutuality and respect. We have developed a simple “covenant” of behaviors that group members will follow. These allow the creation of a safe space as well as keep members present to the work at hand. Our covenant is as follows:

• We will arrive on time and commit to staying the entire hour and a half.

• Should we need to leave early, we will let the group know at check-in time and leave quietly without any exiting attention.

• Cell phones will be turned off.

• Everyone speaks, no one dominates.

• One person will speak at a time, without interruption.

• We will listen intently to the speaker, with the goal of understanding, not formulating a response or rebuttal. We will make certain that we understand what the speaker says by asking, if needed, “Did I hear you say this....?”

• We will not use name-calling or language that demeans the listeners or speakers.

• We will stay on the topic, focusing on one subject at a time.

• We will not judge others, but seek to understand.

• We will hold everything said in confidence.
Our facilitators receive training for their role. The primary understanding of their role is that they are not group leaders, but facilitators, even midwives (see Section Six). They are present to encourage a process that the group itself engages and decides upon. We will share the following insights of Group-Centered Leadership from John Mallison’s *Building Small Groups in the Christian Community*:

- Leadership is the function of the whole group and not an individual.
- Leadership is shared.
- We support and believe in the integrity and wisdom of all members.
- A sense of belonging and security will be encouraged so all will feel comfortable to participate.¹⁹

Therefore, the facilitator will help the group build a sense of shared power and equity. The facilitator will ensure that everyone has equal time, if desired. The facilitator should also be sensitive to someone who dominates and may even need to ask that person to come to a closing point so that others may have the opportunity to speak.

**Living in Communion When We Disagree Forums**

These periodic, open forums enable parishioners to come together to converse about specific issues in the church and in the wider society that can keep us polarized. In 2004, we held two of these forums to discuss topics about which faithful people in the church have divergent views. These two forums were on human sexuality and political parties. The premise is that faithful persons can reach different conclusions or stand in different places.

One of the great prayers from *The Book of Common Prayer* is a petition, “In Times of Conflict,” that calls us to this work together.

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; that we may be bound together in love and obedience to you in one body by one Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  

On the night before he died, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for his disciples that they might be one, even as he and the Father are one. Working through our struggles with mutual forbearance and respect can lead to the ties of love and obedience that bind us together—reconcile us to each other even when we disagree and are in conflict. We can live together in communion when we disagree—it is part of the Anglican gift to the church. We can be one, even when other groups are divided because we share a common prayer and worship life through our *Book of Common Prayer*.

At the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the primates urged us either to begin talking, or continue talking and praying about the complexities of the gift of sexuality and our response as the church. Faithful people are found on both sides of these issues around human sexuality, hence the need to talk together as a family. This discussion sparked Nativity’s first “Living in Communion When We Disagree” Forum.

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How do we talk together as a family?

An excellent and most useful model for dialog, *Good News: A Congregational Resource for Reconciliation*, has been produced by Episcopal Divinity School under the leadership of President and Dean Bishop Steven Charleston. EDS developed this small group discussion model for parishes to use in bringing together people on “both sides of the argument” as faith communities deal with the controversy, confusion, and anger following the decision of the Episcopal Church’s General Convention to endorse the election of the first openly gay bishop in the Anglican Communion in 2003.

In promoting its program booklet, EDS said that *Good News: A Congregational Resource for Reconciliation* is designed “to bring people together in mutual respect with a shared hope for healing and peace. Participants use the booklet as a prayer-centered guide that examines how Christians can—and indeed must—stay together even when the differences between them seem irreconcilable.” To make the process accessible and affordable, parishes are encouraged to purchase one booklet for parish use and then may reproduce as many copies as necessary for small group dialogue.

This model sees reconciliation as bringing together something that has been separated. Reconciliation is more an art than a technique. In the Christian sense, it particularly

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21 Episcopal Divinity School web page, “Resources at EDS” at www.eds.edu/sec.asp
means that God now sees us as God intended to see us—not because of anything we have done, but because God now sees us through Christ’s life, death and resurrection.

Through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to live according to the holy purposes for which God created us. Paul reminds us, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.” In Ephesians, Paul gives these strong words of life and purpose: “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised up with him and seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the ages to come he might show us the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness to us in Christ Jesus…”

Reconciliation is not resolution. It lives by the axiom, “I’d rather be in relationship than be right.” This resource takes us down a path on which we discover new ways of living together. At the end of the path, we may still disagree, but we hope we will find the peace of Christ which is at the heart of community. There are three Gospel signposts of this pathway to peace: (1) the need for justice in human affairs; (2) the need for compassion in seeking justice; and (3) the need for reconciliation in living out compassion.

We move from the deadlock of disagreement to the ground of discipleship; away from the demand for resolution and on to the hope of reconciliation. We hope to promote a fair and respectful dialogue among persons who hold different opinions while offering a

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22 Romans 8:2, NRSV.
23 Ephesians 2:4-7, NRSV.
context of reflection on shared values of the gospel, and we encourage the art of reconciliation in our communion together.

Bishop Charleston writes in the introduction, "‘Good News,’ is not about trying to resolve the debates on human sexuality, but about helping the Christian community find reconciliation." "At the end of that path," he writes, "people may still disagree, but they will have found the peace of Christ which is at the heart of community ... To use ‘Good News,’ no one is asked to give up his or her own opinions. They are only asked to enter into a shared journey with others to search for reconciliation ... they are asked to take the path to peace, even if it means only taking a few steps at a time."24

“Good News” builds these steps on the three central visions of the seminary’s own mission: Justice, Compassion, and Reconciliation. This resource walks participants through these three viewpoints on the gospel, shifting the focus away from the usual repetitive cycle of arguments on fixed positions and placing it on the call to discipleship every Christian hears when Jesus says, “come, follow me.” This model can help communities discover that they can find reconciliation without resolving all of their disagreements. Parishes can experience compassion rather than conflict. They can embrace the peace of Christ, calming fear with the forgiveness of Jesus.

While “Good News” may be especially timely and supportive for communities struggling with the issues surrounding the last general Convention, it is equally helpful for any

congregational conflict. It is a flexible model that can be carried out over a one-day retreat, or, divided into separate sessions over three days. It is intentionally created to be an adaptable, welcoming, and yet challenging resource for any congregation to use in its own ministry of healing and Christian education.

“In a time when people were being called to take sides,” said Bishop Charleston, “EDS decided to stand with Christ in the crossfire. Our mission is one of reconciliation and that is what the church needs now more than partisan politics.”

To facilitate that discussion, participants are guided by a covenant that honors persons of all opinions. The covenant is as follows:

- We will allow each person an equal amount of time to speak.
- We will listen to each person without interruption or comment.
- We will speak in a respectful way without criticism or rancor.
- We will honor the feelings of others as genuine and sincere.
- We will disagree without threats or accusations.
- We will agree that we are all seeking the mind of Christ.
- We will hold all that we share in confidence.

The program seeks to fulfill three goals:

1. To promote a fair and respectful dialogue among persons who hold different opinions
2. To offer a context of reflection on the shared values of the gospel
3. To encourage a process of reconciliation within the life of the community.

“Good News” draws upon all four gospels and seeks to shift focus away from a repetitive cycle of arguments on fixed positions, instead focusing on the call to discipleship every Christian hears when Jesus says, “Come, follow me.”

According to the seminary’s website, the program can “help communities discover that they can find reconciliation without resolving all of their disagreements. Parishes can experience compassion rather than conflict. They can embrace the peace of Christ, calming fear with the forgiveness of Jesus.”

Once again, our facilitators will be trained very much like those trained at Christ Church Cathedral and in our Circles of Reconciliation.

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26 Good News: A Congregational Resource for Reconciliation, is available for $5.00 payable to “Episcopal Divinity School–Good News” at Good News, Episcopal Divinity School, 99 Brattle St., Cambridge, MA 02138. For more information, please contact Nancy Davidge at 617-868-3450, ext. 302. A videocassette and DVD version of the program is also available, from Trinity Television, an affiliate of Trinity Episcopal Church, Wall Street. The package includes a book and your choice of VHS tape or DVD for $20.00, including shipping. To order, call Trinity Television at 888-901-1776.
Small Groups can evoke honesty, integrity and compassion.

In the forward to their book, *Insight and Action: How to Discover and Support a Life of Integrity and Commitment to Change*, Tova Green and Peter Woodrow offer as a rationale for small groups lessons expounded by the naturalist Milton Olsen from facts about geese. These lessons reveal important dimensions of the transformative properties of small groups.

**Fact One:** As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the birds following it. By flying in a V-formation, the whole flock adds 71 percent greater flying range than if the bird flew alone. Many indigenous cultures recognize that there's a lot I can do by myself, there's a lot I can do with a partner, but the power of what I can get done with a collective is quantum. It's a mega-step, it's a mega movement. The lesson from this fact: people who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they're going quicker and easier because they're traveling on the thrust of one another. That's a universal collective lesson.

**Fact Two:** Whenever a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed where we want to go and be willing to accept their help, as well as give help to others.

**Fact Three:** When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position. An invaluable lesson for us to apply to all group work. It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. With people as with geese, we are interdependent on each others' skills and capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents, resources, or what indigenous societies call the “good, true, and beautiful.”

**Fact Four:** The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those in front to keep up their speed. Lesson: we need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging and not something else. In groups where there is greater encouragement against great odds, the production is much greater—the power of encouragement. Now I love the word courage because it means “to stand by one’s heart, to stand by one’s core.” To encourage someone else’s core, to encourage someone else’s heart—that quality of honking.

**Fact Five:** When a goose gets sick, or wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own with another
formation or catch up with the flock. Lesson: if we have as much sense as geese, we too will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong. And I think it’s important that one of the things indigenous cultures have done for years is that they look to nature as an outer mirror of one’s own internal nature. And so as we begin to learn about collectives of animals and their patterns, perhaps we have some tools, techniques, methodologies about community and about collective work and group work.28

“Lord we will trust You,
Help us to journey beyond the familiar
And into the unknown
Give us the faith to leave old ways
And break fresh ground with you.”29

In our worship and sacramental life in the church, we proclaim God’s saving and
redeeming work in Christ as we gather, hear the story, pray, and receive God’s life. We
are then sent into the world to declare and share with others what we have received from
God. In our worship life we claim that God reveals God’s desires and purposes for us in
Christ’s life and death, declaring forgiveness when we have broken the relationship with
God and others, and then re-uniting us with God in the risen life of Christ we
acknowledge in the Eucharist and other sacraments. Worship is the life-blood of the
church and at the heart of who we are as God’s people because it is the primary means
through which we connect to God and God, who is always near and present to us,
connects to us. This is certainly implied in the catechism of The Book of Common
Prayer. In our corporate worship we gather with others, acknowledging our unity with
them with certain purposes in mind: to claim together God’s holiness, to hear together
God’s word, to pray together, and to celebrate the sacraments together. Worship is an act
of reconciliation because by its very nature we are united with others who have different
agendas, different ideologies, different lives and purposes that can and will divide us in
the world. But in our gathering, we acknowledge that the walls of separation have been
brought down in Christ’s love and life we receive in Word and Sacrament together. “In

corporate worship, we unite ourselves with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God’s Word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments. Through the sacraments, we claim God’s presence and grace for our lives as the sacraments are celebrated. Through the sacraments, we claim the life of grace, new life, resurrected life, in Christ Jesus. God reaches out to us as we celebrate the sacraments and makes our reconciliation with God possible. By the very act of worship, we participate in reconciliation: we are reconciled to one another and to God. One of the things we acknowledge in worship is the hope for the time when God will be all in all—when all things and persons will be reconciled to each other and to God. But in our worship and sacramental life, we claim that reconciliation is not only something hoped for, but also a reality we know today.

One of the things we claim about worship is that the “rule of prayer” is the “rule of belief” — lex orandi lex credendi. Praying shapes belief. Belief is verified in the praxis of faith adhered to by the worshipping community. This historical understanding of the work of liturgy is verified by observing the life of worshipping communities. A worshipping community that shapes its liturgy and prayers around the need for individual salvation offered through a penal substitutionary vicarious atonement will focus its praxis of belief in “winning others to Christ” and getting others to acknowledge a specific time when they received salvation and “were saved.” A community that prays with reconciliation at the heart of prayers and preaching, with the centrality of the eucharist understood as the form and re-enactment of the great act of God’s reconciling love in

31 The Book of Common Prayer, 857.
Christ’s life, death, and resurrection will exhibit a praxis of faith that reaches beyond the self and into the world.

Gordon Lathrop has written extensively on our union with God and each other through the worship life of the church. Our union with each other is not only shown in the act of gathering, but in the understanding that there are “a few things we know together.” In his book, *Holy People*, Lathrop relates the story of the Dene peoples of northern Canada. Commonly called the “Yellowknife,” these indigenous people have named themselves the *Tetsot’ine*, or “those who know something a little.” Lathrop writes:

Their name reflects the respectful and careful common life of a people surrounded by a vast and mysterious land marked by powerful natural forces: no one knows everything about such a land. But their name also reflects a community that treasures the life-giving, survival-enabling skills of the things they do know together. “Know” here, of course, means something more profound than “be able to think about.” It reflects rather experienced hands and eyes and lives, in concert with each other and with the fearful and beautiful rhythms of the land. Their name can serve as a gentle rebuke to the usual attitudes of dominant cultures toward minority cultures and toward the land. But borrowed here, hovering behind our reflections on worship and ecumenism with both humility and truth—to know the things we do really know, especially those things without which we cannot survive as Christians, and to be silent before the great mysteries that remain; to know together the things that unite us and to listen respectfully to our genuine differences….Christians do indeed know something together.  

Although Lathrop’s point is ecumenism in the liturgical movement, his observations are directly related to the work of reconciliation that is revealed because the “rule of praying shapes the rule of believing.” Lathrop quotes Prosper of Acquitaine (ca. 390-463) writing his treatise on the necessity and availability of grace for all people.

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Let us also look at the sacred witness of the public priestly prayers which, handed down by the apostles, are celebrated in the same way in all the world and in every catholic church, so that the rule for interceding should establish the rule for believing. For when the leaders of the holy people perform the mission entrusted to them, they plead the cause of humankind before the divine clemency, and sustained by the sighs of the whole church, they implore and pray that faith may be given to the unbelieving, that idolaters may be liberated from the errors of their impiety.33

Praying shapes belief. So when we pray for others, especially for our enemies, we are shaping the work of reconciliation in the church. If worship is at the heart of the Christian life, then it is also at the heart of the mission of reconciliation the church is called to participate in through its work and ministry. Through our worship, we are shaping the world and our world views. The things we hope for, the things we do and claim in worship, point not only to an understanding of the world as it is, but to a world as God would intend. And then through our participation in worship, this world view becomes our own as we rehearse it and pray for it in worship. If worship is meaningful, the people who participate in it will be affected by it. They will be challenged by it as they think about what they have heard, seen, and done in relationship to their own lives and the world they live in. Lathrop writes, “If the assembly is full of strong and primary symbols those symbols will give rise to thought.”34 That first symbol is the gathered assembly itself. If we gather together, then our gathering is not without meaning. People can come together to claim that there are some things we know together that unite us. Union with God and each other is possible. As we gather, to use Lathrop’s language, God’s merciful presence is made known to us, but as we learn through Word and Sacrament, that presence is not only for us, but for the world.35

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33 Ibid., 102-103.
35 Ibid., 18.
Worship shapes our world. Liturgy is a social event that enables persons to interact and communicate their deepest hopes and needs. Its order proposes an order for our lives in the world around—even an order for the world in which we live. It proposes that unity can be found in diversity. In our worship we know diverse peoples can find common ground and a common knowledge that enables us to be reconciled to each other. But it is not something we do on our own. We recognize in worship our need for God and for what God has done for us in Christ. So we can see we belong to a world. Recognizing that something greater than ourselves calls and holds us together in unity is a radical learning from our worship life transposed into daily living. Gordon Lathrop writes:

The world that is thereby suggested is not the status quo, but an alternative vision that waits for God, hopes for a wider order than has yet been achieved or than any ritual can embody, but still embraces the present environment of our experience. The reason Christian worship does such a paradoxical world-making is finally a theological reason: the liturgy wishes to call us to God and especially to God's grace known in Jesus Christ, and it wishes to propose that grace to this world. In such an undertaking, the liturgy cannot be satisfied with "God" as the name for our Western absolutes or our current social structure. Thus, Christian ritual has its own way of ordering the spheres of our experience and its own theologically based, self-understanding patterns for continually welcoming the periphery to the center. 36

In our worship we re-orient the world away from our needs and our brokenness and claim God's purposes and God's desire to be one with the world. We claim a world that is not yet, but is here now in which we pray for our enemies and those who harm us because that is what God has done for us in Christ. Claiming that all comes from God and belongs to God, we can learn new ways to reach out to others because God has first reached out to us in generosity and love. We can find space in the world to allow others to stand beside us, in spite of difference, because God has stood beside us in Christ.

36 Ibid., 210.
Two Primary Sacraments of Reconciliation: Eucharist and Reconciliation of a Penitent

Reconciliation first begins as a spiritual exercise, because it is not first something we do, but something that God offers us so that we can be God's continuing conduits of reconciliation and unity. If a spirituality of reconciliation is desired within the Christian community, then we develop patterns of worship that promote reconciliation and especially that connect us to what God has done for us so that we can in turn connect to others. Christian Duquoc writes

The concept of reconciliation is dynamic; it integrates the destructive past with a movement that abolishes it. It is a messianic concept; it incarnates in an authentic movement the most indestructible of all desires—peace and transparency....it is seen as an authentic movement of individuals and communities. “If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar,” Jesus said, “you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:23-24).37

Thus understood, Duquoc claims reconciliation is celebrated in two sacraments, Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation of a Penitent. Intentional teaching and claiming of the work of reconciliation through these two sacraments will enable the world-shaping work of the liturgy to permeate peoples lives in the parish. At the Church of the Nativity, we are instituting a special “Pilgrims’ Eucharist” that promotes and supports the church’s work of reconciliation. Reconciliation of a Penitent will also be offered regularly and connected to the Pilgrims’ Eucharist.

The Pilgrims’ Eucharist Ordo

In our mobile world today, we find many people in the parish have opportunities for travel and leisure. Huntsville’s location in northern central Alabama is close to several large lakes, the mountains of the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee, and a six hour drive to the coast. A large number of persons in the parish have access to weekend retreats in these places of recreation and renewal. This includes access through extended family connections and the bond of friendships established. Although there is some economic diversity within the parish, Nativity’s overall membership consists of a high level of educated, professional persons. The corporate environment of Huntsville that includes many engineers and scientists connected with the Redstone Arsenal, Marshall Space Center, and the large number of high tech industries located here also is a catalyst for business travel as well as travel to visit families located elsewhere because of extensive corporate relocation that takes place. Huntsville is a busy town with many philanthropic and civic opportunities and the people of the Church of the Nativity are busy with work, education, and community involvement.

The implementation of the Pilgrims’ Eucharist arises from three identified needs of Nativity’s parochial context. The first of these is that the number of people traveling on the weekend for the many reasons mentioned above takes people away from church on Sunday. The idea of an additional Eucharist that could be offered that enables persons who are away on the weekends to connect to their community of faith has been widely received. A southern phenomenon that permeates Nativity in the fall is college football
allegiance. Many persons travel to Auburn, Tuscaloosa, and to other college destinations to attend football games. Sunday attendance is greatly affected by the location of these games! Offering this service to these “weekend pilgrims” who are seeking refreshment, renewal, and a sense of stability in their lives through their trips away will enable a sacred connection both to the roots of our common spiritual life, Nativity, but also enjoin the weekend’s purposes to something holy and creative. It seems to be a paradox and as one of my esteemed colleagues phrased it, “Yikes! Football and Eucharist?” Anglicans have long claimed, however, that God makes the common holy.

The second contextual need arises from our increasing contemplative prayer ministries. Nativity has three regularly scheduled centering prayer support groups. These ministries are growing because of the hectic and busy lives we have today. The leadership of this group recognizes the need for worship that allows for more contemplation and reflection than the primary Eucharist on Sunday offers. They are calling for a worship opportunity that creates space to be silent and sit still in the midst of life’s busyness. What if we could combine these two aspects of sacred journey (pilgrimage) and contemplation? My experience of the people who travel on the weekends reveals people who are busy above and beyond a normal level. Offering worship that also creates a space to step away from life’s hectic pace and slow down and be receptive to God’s presence could provide spiritual nurture in a new way, but in a way that responds to our life situations.

The third contextual need a Pilgrims’ Eucharist meets is our desire to nurture and expand the spirituality of reconciliation throughout the parish as we are encouraging it through
the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation. This service will allow us
deliberately to shape a worldview of reconciliation: first between persons and God, and
then with our mission to go into the world with the work of reconciliation. Establishing
the bond between pilgrimage and reconciliation in worship with the Eucharistic
sacrament of reconciliation will establish a consciousness of our spiritual journeys in
finding union with God, so that we can share what we have received with the world. As
we claim our oneness with God, we can proclaim God’s oneness with the creation and
our intended unity with the creation in God’s creative purposes.

In determining the shape of the Pilgrims’ Eucharist, it is important to remember three
things. Marion Hatchett reminds us in his seminal work, *Sanctifying Life, Time, and
Space*, that there are three categories of questions when revising or experimenting with
liturgy:

1. *pastoral*—does it communicate? does it function to meet the cultic
   needs of the community?
2. *theological*—is it expressive of the myth of the community (*lex orandi
   lex credendi*, that is, the law of prayer, the law of faith)?
3. *historical*—is it gimmickry, dilettantism, idiosyncratic, or antiquarian,
   or is it well-grounded?38

This liturgy will be based upon the order allowed in *The Book of Common Prayer*, for
services outside of the regular Sunday Eucharist (pages 400-401 of the Prayer Book). It
will include expansive language and supplemental texts for the canon of the Eucharist, in
addition to using regularly authorized canons of the Eucharist for Rite Two. Language
that speaks to peace and reconciliation will be used. The prayers will speak to

38 Marion J. Hatchett, *Sanctifying Life, Time, and Space: An Introduction to Liturgical Study* (New York:
pilgrimage, healing, personal peace, world-wide peace, and specific areas of needed reconciliation in the world. Contemplation through silence and appropriate music are important elements of the service.

This service will be held on Thursday evenings at 6:00 p.m. in order to give those people who are going away for the weekend the opportunity to worship prior to their traveling. Every weekend gives those who work or abide by a Monday through Friday schedule the opportunity to recreate their lives and find refreshment and renewal through the opportunities the weekend brings. People garden, participate in special events—many sports and recreational related—and people gather with family and friends in special dinners or picnics. These are all opportunities to claim God’s grace for us in new and recreating ways. We are given life and grace, in effect, given new life to meet the ongoing demands of our living that lies ahead, the next week’s schedule! People will be encouraged to commit their weekend activities to holy purposes by attending this service. In considering the best time for the service in order to allow those going out of town an opportunity to attend a survey of parishioners revealed that Sunday evening upon returning home would not be as attractive as Thursday evenings. The business of re-entering life after a couple of days away is too pressing to add a worship service to the mix. The propers used for this service will be the propers specified for the coming Sunday.

People gather in silence, and the service begins with a five-minute period of silence. The silence is broken with a Taize' chant accompanied by musicians that we hope include
string and wind instruments. The collect of the day will be offered at the end of the chant. One lesson will be read that will be followed by a three-minute period of silence. The gradual psalm will be said in unison prior to the Gospel reading. The Celebrant will offer a brief meditation, encouraging people to consider the work of reconciliation in their own lives and their personal spiritual journeys. A five minute period of silence will follow prior to the Prayers of the People and the confession and absolution. The Peace will then be exchanged. For this service, a portable altar will be brought into the nave of the chapel since the regular altar is still attached to the East wall. While the Table is prepared, another Taize' chant is sung. The Canon of the Eucharist follows. The Sanctus will be sung. The contemporary version of the Lord's Prayer will be used (not normally used at Nativity). The fraction will be deliberate, but in silence. As the people share Communion, a Taize' chant is sung. The Postcommunion Prayer of Thanksgiving will be printed on the service leaflet for people to pray silently. The service will conclude with silence with a written rubric for worshippers to remain silent in the sacred space for as long as they like. An outline of this service and suggested prayers as well as one of the alternative canons to the Eucharist prayer is included as Appendix A.

The Reconciliation of a Penitent

One of our understandings of reconciliation is that “truth-telling plus forgiveness leads to reconciliation.” The Church’s sacramental rite, The Reconciliation of a Penitent, offers another tool for building the spirituality of reconciliation within the Christian community. This rite is not widely used in the Episcopal Church, and especially not regularly used at
the Church of the Nativity. However, the 1979 Prayer Book, following the lead of Anglicans in New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon in the 1950s that separated a “Form of Confession and Absolution,” was the first to refer to Reconciliation as a distinct sacrament and taught more extensively (a relative term) the use of the sacrament than Anglican formularies prior to this time. Prior to this, its use was implied in the Exhortation to Communion, but never explicitly laid out. The 1979 Prayer Book through the rubrics, Catechism and the Exhortation provides more teaching and provision for hearing confession (and through specifying its role as a sacrament) than any earlier prayer books.39

The Catechism defines the Reconciliation of a Penitent as “the rite in which those who repent of their sins may confess them to God in the presence of a priest, and receive the assurance of pardon and the grace of absolution.” The 1979 American Prayer Book’s rubrics concerning the rite further states:

The ministry of reconciliation, which has been committed by Christ to his Church, is exercised through the care each Christian has for others, through the common prayer of Christians assembled for public worship, and through the priesthood of the Church and its ministers declaring absolution. The Reconciliation of a Penitent is available for all who desire it. It is not restricted to times of sickness. Confessions may be heard anytime and anywhere. …The absolution in these services may be pronounced only by a bishop or priest. Another Christian may be asked to hear a confession, but it must be made clear to the penitent that absolution will not be pronounced; instead, a declaration of forgiveness is provided.40

Because of the priesthood of all believers, any Christian may hear another Christian’s confession. However, the sacramental life of the church limits absolution to the order of

40 The Book of Common Prayer, 446.
the Church through bishops and priests. Although called “confession” or “penance,”
naming the sacrament “Reconciliation of a Penitent” makes it a process that includes
confession and penance that leads to reconciliation: that which was broken has been
restored.

The Exhortation to Communion in the 1979 Prayer Book urges self-examination and
reconciliation prior to sharing in Communion. Its encouragement of the use of the
Sacrament of Reconciliation of a Penitent is clear: And if, in your preparation, you need
help and counsel, then go and open your grief to a discreet and understanding priest, and
confess your sins, that you may receive the benefit of absolution, and spiritual counsel
and advice; to the removal of scruple and doubt, the assurance of pardon, and the
strengthening of your faith.\textsuperscript{41}

Christian DuQuoc writes about the praxis of forgiveness and reconciliation and provides
an enlightening quote from French Roman Catholic teachings in 1970:

To have a religious practice means, for example, to rediscover the
meaning of confession—not the exercise that engenders guilt to the point
of neurosis, but the act that signifies that we are never victims of fatalism.
To know that in the last resort everything depends on the use we make of
our personal freedom; to be able to say to those we love that we have
loved them badly, that we are dependent on them to rediscover our
unity—what is more liberating? To recognize that History is determined
by the men who make it, and not otherwise; to admit that we are
responsible for the unjust situation in the contemporary scholastic and
social scene; to dare to proclaim that Manicheism in all its forms is deeply
alienating—that for us is the meaning of confession.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41} The Book of Common Prayer, 317.
\textsuperscript{42} Duquoc, 31.
Reconciliation offered through the action of the sacrament of Reconciliation of a Penitent rejects blame and our victimization because of a combination of historical, personal, and collective sins. Participating in the sacrament, we are empowered by God for a future that we have the freedom to choose, exercising our freedom to end behaviors that brought us to this point of separation from God and others. Duquoc writes, “Reconciliation through penance, ...situates equally well the liberating effects of recognition of our sin, and points the way to not enclosing ourselves in our actions as if in some logic of inevitability. The recognition of sin is in this sense a condition of newness; it looks toward the future.” What liberating news! What a clarion call to utilize the sacrament’s grace and power for our lives! Forgiveness breaks the pattern of evil by opening up something completely new and creative.

A foundational pastoral understanding of the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent for Anglicans is its voluntary nature. This is especially noted in that “Confession” rally cry heard (but whose origin I cannot recall) “all may, some should, none must.” For Episcopalians, we come to this sacrament out of a personal need to claim and grow in God’s grace, not out of a legal compelling or even normative expectation of piety. Clark Hyde draws three probable circumstances in which the rite is chosen by some: the Prodigal, the Perplexed, and the Pilgrim. In a word, the Pilgrim’s choosing the Sacrament is what is relevant here, but in order to promote the sacrament’s use, the analogy to the Prodigal and the Perplexed is helpful. The Prodigal is someone who has “left the fold” and is returning. The sacrament may be a helpful resource of claiming

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43 Ibid., 32.
44 Hyde, 102-103.
God's grace and of re-incorporation into the Baptizing Community with the understanding that Reconciliation of a Penitent and Baptism are related—Reconciliation recalls the promises of Baptism. The Perplexed is someone who is struggling with specific questions or is deeply troubled by specific actions in his or her life. The perplexed need assurance of forgiveness and a release for their guilt for healing to occur.45 Hyde relates that the Pilgrim “is the person who is consciously and conscientiously seeking a deeper knowledge of God and a more faithful Christian life through spiritual discipline and direction.”46 This sacrament calls one to a greater level of spiritual maturity.

We will offer the sacrament of Reconciliation of a Penitent to reinforce (and perhaps teach to some) that the church is the “reconciling community.” “We are the community in which reconciliation is experienced, and the community that celebrates and proclaims reconciliation to the world.”47 Our worship and liturgical actions shape our worldview—in other words, our lens of looking at the world and its needs around us and our response to those needs. Our rituals and liturgies embody this world view and the values we maintain. Participating in these value-making events, parishioners are challenged to appropriate them in their lives through their actions. Making Reconciliation of a Penitent a regular practice of the church community will shape the collective mind towards the work of reconciliation, helping us acquire what Hyde calls a “sense of style” in which we announce to others “the way we people are.” If we cannot act out the work of

45 Ibid., 103-104.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 107.
reconciliation among ourselves, how can we participate in its work in the world with integrity, who will believe us!

As a sacrament of healing, reconciliation does not so much focus on the past, with “breaking a moral code,” as it does with building a new future. This new life is always a sign of God’s acceptance of us and love for us as we are given in Christ’s cross on which he intercedes for us, “Father forgive.” Reconciliation involves the building, healing and nurturing of relationships, and we receive reconciliation from the sacrament bearing its name, not as we list the sins of commission and omission, but as we understand through its praxis why these actions lead to brokenness and separation. The intended outcome is not so much forgiveness in isolation, but freedom to live one’s life as one forgiven and restored to union with God’s purposes and life. This hope for the sacrament is expressed in a useful publication from the Order of the Holy Cross entitled, “How to Make a Confession.”

If you have decided to make a confession, you have probably already gone a long way towards making a preparation...Being able to make the decision says a lot about you: it says that you have faith in a God who loves you and who wants to forgive you, who proved that desire for your forgiveness by giving his only Son to die for you; it says that you recognize his love and your falling short of the mark. Most of all, it says you are prepared to begin once again to live the life you received at your baptism, the life of the Risen Lord Jesus.48

48Ibid., 125.
Offering the Sacrament

The Reconciliation of a Penitent will be offered in the church prior to the Thursday Pilgrims’ Eucharist (held in the chapel). A priest will be available from 5:00 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. before the 6:00 p.m. service. Teaching about the sacrament will be necessary, and we will hold several forums during Christian Formation times to do this. Also we will develop materials that explain the context and use of the sacrament and especially the sacrament’s relationship to pilgrimage and reconciliation. Special attention will be made to both the pastoral and practical aspects of participating in the sacrament. Several resources, including the Order of the Holy Cross pamphlet, “How to Make a Confession,” will be available. We will teach the availability of the sacrament in our adult and youth confirmation preparation classes, thereby providing necessary instruction our newly formed and emerging adult Episcopalians. Regular and frequent publication of the schedule when the sacrament is available will make for easier access. The sacrament will also be available on Ash Wednesday and during Holy Week, tying its observance to these public times of penitence and reconciliation in the church.

A Place for Reconciliation

Eventually, we will develop a small Reconciliation Chapel off the chancel of the church in which this sacrament can be observed, offering a small, intimate and private place to meet. This Chapel will also provide a physical space that helps make the work of reconciliation incarnate to the people in the parish, much like Christ Church’s
Reconciliation Corner. This will be a sacred place where people may go anytime to pray for the work of reconciliation and peace. On Sundays, we will use this space as a place to offer prayers of healing to those who desire them as persons leave the Communion rail and return to their seats.

Why is this important? It will be a holy, sanctified space which, in liturgical terms, sanctifies time and indeed, all of life. It will serve to bring God’s redeeming action into our lives as pilgrims, not by focusing on the past, but by bringing us to an eternally present “now.” This holy space sanctifies the present in such a way that we are joined to the eternity of God’s “now.” This is a place where both past and future collide in the present. This is a place that causes us to see ourselves, not as we are, but as we might be in God’s glory; just as God’s glory, and the highest expression of that glory is achieved by humanity’s sacred and God-infused imagination. Holy space induces stillness, quiet, and invites us to linger. One receives the story in these sacred places. One can only then tell the story as it has been received, but translated into the language of one’s experience, both past and present. And the experience in which one receives that which these sacred places offer, is prayer. T. S. Eliot said it another way:

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At anytime or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment

This brings up an important consideration. Is the chapel set apart for special purposes just because a bishop or priest prays over the space and asks that it be set apart? Well, of course this is true. But the answer is deeper. The bishop's prayers mean little if no one gathers to pray and use the space. Even without a bishop's blessing, places are deemed holy by sacred use. As Eliot puts it, places are holy because "prayer has been valid" here, not so much by the bishop but by all the faithful who have gathered through the centuries to pray. This is the place where God has been received in word and sacrament and where life is made holy through the claiming of God's presence.

Our Reconciliation Chapel will be informed by what I call the theology of place. After a few years, this includes a "residual" holiness that is generated by the ongoing use of sacred places in the life of the church and her people's lives. There is a holiness that endures and lingers long after the generation of invoking the sacred presence. Because of this generated holiness where prayer has been valid, people will come again and again to these places and offer prayers of remembrance, thanksgiving and intercession for the future.

Thursdays at Nativity will be "pilgrim days." By adding a special Pilgrims' Eucharist that is preceded by the regular offering of the sacrament of the Reconciliation of a Penitent we will encourage the development of a mind and spirit for reconciliation within

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the parish. Once a month, we will offer the labyrinth before and after this service.

Currently, the labyrinth is offered on a Friday evening and Saturday morning, but making it available on Thursdays once a month will be an additional connection to the spiritual resources available for personal and community reconciliation.

However, we will not limit this activity to Thursdays. Our Sunday prayers of the people will include prayers for reconciliation, peace and for our enemies. We will include the Community of the Cross of Nails ROTA as well. We will begin using the Reconciliation Chapel as a place to offer prayers of healing on Sundays after people return from the altar rail. Through our worship and liturgical life, the rule of prayer will engage our imaginations in such a way to claim the Gospel role as Christ’s ambassadors—committed to the work of reconciliation, even as it is revealed in the actions of our liturgy whereby we participate in the work of reconciliation.
In the late spring of 2003, the depth of the work of reconciliation the Church of the Nativity had accomplished internally concerning a painful event within the parish of widely encompassing, yet divergently understood proportions, was enormous. The laity’s leadership in many of Nativity’s ongoing ministries was a hallmark of Nativity’s ministry in pastoral care, Christian formation, and outreach. Nativity is thriving because of commitment by parishioners to significant ministries, coupled with their participation in these ministries.

Revisiting the sequence of events around the genesis of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation shows the importance of the laity’s involvement and leadership and why we would consider training as an important aspect of our mission. In June of 2003, we received the initial special thanksgiving gift of $3,000 to promote any ministries of the parish that had reconciliation as their goal. Looming in the near future was a huge opportunity for the parish to participate in the reconciliation and healing workshop at the National Children’s Advocacy Center’s National Symposium the following April. The workshop’s goal was to teach advocates working with abused children about a uniquely developed use of the labyrinth as a tool for spiritual healing in an otherwise therapeutic and secular environment. Concurrently, the Diocese of
Alabama was also seeking additional support for its annual Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage held every August as a joint reconciliation event with the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.

The dream of the Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage emerged and the initial donor enthusiastically committed an additional $30,000, requesting that we dream about creative ways we could promote reconciliation and pilgrimage ministries, expanding the impact we could have at Nativity by training and including the laity in this important work. The newly formed planning committee assessed the emergence of new healing, reconciliation, and pilgrimage ministries and increasing participation in existing healing, reconciliation, and pilgrimage ministries. These ministries include the labyrinth, rosary, healing services, Stations of the Cross, The Hours, Centering Prayer/lectio divina, sacred silence, sacred art/iconography, sacred music, the sacred feminine, Rites of Reconciliation and Confession, Cursillo, the Enneagram, wilderness experiences, and pilgrimages. These ministries recognize that healing is a holistic experience encompassing mind, body, and spirit, that spirituality is not focused only on pastoral care, and that intentional and situational experiences can provide the means for God’s intervention. The Center would be an umbrella structure within the parish in order to coordinate and further promote these existing ministries, and also would determine ways to offer these reconciliation and healing ministries to those outside the church.

The Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation was founded upon the vision that the powerful healing and reconciliation ministry offered by Kerry Holder could be
expanded to include more persons working collaboratively with clergy and professional staff to increase the possibilities of this ministry (much like Stephen Ministry). The Task Force began work in the Fall of 2003.

The inclusion of the laity in the leadership and vision has been a defining aspect of the Center’s fabric. In March of 2004, the Vestry authorized the existence of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation. Although the Center would have a half-time lay professional director and a cleric chaplain, it would be administered by a lay Board of Advisors. In September of 2004, the Center applied for a grant from Trinity Church, Wall Street, to support its work by the development of lay participation. The category of grant sought from Trinity was in the “Spiritual Formation and Development—Deep Leadership” category in order to permeate the parish leadership with the work of reconciliation by training leaders and developing materials for this ministry. Embedded in the request for the grant is the goal to train lay persons, much like we train persons for Stephen Ministry, which enables persons to use their gifts for pastoral care, to help with reconciliation ministries in which pathways and pilgrimages of healing are designed to bring healing, reconciliation and wholeness to relationships and lives broken.

The grant application was prefaced by the following description of our work and needs:

The Church of the Nativity has opened a Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation (NCPR) the purpose of which is to become a nationally recognized provider of a variety of experiences that guide the participant to spiritual wholeness through reconciliation and pilgrimage / journey work. Requests for services already greatly exceed the ability of the Church of the Nativity to provide meaningful response. In order to address this issue, NCPR will develop a leadership program designed around reconciliation and pilgrimage / journey that will:
1. Enhance the skills of existing leaders and train new laity at the Church of the Nativity, to lead, facilitate and train others in the various ministries of the Center.

2. Using the model of pilgrimage and journey, provide training and experiences in reconciliation and healing.  

In December, 2004, we learned that Nativity had been awarded a $90,000 Trinity Grant to be distributed over three years in order to accomplish our goals and especially to provide Deep Leadership that promotes the spiritual formation and development of the laity within the parish, especially raising up leaders with a "reconciliation" spirituality. This was indeed a happy day for the Center!

As Nativity processes incoming reconciliation requests, we will give leaders-in-training opportunities to work in a hands-on fashion while being mentored to develop their skills and nurture their gifts. There is a two-track model for leaders, called Pilgrimage Companions:

1. We will accept at least 15 people who wish to have training in reconciliation work. They need have no prior professional background in resolution of private or public conflict situations.

2. We will accept at least five people having relevant professional backgrounds for training to form the Center’s professional Resource Group (RG). This group will diagnose and create a specific architecture of healing around incoming requests providing assessment of inflammatory situations both within and without the Church that require discernment around reconciliation issues.

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50 Grant application for the Nativity Center of Pilgrimage and Reconciliation submitted to Trinity Church, Wall Street, in September, 2004.
By the end of two years we will have completed three training retreats that will familiarize leaders-in-training with some of the basic dynamics of pastoral ministry. The participants will gain familiarity with the goals of the Center and reflect on their own brokenness and needs for reconciliation, seeing the place for ritual and sacramental healing. (See Training Outline section on pages 125-133 below). Through our training, we will have at least 15 people trained in facilitating journeys of reconciliation. We will also have 5 – 6 people forming a strong resource / advisory team that is diagnostic in nature. These people will also be leaders in our small group ministry—Circles of Reconciliation. Our hope is to have about 120 people in these small groups who are involved in the conversation around reconciliation and wholeness. These people in the parish will experience a Benedictine Discipline, praying, studying and working for reconciliation issues and taking reconciliation to the wider world of work, home and civic engagement.

Rationale for Training Pilgrimage Companions

Our lay leaders for this ministry are called Pilgrimage Companions. It is significant for the Church of the Nativity and this work that we expand the leadership and the praxis of this ministry to include the laity and not only the ordained and lay professionals. Nativity is a place where ministry is shared in significant ways with the laity. This effort grows
from the idea of mutual ministry that is being defined and growing within the larger church.

Contemplative prayer practices, especially Centering Prayer, are an important dimension of Nativity’s mutual ministry with the laity. All of these groups are led by the laity with very little clergy support. We will also encourage the practice of Benedictine Spirituality. An important aspect of our Pilgrimage leaders’ formation is the contemplative approach to pastoral care utilized by Sarah Butler through the Caring Ministries of St. John’s Cathedral in Denver, Colorado. This approach will inform the actual ministry and work of our Companions as they listen, discern, and create pathways of healing.

Nativity has learned many things in our pastoral care ministries through offering Stephen Ministry as an extension of the pastoral work of the clergy. Stephen Ministry training provides many specific useful training concepts that will assist our training the Pilgrimage Companions. Although we will not copy Stephen Ministry tools, we will utilize several concepts in forming and training our Companions.

Mutual Ministry: Celebrating Diverse Gifts and Friendship

Mutual ministry finds its foundations in the baptismal covenant of all Christians in which we recognize that we “share in Christ’s priesthood” and are all given gifts by the Spirit for ministry as well as being created as diverse, unique creatures of God, in God’s image. Clergy are not the only ones who can offer reconciliation ministries and pilgrimage design! Jesus no longer calls us servants, but friends, we learn from John’s Gospel. The hierarchical understanding of ministry from the “top down” is now replaced with a relational model.

One thing Christians claim about God is that God is three but one—God is known through the work and experience of the Holy Trinity. In other words, God is relational and God’s purposes are revealed through the inter-relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus calls us friends, no longer servants, and invites us to participate in the work of the Trinity, sharing in the creating, redeeming and sanctifying work of the Godhead. Science is affirming that we are indeed relational beings; we are a complex web of relationships of particles, atoms, molecules, cells, organs. The science of our existence affirms that our being created in the image of God is never separated from the idea of God as Trinity and relational.

The relational and nesting character of all creation reveals a communitarian approach to God, reflective of the Trinity. Creation as a system of interwoven lives leads us to affirm that relationship, partnership, and mutuality lie at the heart of being creatures of God. When we follow the communitarian path to God, it transforms our relationship with creation. We discover to be a people sent is to be a people whose mission is characterized by listening, learning, and leading. These gospel virtues flow from a recognition and respect of the Trinitarian presence in all that is. The Trinity is not only how God is, it is how we, created in God’s image, come to and rest in God. God is community and so are we. A
theology of mutual ministry asks us not to begin with a singular one, but
with a oneness birthed through the union of mutual love.\textsuperscript{52}

The idea of mutual ministry inherent in our lay training recognizes that we will embody
in our ministry the mutual respect that is eternally present in the life of God: the Trinity.
Together, we collaborate in listening and discerning God’s work of creating, redeeming
and sanctifying the experiences of each other and of others to whom we have been called
to offer ministry. Forrester offers this insight:

Mutual ministry ....is how we live in a community of brothers and sisters
where leadership is no longer structured around a hierarchy of those of
greater importance or lesser importance, but around the mutual nurturing
of the gifts of all the members of the community. In the Episcopal
Church, mutual ministry has become shorthand for a baptismally grounded
church, where ministry is not the prerogative of the ordained, but is now
the shared ministry of all baptized people....Being baptized is to become
one who accepts the call to serve others....This shared ministry reflects the
conviction that there is one ministry in Christ and all baptized people—lay
and ordained—participate in it according to the gifts given them.\textsuperscript{53}

We all have different gifts and the recognition and collaboration of these gifts enables a
richer approach to life and ministry. Our Pilgrimage Companions will help each other
discern their gifts and will celebrate the diversity that God bestows upon us. This
diversity is a source of creativity, just as we notice it in the world around us. Our
Companions will be trained and nurtured in the idea of partnership embraced by the
concept of mutual ministry. We are not isolated players, even as God is not isolated and
bifurcated into three persons, but a unity of persons always working together in mutuality
and collaboration.

\textsuperscript{52} Kevin Thew Forrester, "I have Called you Friends..." An Invitation to Ministry. (New York: Church
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., viii.
Forrester introduces the idea of midwifery as a principal role of leaders for mutual ministry. This is certainly true for the work our Companions will be doing together. They are not there to manipulate or control or even solve problems, but rather to enable healing and new life to be birthed from within the lives of those they are called to serve. Forrester draws upon the work of Parker Palmer to add intimacy to the equation of mutual ministry leadership. “Leadership implies intimacy—knowledge of the one with whom I am in relationship. [This knowledge originates] in compassion or love….The leader is one who seeks to reunify and reconstruct our broken selves and worlds.”54 Our Companions will seek to reunify and reconstruct the broken selves and world that comes seeking reconciliation and a pathway to healing. Compassion, intimacy, trust, and love are essential ingredients. This ministry is Christ’s ministry of reconciliation, one ministry we can share, but one we offer according to our differing and diverse gifts.

**Grounded in Contemplative Spirituality**

Before we can offer pathways to healing and reconciliation using the many spiritual tools available in designing a pilgrimage for those seeking to benefit from the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation, we must listen. We must first listen to God and to God’s Spirit at work within our own experiences as healing Companions and listen to God in the lives of those who come to the Center. To listen to God, one must first be aware of God’s presence. This posture of openness and receptivity to God’s presence enables our careful listening. It allows our emptying ourselves of our own pre-conceived notion of God and what God is doing in us and others. Sarah Butler, who developed the

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54 Ibid., 37-39.
Caring Ministry at St. John’s Cathedral in Denver, a lay pastoral care ministry that is also grounded in contemplative spirituality writes, “Caring ministry is about what we know and who we are. We share the fruit of our intimate relationship with Christ. Our cultivation of listening awe-filled prayer nurtures our capacity to listen to one who is hurting.”

Practicing contemplative prayer disciplines that combine silence with other forms of listening to God (e.g. lectio divina or Ignatian exercises, etc.) in which we nurture our relationship with God and build our skills of listening to God will allow us to listen more compassionately and openly to others. This way of listening should become second nature to our Companions and is the foundation of any listening we will do. We will offer practical training in listening skills as well, drawing from the wealth of resources available, but we will begin our training by recognizing the foundations offered through a contemplative discipline.

To be contemplative is to understand that all of life is infused with God’s presence and influence. God is present in all things. We are hopeful people because we understand that it is God’s good pleasure to give us the Kingdom (Luke 12: 34). Fear and scarcity are overcome by abundance and peace. Contemplative prayer enjoins us to God’s presence, not because God is not there for us, but because we get too busy and noisy for God to be noticed and heard. Reconciliation in all forms grows from the implicit Christian understanding that we are first reconciled with God. Contemplative prayer recognizes our reconciliation with God and is an act of union with the Divine. The more we recognize our union with God in Christ, especially as practiced in contemplative prayer disciplines, the more we are reconciled with God in the living of our lives.

55Butler, 10-11.
Sarah Butler recognizes a three-fold rhythm that emerges from our contemplative practice intersecting with our caring and healing ministries:

1. divine/human collaboration
2. care and prayer as relationship
3. parallel dynamics of lectio divina and pastoral care.\(^{56}\)

In our divine/human collaboration, we not only recognize the validity of mutual ministry, but also that although God is already aware of the needs present, we are invited to participate with God in the healing that God will provide. In our work of reconciliation, just as in St. John’s pastoral care ministry, we participate in something larger than our efforts, yet something that is indeed brought to fruition by our participation. We practice this divine and human collaboration in contemplative prayer practices. As we consent to God’s presence and action within us, we can begin the process of listening to God. We can “let go” of the need to control and indeed find ourselves as God’s friends in this work. Through this prayer, God’s Spirit which dwells within us and our spirits are united.\(^{57}\)

Butler also informs our ministry of reconciliation as being nurtured by the rhythms of contemplative practice through the idea of care and prayer as relationship. Both contemplative prayer and pastoral care call us into relationship. In contemplative prayer, we respond to and nurture our relationship with God by simply availing ourselves of God’s presence and allowing God, our friend, to speak to us. The relationship becomes

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 14-16.
two-way. As regularly practiced by many, prayer is about our talking to God, not listening. We command center stage. Contemplative prayer nurtures the equity of the relationship! Pastoral care and the care we will offer to persons seeking reconciliation also grow out of a two-way relationship. As in pastoral care, we will not be "solving problems." Although our ministry will have more of a diagnostic and problem-solving dimension than pastoral care, we must always recognize that the pathways for healing and spiritual resources offered are there for God’s healing to become manifest. We can only help our pilgrims identify both the deserts and well springs of water in their own journeys. Their pathway for healing will emerge from within them. Although our experiences may inform, they are not definitive of someone else’s healing. \(^{58}\)

A creative comparison of the process of *lectio divina* to the pastoral care-giving process understood at St. John’s is helpful in forming our application for reconciliation ministries through our Pilgrimage Companions’ work with pilgrims seeking reconciliation and healing. The rhythm of contemplative practices can provide a clear methodology that is helpful to our Companions. *Lectio divina* begins in reading and reflecting in which a dialog with God emerges from both our listening to what God is saying to us through scripture and our emotional response to God deep within us. Centering prayer then facilitates the move from active modes of prayer (what is called *meditatio* and *oratio*) to the “silent, awe-filled prayer of presence (*contemplatio*)” \(^{59}\)

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\(^{58}\) Ibid., 16-19.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 19.
Lectio divina begins with listening to the “Sacred Story” from scripture. Just as lectio divina usually involves hearing the story more than once and hearing the emotional response from more than one person, so will our pilgrimage companions hear the story (several times) and respond from their deep experience of God in their own lives. This will offer a richer response to what God can be doing within each of us. Butler shows the parallels between the process of lectio divina and pastoral care. Using her understanding of the lectio divina process, she helps to draw parallels for our application of reconciliation ministry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lectio Divina</th>
<th>Reconciliation Ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lectio Divina</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the story in God’s Word (lectio):</td>
<td>Listen to the pilgrim’s story:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the story for information.</td>
<td>Be present to the person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take it in. Get acquainted with the passage of scripture.</td>
<td>Listen to the story for information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receive it non-judgmentally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflect (meditatio):</strong> become actively involved with the story. Pay attention to what attracts your attention. Notice your own feelings. Reflect on your own inner experience of the Scripture. Allow the Gospels to be a mirror of your own life.</td>
<td>Pay attention to what attracts your attention. Begin to see the unique person that God loves. Recognize and accept the person’s inner experience. Mirror back your perception of the pilgrim’s inner experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respond (oratio):</strong> Be free to express what is pouring out of the reflection: praise, tears, repentance, thanksgiving, etc. How is God becoming formed in you? Offer thanksgiving.</td>
<td>Allow the pilgrim to respond to the mirroring above; notice the emotions of the pilgrim. How have these experiences formed the pilgrim’s relationship with God and others? Offer thanksgiving for the insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rest (contemplation):</strong> Let go of all reflections and responses in order to allow God to speak to you in the mystery of silence and quiet presence. Surrender to the mystery and awe.</td>
<td>Let go of your need to control the outcome. Be silent for a while. Allow God to speak to all through the silence. Be silent in the awe of God’s divine action welling up in all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 20.
For Butler's pastoral care work, the process ends with "resting" with the caregiver. Much like Stephen Ministry, this ministry at St. John's in Denver is a ministry of presence with no desire for problem solving. However, for our Pilgrim Companions, this is just the beginning of a process in which they will use other tools, skills and resources in order to collaborate with God and the pilgrim on a pathway for healing.

**Stephen Ministry Applications for Training**

A review of the Stephen Ministry training materials reveals important applications and skills that can be incorporated into the Pilgrimage Companions' training. Although the Church of the Nativity is a licensed Stephen Ministry Congregation, we will not merely copy the Stephen Ministry training materials, but rather use them as a partial roadmap in identifying skills and processes that will be helpful to our Pilgrim Companions.

Stephen Ministry is ultimately a ministry of presence in which pastoral care is offered through listening and being present to the care receivers—much like the Caring Ministry at St. John's Cathedral in Denver. Our reconciliation ministry has an application aspect to it in which we will assist pilgrims with the design of pilgrimages and healing journeys, pathways. Unlike Stephen Ministry, in which often the need and appropriateness of the caring relationship must be validated in the mind of the receiver, our pilgrims will come to the Center for this healing work. Although they may be referred by clergy, the pilgrims will determine on the front end the viability of their participation in this
ministry. The initial Stephen Ministry training focuses on establishing the relationship and convincing the receiver that Stephen Ministry is a good thing. The Stephen Ministry relationship can be for a period of six months or longer, with an "opened ended" duration. Our pilgrimage consultations in which we utilize Pilgrimage Companions will probably last no longer than two to three months. Unlike the Stephen Ministry visits, these visits will require some deliberate assessment. However, an important step in the initial Stephen Ministry function of establishing a relationship is building trust between care giver and care receiver. This level of trust will need to be built among our Pilgrimage Companions and their pilgrims. This can only come from open, honest dialog in which the Companions listen to the presenting problem and encourage the pilgrims to tell their stories as well. It will be important to make certain that the Companions understand what the desired outcome for the ministry relationship will be in the pilgrim's assessment. Stephen Ministry training encourages the care giver also to determine what kind of assistance the care receiver has knowingly utilized up to this point. The care giver will determine who has provided the assistance for the care receiver and how has it been useful to this point.62

The art of listening is the first skill to teach to care givers. This skill is taught in a practical way, utilizing basic listening exercises. The Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage sees contemplative prayer disciplines as the foundation of our ministry and its germane ingredient of careful, discerning, non-judgmental listening. This is the beginning. Like Stephen Ministry, listening skills are an important aspect of our training. Stephen Ministry points out that an important aspect of listening is to listen not only for

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words but for emotions and feelings. Feelings and emotions can be observed and discerned, but must also be recognized. Skills like active listening, mirroring, and reflective listening are important to our Pilgrim Companions. 63

Stephen Ministry training includes a section on “sharing your faith.” What is important for our Companions is how our life stories intersect with the Gospel Story of our faith. Early on in their training, they will reflect theologically upon their spiritual journeys and share this with the other Companions. Stephen Ministry training includes a module on “Scriptural Resources.” Instead of offering this kind of prescriptive resources, which are helpful, our Companions will either be involved with Education for Ministry or regularly attend one of the parish’s Bible studies.

The Stephen Ministry training program includes other important subjects that we will also incorporate into our training. These include but are not limited to confidentiality, professionalism, assertiveness, the availability of community resources, and the difference between what we are offering and professional therapy.

Let’s now take a look at the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation training program for our Pilgrimage Companions.

63 Ibid., 29-35.
Training Methodology and Philosophy

The educational model will be based on the Gospel’s good news of our intrinsic wholeness and an understanding of learning and integration as a process which provides an experience involving personal and collaborative reflection, didactic instruction and practical opportunities for involvement in situations of brokenness and healing.

We will create a learning environment where each trainee experiences love and respect; we will at the same time create an environment of emotional safety and understand clear boundaries. Open communication, especially in situations of disagreement or conflict, will be encouraged. We understand that we must work on our own difficult issues of reconciliation before we can be present authentically for anyone else. As we work towards our integration we will help each other to identify the barriers both conscious and unconscious that may impede effectiveness.

Trainees are expected to:

- Attend three retreats (20 hours each) during which they will become familiar with some of the basic dynamics of pastoral ministry. They will gain familiarity with the goals of the Center, reflect on their own life journeys, specifically on places of brokenness and reconciliation, and will see the place of ritual in sacramental healing.

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64 These materials have been developed in discussions with Ms. Zara Renander, Director of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation; The Rev'd Kerry Holder, Chaplain to the Center; the Center’s Training Team, and The Rev’d Andy Anderson.
- Have a strong biblical background and to have either completed EFM, *Kerygma*
  whole book studies, or some other comparable study (or be currently involved).
- Follow a daily spiritual discipline.
- Attend church regularly.
- Participate in and help plan pilgrimage activities.
- Be available as necessary to assist in situations requiring reconciliation work as they arise.
- Engage in a narrative theological approach seeing the congruence of their histories and “The Story” (scripture).
- Provide written materials for reflection.
- Have a sacramental / ritual awareness and sensitivity.
- Participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation of a Penitent at least twice a year.
- Lead one of Nativity’s Circle of Reconciliation small groups.
- Participate in one of Nativity’s existing “circles of reconciliation” ministries such as Labyrinth, Centering Prayer support groups, Cursillo, Anglican Rosary, etc.
Training Modules for Companions in Reconciliation^65

1. Self-reflection: Spiritual / life autobiography:
   A written (minimum three-page) spiritual autobiography signifying the signposts and
diversions along one’s life-long spiritual path to be presented to the group orally.
Each will have one hour for a verbal presentation.

2. Group building exercises:
   These exercises are designed to build trust and collegiality in the group and
demonstrate community and false community. The Glove Exercise, for example, is
done with participants in a circle with a latex glove on one hand. The group stands
in a circle and describes their experience of connection and disconnection with the
person’s next to them (gloved hand or un-gloved hand reaching out to the person
next to them in the circle).

3. Introduction to Benedictine Rule of Life for Lay Persons:
   Trainees will be expected to live a rule of life. A Rule of Life is a system of spiritual
disciplines including: work, scripture study, and prayer. A Rule effects a balance
between worship, work and leisure. Benedictines are noted for their charism of
hospitality and balance. The Benedictine rule fits well with our Episcopal cultural
heritage.66

^65 Ibid.
66 All trainees will be given a copy of John McQuisten II’s book Always we Begin Again: The Benedictine
Way of Living (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1996), and will also be encouraged to read Ester de
4. Confidentiality:

Trainees will be entrusted with some complicated and vulnerable transitions for pilgrim participants. The same level of confidentiality that is required of Stephen Ministers will be taught and practiced and required. Companions will allow for complete anonymity of pilgrims. Methods of discretion will be taught to trainees.

5. Theology and Scriptural basis for reconciliation:

- Movement from brokenness towards healing, scarcity towards abundance.
- Provision of case studies – servanthood vs. servitude (co-dependency).
- Need for kenosis (emptiness and letting go of control on part of leader, not fixing).
- **Theology of Forgiveness:** This section will be based on the theology and practice of forgiveness known through the Community of the Cross of Nails as well as that found in the Taizé community of Taizé, France. It derives from the life and ministry of Brother Roger and can be applied both specifically and universally.

6. Ritual as sacrament:

Trainees will be introduced to the importance of ritual in transformation. They will be asked to engage in their own Rite of Reconciliation and be asked to have personal experience using at least two different rituals for different situations. They will be involved in design of ritual. A major resource will be Elaine Ramshaw’s book, *Ritual and Pastoral Care.*

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7. Communication and Interpersonal Relations:

This section will be based on the precept of our Baptismal Covenant of ‘respecting the dignity of every human person.’

7a. Confidentiality.

7b. Holy Listening, including skills for listening: active listening, mirroring, reflective listening, whole body attention, understanding emotions, cross-cultural understandings.

7c. What to do on the first contact.

8. Alcoholism, Co-dependency, and Dependency dynamics:

This section of teaching will be based on the Hazelden model of spirituality and addiction. A twelve-step approach and working knowledge will be necessary in understanding the brokenness of addictive thinking and living.

9. Family issues and dynamics:

Based on family systems models with a spirituality based in contemplative thought. The mainstay of the theology working in this section of teaching is the idea of the *Imago Dei* or person and family created in the image of God.

9a. Case studies around family dynamics.

9b. Developmental issues.

9c. Divorce.
10. Shame based behavior:
This section is based spiritually also in the human being’s central core being based in
the image of God. We will premise all we do from here on the dynamics,
consequences and spiritual assumptions of intrinsic goodness and that life is to be
lived abundantly. This model reverses a fear-based model of living and will draw
from the examples of what the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare teach us about shame.

11. Illness and healing – death and dying:
We will work with life-affirming theology even in the face of illness and death. The
underlying psychological structures will be based on the important work of Hospice
models. This will be a progressive and stage-based learning wherein acceptance and
transformation become possible even in the face of death.

12. Overview of the ministries of Nativity as they relate and support the Center.

13. Pilgrimage:
Trainees will take some leadership and design role in a formal pilgrimage and have
the opportunity to reflect on that experience in the light of all the above noted
categories.

15. Issues around human sexuality.

16. Leading Small Groups:
Familiarity with Episcopal Divinity School’s Good News: A Congregational
Resource for Reconciliation; group dynamics, group facilitation.
17. Anti-Racism Module taken from Diocesan materials.


**Additional Training for the Resource Group**

In addition to the above, the Resource Group will receive training sessions devoted to

- Understanding the precipitating problem.
- Discerning sources of ministry – knowing our limitations and when we must refer to others.
- Working and relating collegially in an interdisciplinary fashion in spiritual work.
- Creating the ‘treatment plan’ – designing the architecture of healing.
- Crises theory and intervention.
- Conflict, mediation and reconciliation.
- Evaluation and assessment component.

**Supervision and Evaluation of Pilgrimage Companions**

Healthy ministry involves consistent supervision and evaluation. All Pilgrimage Companions will participate in ongoing supervision on a monthly basis.

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68 This material has been developed by the Director of the Nativity Center for Reconciliation and Pilgrimage, Ms. Zara Ranander.
Areas which will be covered are:

1. The relationship of the Pilgrimage Companion with the situation or person requesting care, or the pilgrimage experience.
   - An evaluation of the situation – how did you initially assess the situation?
     What tools, if any were used?
   - Expectations and assumptions.
   - The challenges.
   - The strengths and limitations of the leader.
   - What are the fears?

2. Theological / Faith / Spiritual Nature of situation / pilgrimage.
   - What Christian resources can or should be applied?
   - Where does The Story intersect with the story and situation?
   - Do the persons / situation call for a deeper understanding of theology? If so, what and how did you introduce this subject?
   - How have you experienced God’s help and strength in your life?

3. The Leader’s feelings and self-assessment.
   - How are you tempted to fix this situation?
   - What do you fear?
   - Why did you not address a certain piece / dynamic of the situation?
   - How are you changing? What are you learning?
   - How difficult is it to realize that you are powerless?
   - Should other resources be involved in this ministry?
• What spiritual challenge did you engage when you engaged in leadership in this situation?

4. The situation / Person receiving ministry / pilgrimage.

• What has shifted in the situation since you first visited?
• What is the next step?
• Is there an area where the person / situation seems stuck?
• Are they ready to listen and forgive? Why? Why not?
• How do you plan to address any next steps that need to be taken?
• Is it time to change the approach?
• How has Nativity been an agent of reconciliation in this circumstance?
SECTION SEVEN
Forming a Community of Reconciliation Through Understanding and Implementing a Ministry of Restorative Justice

Reconciliation and Justice: Biblical and Theological Background

Our hope at the Church of the Nativity is to develop a community of reconciliation that is fed by the underlying spirituality and theology of reconciliation as we have received it from God in Christ. Reconciliation is ultimately new life, restored life—the restoration of that which was meant to be—relationships intended to be otherwise. In the Christian perspective, reconciliation happens first between humanity and God as God’s gift to us. God is the subject of reconciliation. This gift is finally and ultimately understood through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

John W. de Gruchy understands reconciliation taking place in the “grand narrative” of redemption, beginning with creation and humanity’s fall (understood in many varied ways by differing traditions).69 Beginning with God’s Covenant with Abraham, God deliberately begins the process of offering salvation to the world and reconciling the intended relationship that God sought in creation with humanity as God’s partner and as stewards of creation. According to de Gruchy, the church’s ministry of reconciliation is

based upon this conviction that human beings are meant to be in harmony with God, one another, and nature. As a result of human disobedience, the “fall” takes place and human beings are alienated from God, each other and the created order. Reconciliation would not be necessary in a theological sense if these convictions are not held. God, as the subject of reconciliation in one act of salvation after another, finally culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, reconciles humanity to God and makes possible our reconciliation with each other and nature. Out of love, grace, and justice, God freely chooses to overcome our alienation and restore the relationships to their intended order. Because all are created imago Dei, all humanity is capable of sharing in God’s reconciled existence.70

Reconciliation is not without activity that both results in and shows forth new life. Our reconciliation with God came about because of Jesus’ death, but is given its fulfillment in his resurrection. He is the new creation and our reconciliation with God proclaims that we share in the new creation. Just as the rite of reconciliation looks not toward the sinful past but towards a fruitful future, a healed way of living (with self and God and with others), reconciliation will result in new beginnings because of restored relationships.

Justice is a part of the process of reconciliation because for Christians, God’s justice, which always has a bias toward the poor and the oppressed, results in restored relationships and a restored community. God’s justice is always tempered with mercy, but based upon love. God’s love is unwavering in the effort to include those who have, because of their own fault (sin), excluded themselves. A review of our biblical and

70 Ibid., 48-49.
theological understanding of reconciliation can lead to an understanding of the nature of reconciliation ministries and how specifically the work of restorative justice as a means of reconciliation is an appropriate avenue of reconciliation ministry for the reconciled and reconciling community.

An important understanding about reconciliation will be repeated: Truth plus forgiveness equals reconciliation. Truth must be spoken and heard ---everyone's truth must be heard. Forgiveness is germane to the process of reconciliation. However, in our Christian understanding of forgiveness, it is gratuitous and a result of grace....while we were yet sinners, Christ Jesus died for us. Gregory Jones reminds us that God's forgiveness comes before we repent.71 Jesus embodied God’s forgiveness and the community of believers who are known as his Body, the Church, who grew out of the small community of Jesus’ disciples, continue to show forth God’s forgiveness. Forgiveness shifts its focus from the Temple sacrificial system to a community who lives forgiveness and offers it in God’s name to others.72 Like God, in sharing God’s reconciled life with others, we are to live as if people had repented and offer forgiveness prior to repentance, just as God has done for us in Christ. However, as Jones rightly leans toward an understanding of Rebecca Chopp, repentance does not earn forgiveness. But repentance is the only adequate response to God’s forgiveness. If we want to re-join the covenanted relationship that God’s forgiveness extends, then in a loving response and gratitude to this forgiveness that cannot be earned, we are restored and reconciliation takes place.73 Forgiveness then, is about the restoration to/of community. It is not about abating individual guilt.

72 Ibid., 111.
73 Ibid., 121.
Sometimes reparation is called for. Lamenting is always appropriate in order to hear the cries of those wronged. Jones lists several features of embodying forgiveness that point to the work of restorative justice:

- Truthful judgment about what has happened.
- Willingness to acknowledge anger, resentment, bitterness from both parties.
- A concern for the well being of the other(s) as God’s children (all created in the image of God).
- Listening to narratives, both by the person who is to be forgiven and by those embodying forgiveness.74

This process neither denies sin and evil nor does it seek to explain it. Rather, in living into a pattern of learning God’s peaceful charity and intense hope for new life, forgiveness transforms relationships by looking both backwards and forwards at the same time. Embodying forgiveness means refusing to be trapped in cycles of violence.75

Paul’s understanding of God’s work in Christ is critical to the biblical roots of our ministry. The primary texts are 2nd Corinthians 5:17-20, Ephesians 2:13-21, Romans 5:10-11, and Colossians 1:20-22. Paul’s use of reconciliation as a verb (katalasso/katallage) is limited to six uses: five refer to the divine/human relationship and one to interpersonal human relationships. The noun reconciliation (katallage) occurs four times in theological contexts in differentiated contexts that refer to God’s reconciliation and the ministry of reconciliation of which we are ambassadors. The root of this word is used by classical Greek authors in a metaphorical sense for exchanging...
enmity, wrath and war with friendship, love, and peace. Christoph Schwobel believes
that in our Pauline understanding, God is the sole author of reconciliation (God was in
Christ reconciling the world to himself).  
76 Reconciliation is a cosmic event that happens outside of us. God reconciles the world, not individuals. But, individuals receive reconciliation as a gift.  
77

For Schwobel, reconciliation refers to both the broken past and to the enduring
relationship of the present that is eschatologically ultimate. God reconciling the world not
only includes Christ’s death but also the resurrection and Christ’s (and our) participation
in life everlasting. Reconciliation bridges the past act of creation mediated in Christ with
the fullness of creation—the fulfillment of final destiny of all things in Christ.  
78 Reconciliation for Schwobel, like for others, is a dynamic process in which we are
included. Reconciliation creates a new community between those who were divided by
sin against each other and ultimately all against God.

Understanding reconciliation is critical to the mission and ministry of the church because
it is an important dimension to salvation. Our salvation in all of its many theological
understandings from multiple atonement theologies to soteriology results in
reconciliation. Reconciliation in Paul is a relational metaphor from broken relationship
to a restored relationship. The result is God’s peace, salvation and life. Peace is obtained

76 Christoph Schwobel, “Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction” in The
77 Ibid., 14.
78 Ibid., 21-22
because of the end of enmity and the establishment of an enduring relationship through
the life of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{79}

Robert Schreiter offers further insight into our understanding of reconciliation in his
work, \textit{The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality \& Strategies}. Our Christian
understanding of Reconciliation from Paul has been celebrated by the Protestant leanings
of the church by focusing on Romans 5: 6-11:

\begin{quote}
For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the
ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though
perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God
proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.
Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will
we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were
enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much
more, surely, having been reconciled will we be saved by his life. But
more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through we have now received reconciliation. (NRSV)
\end{quote}

This protestant view of reconciliation is tied to Christ’s atoning death and our
justification by faith in the act of atonement.\textsuperscript{80} Schreiter posits that a more catholic
understanding of reconciliation focuses on God’s love poured out for us in Christ,
enabling the new creation.\textsuperscript{81} This understanding is found in 2 Corinthians 5: 17-20:

\begin{quote}
So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has
passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who
reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of
reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,
not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of
reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Robert J. Schreiter, \textit{The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies}, (Maryknoll: Orbis
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
Schreiter’s biblical understanding of reconciliation and the resulting spiritual dimensions and ministry for the church are more clearly defined for him by this more catholic leaning. The passage from Second Corinthians has more of a directive to ministry than the Romans reading. Schreiter outlines five major tenets of reconciliation that we receive from Pauline theology that drive a ministry of reconciliation. This understanding is helpful in our claiming reconciliation as an important aspect of our mission and ministry.

First of all, reconciliation is the work of God, who initiates and completes in us reconciliation through Christ. It is not a human achievement. God initiates reconciliation in the lives of the victims, not beginning with the repentance of the wrongdoers (this move can motivate the offenders). God restores to the victim the humanity the offender has attempted to take away. Reconciliation is the experience of grace in a life-giving relationship with God. For Schreiter, repentance and forgiveness are not the preconditions of reconciliation, but rather the consequences of reconciliation. Divine initiative comes through human action as a result of communion between God and human beings. 82 John de Gruchy presents a slightly different understanding, that repentance and forgiveness are not the end results of reconciliation, but a part of the process of reconciliation that results in the restored relationship. Repentance will need to occur, however, for the relationship to be restored and for reconciliation to be realized. 83

82 Ibid., 14-15.
83 De Gruchy, 176-177.
Schreiter’s second critical understanding is that reconciliation is a spirituality rather than a strategy. If it is God’s work, then we are God’s ambassadors. Cultivation of one’s relationship with God is the medium through which reconciliation can happen. People coming together like this build communities of hope that practice forgiveness and claim God’s grace. A new future is imagined and celebrated in these communities of hope. After building a spiritual basis for reconciliation, strategies of reconciliation can be built in order to give people the opportunity to engage in activities that promote the reconciliation process. Spirituality always leads to action. Our faith in God cannot be separated by our love and service to our neighbors. One cannot concentrate on strategy without first having the foundation of spirituality. These must be balanced. 84

Third, the experience of reconciliation makes both the victim and wrongdoer a new creation (2 Corinth 5:17). The experience of evil and violence that are forever a part of us is transformed into a new way of being in community and living with others and ourselves. Restoration is not to the status quo, but to something completely new that goes beyond the broken past that led to the act of wrongdoing. The wrongdoer is restored to the community (hence restorative justice), but restored with healing and a new understanding and place in life. In addressing the past adequately, we can go forward. We cannot do this by ourselves. We need God’s presence developed in our spiritual lives to work through us. The spirituality of reconciliation that becomes embodied in our lives is a sign of God’s presence. 85

84 Ibid., 16-17.
85 Ibid., 17-18.
Fourth, this process of reconciliation that creates the new creation for us is found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, known through and in the Paschal Mystery. ⁸⁶ And finally, Schreiter’s fifth tenet understands that the process of reconciliation will only be fulfilled by the complete consummation of the Kingdom of God in Christ. It is only through God’s work that all things will be reconciled in Christ. ⁸⁷

Schreiter believes these five steps will develop a spirituality of reconciliation that may then be expressed in various strategies or types of ministries. One of these ministries is reconciliation expressed in a ministry of restorative justice. Schreiter quotes Pope John Paul II in his 1997 Day of World Peace homily in order to give substance to his support for restorative justice ministries:

There are two things required to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation: First, respect for the truth, and a justice that is not limited to that which is right among the parties in conflict, but looks above all to reestablish authentic relations with God, with the self, with others. ⁸⁸

Christoph Schwobel concurs that reconciliation is relational: it describes our salvation and also who Christ is (not only death as in atonement but includes his resurrection and ascension). Christ is our reconciliation and peace. In reconciling us, Christ is a mediatorial substitute, not a penal substitute. ⁸⁹ Therefore, following Christ’s lead, the reconciliation ministry we participate in to proclaim God’s word of reconciliation to the world is mediatory, not penal or retributive justice. God reconciles us out of divine love—not wrath. God’s reconciliation and love are prevenient for us and for the cosmos.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 18-19.
⁸⁷ Ibid., 19.
⁸⁸ Ibid., 19.
⁸⁹ Schreiter, 99-100, quoting John Paul II in “Offri il perdono, recevi la pace.”
⁹⁰ Schwobel, 25.
Interpreting Paul, Schwobel believes that in Christ, everyone and everything will ultimately be reconciled. Reconciliation includes us in the life of the Spirit which anticipates, encourages, and presents the fullness of time, the purpose of the end of times now. Nothing can separate us from God’s love!90

Christians live from reconciliation toward reconciliation; from the reconciliation God has achieved in Christ to the consummation of God’s community with God’s reconciled creation. For Christians, the ultimate reality is, “We are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). However, we must be realists: sin and evil exist and divide us from one another. Reconciliation can only spread at a price: there is a one-sided step in which the one offended against offers peace where there was conflict. Reconciliation means withdrawing from attempts at retribution.91 Christians share the work and ministry of reconciliation with the world because the message of reconciliation is universal: we are divided from one another and for a world where people live in peace and unity with each other reconciliation is a pathway (we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God). So the Christian community is called to work for reconciliation in the world.

However, we must be careful not to confuse our incomplete actions toward reconciliation with God’s divine and complete action in Christ.92 By being agents of reconciliation, we testify to the community of God’s purposes that is the desired outcome for the entire creation. Our worth and value comes from the understanding that we are reconciled

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 36.
92 Ibid., 38.
children of God and that nationality and racial and cultural differences melt away.

Schwobel calls these “relative” values. Until the Kingdom of God is brought in by God’s divine action, “the Church has a two fold function of being a community of reconciliation that is called to witness to the world not only in the proclamation of the gospel in word and sacrament, but also in its critical, constructive engagement in the political, cultural, and social life—not because it can claim to bring reconciliation to an un-reconciled world, but because it already celebrates and claims the message that God has reconciled the world to himself.”

The world is in a difficult state. We need healing not only from poverty and disease, but from hatred and violence that separates individuals, groups, and nations. The world needs the ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation needed has two faces: one is social, providing processes and structures whereby a fractured society can be reconstructed as truthful and just. The world needs reconciliation to build trust that makes civil society possible. The other side is spiritual, rebuilding shattered lives so that social reconciliation can be maintained. However, the state cannot guarantee forgiveness. But the church can work toward it and establish processes whereby forgiveness allows for a new society (such as in South Africa and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

Christians understand suffering in light of Jesus’ suffering. We identify with Jesus who walks with others who suffer. Jesus’ suffering and death alone are not enough to release

92 Ibid.
us from the bonds of our own suffering. Only his resurrection can help us find the new life we long for and need.  

Reconciliation in the public sphere is about coming to terms with a very concrete past and working toward a different future within the constraints—political, economic, social, cultural, and religious—of a given context. What, then, does the church offer to the work of reconciliation in society? Schreiter proposes these three things:

1. The message of reconciliation and our enacted spirituality because of this message;
2. The power of our rituals—established and created that especially embody forgiveness and hold out the possibility of reconciliation;
3. Our capacity to create communities of reconciliation.  

In Barth’s Ethics of Reconciliation, John Webster addresses the context of the church’s ministry of reconciliation. Webster argues that our acts of reconciliation are related to our triune understanding of God. We discover from the Truine God the way we are to model our own lives and relationships. From the Trinity we get both a model and vision of how to form our ethical response. But there is the danger of immanence vs. transcendence. God is wholly other for Webster and we cannot participate in God’s saving work. However, we can proclaim it by our actions and thus point others to Christ. We are entrusted with the message of God—that God in Christ is reconciling the world to God’s self. Therefore, we are Christ’s ambassadors, attesting to the Triune

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94 Schreiter, 105.  
95 Ibid.  
life of God that is always showing forth unity in diversity through the relational aspect of three persons in one. 97

Gregory Jones also claims this understanding of our participation in the life of Triune God as we embody forgiveness:

Healing and re-creating is not God acting wholly without us. They also invite, and require, our practices, which—by the guiding, judging, and consoling work of the Spirit—enable us to witness to God’s forgiving, re-creating work and to be transformed into holy people. To be involved in such practices is to engage the narrative of the triune God’s creative and re-creative work as Father, Son, and Spirit; likewise, to believe faithfully in the triune God is to have our lives formed and transformed through participation in Christian practices. 98

For Webster, forgiveness cannot happen without God. It is not ours on our own, but God’s gift to us and to others. Although the church is a community characterized by reconciling practices and by learned habits of peacemaking, we are first and foremost a creature of the word and because of this we must maintain the asymmetry between divine and human action. For Webster, the church is the passive agency of Christ. 99 Webster is afraid that the church will begin separating our work of reconciliation from the message of the Gospel—that it is God’s work. We must always be informed by the prior work of God for us and not forget it, Webster warns the church.

Let’s talk more specifically about the Christian Roots of Restorative Justice. Jesus’ ethic is one of restoration to the community of God’s people. His ethic is of love and not retribution. Jesus’ opening public ministry in Luke is announced: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me

97 Ibid., 118.
98 Jones, 165.
99 Webster, 123.
to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” In the sermon on the mount, Jesus supplants and “eye for an eye” with turning the other cheek: give your shirt, give your coat too, go the second mile. Not only do you love your neighbor, but you must love your enemies.

There were many “unfair” standards of behavior that Jesus introduced that seem out of line with retribution and our sense of “what is fair”—the laborers in the vineyard, the prodigal son. Jesus is the great restorer of relationships and hence our reconciliation in God.

As discussed, the point of forgiveness is for restoration. This is sealed in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Because of resurrection, Jesus’ love reaches out to all without distinction, offering hope, fellowship, and new beginnings. Jesus’ death on the cross links Jesus with criminals. The thief is promised the community of the Kingdom, there and then, with no strings attached. Jesus, following Deuteronomy, insists on the canceling of debt as a fundamental aspect of Christian practice.

Early Christian understandings attest to this. Augustine wrote in 412 to the judge Marcellinus: (fearing a sentence of death for the murderer of some of his friends):

101 Ibid., 121.
...by no means do this or permit this to be done...we do not wish the sufferings of the servants of God avenged by the infliction of precisely similar injuries in the way of retaliation...Fulfill [you] Christian judge, the duty of an affectionate father; let your indignation against their crimes be tempered by consideration of humanity; be not provoked by the atrocity of their sinful deeds to gratify the passion of revenge, but rather be moved by the wounds which these deeds have inflicted on their own souls to exercise a desire to heal them.\textsuperscript{102}

Our Christian understanding of reconciliation leading toward restorative justice has its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Hebrew Scriptures, restorative justice is a response to the lack of "shalom" or the salvation, justice, and peace of God. In order to create "shalom" restorative justice is a peacemaking response to crime for all persons affected by the crime.

The prophets pointed to the Messiah who shatters the legitimacy of scapegoating. Justice was an important concept for the prophets, but the Jewish idea of justice is always linked to the restoration of the relationship with God. Consider especially Hosea’s treatment of Gomer!

However, the texts describing God’s vengeance and wrath cannot be overlooked, Allard and Northey remind us. The message of the social justice many of the pre-captivity prophets give is that God alone is the redeemer of both Israel and the world. God’s salvific work can be both hastened and hindered by the responses of both Israel and other nations. The Hebrew scriptures show that when justice is deliberately interfered with, truth denied, and oppression is allowed to flourish, God executes vengeance. De Gruchy addresses this difficult terrain for us on the Christian side of these scriptures who live in a tradition that sometimes bifurcates God into an Old Testament God of vengeance and a

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 131, quoted from the “Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine” (Shaff and Wace, 470-471).
New Testament God of love and mercy in Christ. He considers Isaiah 59: 14-17 as a classic text to review:

Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance; for truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled. The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle. 103

How does God mete out vengeance against this oppression and injustice spoken of by the prophet? Are there separate agents of reconciliation and of wrath and vengeance that God offers? This is one of those tensions we must live into as we seek reconciliation. The ambiguity of vengeance is a difficult matter to consider. For on the one hand, oppression and injustice cry out for redress and for the restoration of a moral order. On the other hand, wanton destruction that takes innocent lives and wreaks havoc on peoples and nations, even in the name of liberation and justice, is hard to stomach. It can even cause moral revulsion. 104 However, the demand for vengeance and retribution seems natural for those who have been grievously hurt. The demand for vengeance is not something to be lightly dismissed as primitive or without warrant. It sets against that which is often patently evil, seeking justice in the face of extreme injustice and oppression and sometimes just unexplainable evil. Christians cannot deny the moral force of anger, hatred, and vengeance, thinking it will all just be okay with love and forgiveness. 105

103 Isaiah 59:14-17, NRSV
104 de Gruchy, 165.
105 Ibid., 167.
De Gruchy speaks of God’s vengeance as always being positive, “restoring the balance in society caused by human wickedness and bringing encouragement to those who are oppressed by punishing their oppressors.”\textsuperscript{106} De Gruchy goes on to say that although the New Testament speaks of vengeance in legitimate terms, the overwhelming sense of justice in both the Gospels and Paul’s writings emphasizes our trusting God’s actions to set things right, not taking matters of retribution into our own hands. However, we cannot deny the role of vengeance and retribution.

Acts of vengeance and retribution are the sounds of fury, an expression of righteous anger against those who undermine or destroy human life and social well-being. They reflect a legitimate concern for justice, and thus affirm the biblical understanding of God as the one to whom vengeance ultimately belongs. If we are truly going to understand the relationship between justice and forgiveness in the process of reconciliation from a biblical perspective, we must keep in mind that ‘God’s wrath’ against evil is presupposed. Only those who are truly angered by injustice can really begin to practice forgiveness or know what it means.\textsuperscript{107}

Therefore, God’s wrath is a necessary ingredient of reconciliation and justice. Evil must be named as evil and the restoration of communion with the perpetrator is not based simply on retributive justice accomplished.

Now we take another look at what was happening during the formative days of the church. The early church fathers clearly understood reconciliation as a process that included the hope of reconciliation in an effort to turn the hearts of the offenders. The Apostolic Constitutions states, “It therefore behooves you....to encourage those who have offended, and lead them to repentance, and afford them hope....Receive the penitent with alacrity, and rejoice over them, and with mercy and bowels (sic) of compassion

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 168, referring to Isaiah 61:1-4 and Psalm 58.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 169.
judge the sinners." In the early church, Christians were forbidden to serve as soldiers. They shunned involvement in the political realm.

However, Constantine changed all of this in the 4th century. The persecuted church that was known for showing mercy and forgiveness became the persecuting church. Christianity was co-opted by the powerful and entrenched Roman legal system. It continued in continental Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire and was adopted in the middle ages, even used in Britain. Although many theologians claim this system has nothing to do with Christian doctrines or practices, since the Middle ages were thought to be Christian, this system has prevailed. Its basis was the Roman slave laws that were often brutal. In the biblical concept of justice, the victim’s voice had primary weight. Yet this voice became silenced as the Emperor assumed supreme authority for keeping peace in the kingdom. Anselm in the 11th century gave theological justification to retributive justice by the Christian state through his satisfaction theory of the atonement.

Allard and Northey draw upon Rene’ Girard’s work on forgiveness and scapegoating. Girard points to a reading of God in the Christian scriptures which is absolutely incompatible with any idea that God is involved in violence, separation, anger, or exclusion.

In the Hebrew Bible, there is clearly a dynamic that moves in the direction of the rehabilitation of the victims, but is not a cut-and-dried thing. Rather, it is a process under way, a text in travail; it is not a chronologically progressive process, but a struggle that advances and

108 Allard and Northey, 131.
109 Ibid., 126.
110 Ibid., 127.
111 Ibid.
retreats. I see the Gospels as the climactic achievement of that trend, and therefore as the essential text in the cultural upheaval of the modern world.112

Girard points to a non-violent reading of God that is ultimately revealed in scripture. The cross is the ultimate negation of all violence in God and hence all violence that human beings deliberately engage.

Allard and Northey finally bring their observations to culmination on the subject of restorative justice:

As Christians return to the spiritual roots of Restorative Justice, they will be challenged to discover new ways of doing justice. Repentance, or ‘changing one’s course in life,’ should lead to a commitment to influence through servanthood and not through power, to change one’s perspectives on crime in the knowledge that the line dividing good and evil cuts through every human being. Restorative Justice is a call to build new communities where acceptance and reconciliation are realities. Restoration and reconciliation are lived in the community of the covenant of love between God and humankind, and between individual persons. It is becoming part of a community committed to justice in a world of injustice, a community committed to listening to all sides when crime happens, and a community committed to truth beyond the guilty/not guilty dichotomy. It is becoming a community committed to offering opportunities for reparation and peacemaking so that offenders and victims find healing in community of hope.113

For further reading on the developmental aspects of justice in ethics and moral teaching, see Karen Lebacqz’s Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics.114

112 Ibid., 133, quoting Girard.
113 Ibid., 137
114 Karen Lebacqz, Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986). Drawing from traditional teachings on justice, Lebacqz examines these Christian perspectives of justice: (1) the Utilitarian approach that seeks the greatest good for the greatest number of people. This theory ignores the individual and looks at society corporately. (2) Rawls’ theory of Equal Liberty with Equal Rights in which equal basic liberties result in liberty for all with the greater good for the greater number without diminishing the rights of the individual. (3) Catholic Social Teaching in which the community expresses the fullness of life that is created for and meant for all. The dignity of human beings is never diminished and is a result of the covenant relationship of God with the created order. (4) Reinhold Niebuhr’s Justice and Love theory of justice in which justice is never completely accomplished but must always be held in the dialectic of equality as regulative principle that includes both concerns for process (impartiality in needs calculation and equality for a substantive goal,
Restorative Justice and Reconciliation Communities in the Church

Expressing ministry through restorative justice is one way the church can live into our mission of restoring all people to unity with each other and with God. Reaching out into the world with this ministry of hope and of a reconciled community is one way the church can reflect its role as the sacramental reality of God’s unity with the world and God’s hope that we all live in unity with each other and God. Although many in the world will reject the notion of living in unity with God, we can begin to live into God’s hopes as we promote people living in unity with each other as God intended, as a new creation that looks beyond the walls that separate us.

Restorative justice is a healing proposition. Crimes cause injury to individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Restorative justice can bring healing to the multi-valent wounds of crime. As a value based approach to responding to wrongdoing and conflict, restorative justice has a balanced focus on the victim, offender, and the community. It seeks to transform wrongdoing by healing the harm, particularly in relationships that arise from criminal activity. By collectively naming and addressing harms, needs and obligations resulting from wrongdoing, healing occurs and the possibility for restored, particularly new, i.e., Civil rights - and Freedom (no unfettered freedom because of equality’s demands), therefore pointing to the ideal of love. Equal justice is a political and economic approximation of the ideal of love. Justice can never be absolute since it is an approximation.
community is achieved. The hope of restorative justice programs is to break the cycle in which the offender commits a crime.

In the traditional justice process, the offender seen as committing an offence against the state and victims has a quite limited opportunity to express how he has been affected by the wrongdoing because the system works to keep victims and offenders apart and has others speak on their behalf. The offender is usually not encouraged to accept responsibility for his or her actions. However, restorative justice sees the harm inflicted by the crime against the individual person (or group of persons) and the local community. Victims participate in expressing the harm done to them. Often, restorative justice programs bring all the parties together to consider what happened and find out what can be attempted to help put it right, always with the assistance of regulated statutory agencies. Restorative justice encourages the acceptance of responsibility and reintegration of the offender into the community. It is a problem-solving proposition that includes the personal involvement of the stakeholders in solving the problem and bringing healing and hope.

The Restorative Justice Consortium offers an excellent definition of restorative justice.

Restorative Justice is a process whereby:
1. All the parties with a stake in a particular conflict or offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of conflict or offence and its implications for the future, and...
2. Offenders have the opportunity to acknowledge the impact of what they have done and to make reparation, and victims have the opportunity to have their harm or loss acknowledged and amends made.
Restorative justice takes place in the criminal justice system, and helps communities deal with conflict in schools, the workplace and neighbourhoods.\textsuperscript{115}

Restorative Justice programs commonly include Victim Offender Mediation, Family Group Conferencing, Community Restorative Boards, Sentencing Circles, Victim Impact Statements, Restitution Assessment, Community Service Re-integration programs among other programs.

However, restorative justice is not any particular set of practices or programs, but rather a set of principles that orient the agencies involved in criminal justice toward collective interaction, problem solving, and healing with the individuals and the community affected. Tony F. Marshall lists these principles:

- Making room for the personal involvement of those mainly concerned (particularly the offender and the victim, but also their families and communities);
- Seeing crime problems in their social context;
- A forward-looking (or preventative) problem solving orientation
- Flexibility of practice (creativity).\textsuperscript{116}

Marshall lists the following as the primary objectives of restorative justice:

- To attend fully to victim’s needs – material, financial, emotional and social (including those who are personally close to the victim and may be similarly affected);
- To enable offenders to assume active responsibility for their actions;
- To recreate a working community that supports the rehabilitation of offenders and victims and is active in preventing crime;
- To provide a means of avoiding escalation of legal justice and the associated costs and delays.\textsuperscript{117}

Marshall claims that restorative justice is based upon the following assumptions:

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 29.
That crime has its origins in social conditions and relationships in the community;
• That crime prevention is dependent on communities taking some responsibility (along with local and central governments' responsibility for general social policy) for remedying those conditions that cause crime;
• That the aftermath of crime cannot be fully resolved for the parties themselves without allowing their personal involvement;
• That justice measures must be flexible enough to be able to respond to the particular exigencies, personal needs and potential for action in each case;
• That partnership and common objectives among justice agencies, and between them and the community, are essential to optimal effectiveness and efficiency;
• That justice consists of a balanced approach in which a single objective is not allowed to dominate the others.\textsuperscript{118}

Restorative justice, looking to a future with hope and to the community's well being is an ideal way Christian communities promoting reconciliation and building reconciliation within their specific communities can allow their faith to reach out in blessing, loving their neighbors as themselves. Although restorative justice cannot manufacture repentance and forgiveness, its emphasis upon the healing of hurts, the restoring of relationships, and the building up of the community make it quite compatible with the Christian faith.

The church can help by providing support and encouragement to local restorative movements by providing space and hospitality where restorative programs can take place. The church can also provide people to train as mediators and facilitators in programs such as Victim Offender Mediation and Family Group Conferencing. These two areas are where the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation will get involved. One of the needed functions in Madison County and Huntsville, Alabama, is a Restorative Justice Board where all of the agencies concerned with Restorative Justice can come

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
together and pool resources and information and provide collective training. Nativity’s project has been delayed until the summer of 2006 for two reasons. We are working through political bureaucracies to get the various parties in Madison County together in the late spring. There is an interest in expanding these programs, but no one has come forward to provide the leadership in the public arena. We are ready to assist. Mediation training will be developed and offered by the statutory agencies and we will enlist people to serve as mediators and facilitators. The second delay is caused by lack of space. In August, the Church of the Nativity along with Calhoun Community College, launched the Adult Learning Center in our outreach building. This building is currently only partially available to Nativity for programming because most of the space is leased to outside tenants. When space comes available, we will convert our building usage to outreach purposes. Providing hospitality and meeting space for restorative justice programs, in a neutral, positive environment will be an excellent use of our space. We will empower our parishioners to love their neighbors in such a way that the world will say, “see how they love one another!”
SECTION EIGHT

Assessing our Progress

Will we be successful in building a community of reconciliation through the parish community of the Church of the Nativity? Only time will tell—perhaps a long time. Our attempt to accomplish this work through the creative outlet of the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation, I believe, makes us available agents of God’s reconciling love. I do not like to use that word “successful” in the church, because it seems that we can easily begin to confuse God’s ways with our ways. I prefer to think about faithfulness to our mission and ministry. We are being faithful in implementing the mission and goals of the Center developed in 2004. The viability the Center’s work is validated by the Trinity Grants Program award. We are accomplishing the scope of the work outlined by the requirements of the grant. The grant specifies that over three years, beginning January, 2005, the Center will

1. train fifteen people who do not have previous preparation in reconciliation work, who will assume leadership of the Circles of Reconciliation and work on other projects such as the labyrinth, drama, or teaching.

2. accept five or six professionally trained individuals to form the Center’s professional resource and advisory team. This group’s function will be mainly diagnostic.

3. in the first year and a half, complete three off-site-training retreats to familiarize leaders-in-training with basic dynamics of pastoral ministry. Participants will
reflect on their own need for reconciliation and gain a deeper understanding of ritual and sacramental healing.

4. establish small groups involving approximately 120 parish members who follow a Benedictine rule of life and who participate in Circles of Reconciliation and bring this ministry to the wider world.

5. each year conduct two pilgrimages to sacred places, one within the United States and one abroad.

6. respond to calls for consultation from within and without the Episcopal Church.

7. create a model that can be replicated in other Episcopal parishes.\textsuperscript{119}

\textit{Trinity Grant Requirements Evaluation}

1. The initial training group included fourteen persons. After the first training session, three individuals dropped out. We have since recruited nine additional persons who have committed to training for leadership for the Circles of Reconciliation and to work on other Center projects.

2. Five or six individuals from this group of twenty persons will be selected to receive further training to form the Center’s professional resource and advisory team. All of these individuals have not yet been identified. They will not receive the additional training to be a part of the resource and advisory group until the training in basic reconciliation leadership is completed. We will complete this training by December of 2006 and then begin training these individuals in January of 2007.

\textsuperscript{119} Letter from The Reverend Canon James G. Callaway Jr, Deputy for Grants at Trinity Church, to The Reverend Andy Anderson, Rector of the Church of the Nativity, dated December 9, 2004, announcing the Trinity Grant award to be received in January 2005.
3. By the end of June, 2006, (within the year and a half time frame specified by the
grant) we will have trained eleven persons in the basic work of reconciliation.
We have already completed two of the three training retreats for this group of
eleven. In April, 2006, we will begin the training retreats for the additional nine
individuals identified to be a part of this ministry leadership.

4. During Lent in 2005, we started the Circles of Reconciliation with prospective
leaders in reconciliation work. Eight different groups met involving 82
parishioners. These groups met monthly during Lent and through the end of the
school year term for a total of five sessions. During Lent of 2006, the eleven
trainees are leading Circles of Reconciliation, meeting in six groups and involving
67 parishioners. Some groups are meeting weekly and some are meeting every
other week. These groups will continue meeting beyond Lent.

5. In 2005, we helped lead a diocesan pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy, and to Taize’,
France that involved forty person, eleven of whom were Nativity parishioners. In
August of 2005, we helped the Diocese of Alabama with the implementation of
the Jonathan Daniels’ Pilgrimage. Over 100 Nativity parishioners attended this
event in Lowndes County, Alabama, the site of Daniels’ martyrdom. The Center
will is again working on the Daniels’ Pilgrimage for August, 2006. The Center
was planning a pilgrimage to Palestine for the summer of 2006, but these plans
have been placed on hold due to the unrest in the Middle East. In the spring of
2007, the Center will lead a pilgrimage to South Africa.

6. The Center has responded to calls for consultation from within and without the
Episcopal Church. In the fall of 2005, the Center leadership led a workshop on
using the labyrinth for healing in child abuse for a Child Advocacy center in Mississippi. In November, 2006, the Center hosted students from the Umbau School of Architecture in Virginia to indoctrinate these students in the creation of labyrinths. This school of architecture will be building labyrinths in places of unrest in Eastern Europe beginning in 2006. In January of 2006, the center led another healing consultation on the Choctaw Indian Reservation in Mississippi. In 2005, the Center consulted with the Diocese of Alabama, St. Paul’s Church in Selma, and Church of the Epiphany in Guntersville, Alabama.

7. The Center began consulting with Church of the Nativity in Dothan, Alabama in 2005, and in April of 2006, helped them dedicate an outdoor labyrinth and began discussions for the establishment of a local center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation in that parish that utilizes the model begun in Huntsville. This parish may develop a “satellite” center of Nativity, Huntsville’s, center.

This assessment shows we are accomplishing the work Trinity has asked us to do in accordance with the grant requirements. We provide Trinity with quarterly reports on our progress. This component assesses the viability of our training and our small groups. However, we must be deliberate in recruiting more parishioners for the Circles of Reconciliation in the fall of 2006. Our goal is to have 120 persons in the parish involved in these groups by then.
Other Pilgrimage and Reconciliation Ministries Needing Implementation

1. The Pilgrims’ Eucharist will be implemented by June of 2006. A steering committee has been identified and will first meet the end of April, 2006. A Contemplative Eucharist offered on Wednesday evenings in Lent prior to the evening Lenten program has been well-received. The model for our Pilgrims’ Eucharist will take the best elements of this Eucharist and combine them with supplemental liturgical texts from the Church and A New Zealand Prayer Book in order to create an “ethos” of journey and reconciliation throughout the service.

2. The Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent is proactively offered during Holy Week at Nativity for the first time during 2006. This Rite will be regularly offered once the Pilgrims’ Eucharist is begun.

3. The Daughters of the King chapter at Nativity have agreed to work with the Center and the Rector of Nativity in order to create a sacred space for prayers of reconciliation and healing. A parishioner has been identified who will provide a votive candle stand and underwrite both Nativity and Jonathan Daniels icons that will be placed in the new chapel space. Our hope is to have this space available after Labor Day, 2006 and to begin our healing prayer ministry by Advent, 2006.

4. The Restorative Justice Project has been placed on hold until a capital campaign can underwrite the funding of a piece of property the parish owns at 333 Franklin Street. At this time we will convert this building into an outreach center that can house our restorative justice ministry. A portion of this building is currently utilized for the Adult Learning Center, a literacy center for adults who are being
taught to read on a fourth grade level (along with teaching them basic math skills) to enable them to enter the GED program at Calhoun Community College in Huntsville. An architectural firm is in the process of creating a master plan for the nativity campus. This plan will be presented in June of 2006 and a capital campaign likely begun in the fall of 2006.

5. The parish will become a Community of the Cross of Nails Center in 2006. Conversations with the Very Rev’d Spencer Simrill and the Very Rev’d James Diamond are leading to this happening soon and a presentation of a Cross of Nails along with one of these two leaders in CCN coming to Nativity to preach on this occasion.

6. The retreat center idea is placed on hold until a land donor materializes. The idea has been held out and is being contemplated by a Nativity parishioner who has suitable property available that might could be put to this use.

7. Materials explaining the Center’s work and function are being developed and will be completed by September of 2006.
SECTION NINE

Conclusion: Reconciliation in the Ruins

Standing in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral in England and facing the magnificent new Cathedral buildings that were built on the strong conviction that new life rises from the wrecks of our divisions, the ministry of reconciliation becomes incarnate in steel and stone. But more importantly, it has become incarnate in the flesh and blood of peoples’ lives—people who have grasped the hope and forgiveness this ministry offers to a world where division and hatred exist on every corner. One of these people is Gerald White-Mobley. Mr. White-Mobley is a docent for Coventry Cathedral. Approaching his eightieth birthday, he remembers that fateful night of November 14, 1940, when the cathedral was destroyed by enemy fire. Along with his father and brothers, he was first on the scene in an attempt to put out the devastating flames. He was there on the morning of November 15, 1940, when the Rev’d Arthur Wales picked up several fourteenth century hand-forged nails which had fallen from the roof to the sanctuary floor, and bound them together to form crosses. His life was changed forever when he saw the words, “Father Forgive” scribbled on a piece of paper and placed on the stone altar in the ruined sanctuary. White-Mobley sat in the sanctuary of the new Cathedral of St. Michael when it was consecrated on May 25, 1962. For the last twenty-five years, he has served as a docent, telling thousands and thousands of visitors the inspiring story of Coventry and his life’s devotion to its work of reconciliation through the Community of the Cross of Nails and the International Centre for Reconciliation. White-Mobley said,

120 Mr. White-Mobley gave my wife and me a private tour of the Cathedral on September 6, 2005.
“The ruins of the bombed building are interlinked with the new building, a symbol of the old giving rise to the new; of resurrection and new life emerging from the destruction of the old.**121** God’s love in Christ is the bridge that enables us to move from the ruins and wrecks of our broken relationships and divisions to a completely new way of life and existence.

The International Centre for Reconciliation (ICR) deliberately takes the Cathedral’s work of reconciliation to hurting and broken places around the globe. It is one of the world’s oldest religious-based organizations for reconciliation. The ICR was established in 1940 following the Cathedral’s destruction. This organization embodies the Cathedral’s 1940 commitment to reconciliation with Great Britain’s enemies, inspired by the purpose of rebuilding the cathedral, not in defiance for what happened, but as a symbol of hope, forgiveness, and new life. Since then, ICR’s work for peace has expanded into some of the world’s worst areas of conflict. Much of the Centre’s early work was in the former Communist bloc. Eventually it expanded its mission to respond to conflicts involving the three major monotheistic faiths. Today, the International Centre of Reconciliation is committed to reconciliation in various world-wide situations of violent conflict, some related to religious dispute and others fuelled by different factors, particularly political and economic ones. In addition to its short-term reconciliation work, ICR coordinates the Community of the Cross of Nails, the international network of over 160 organizations in

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**121** Conversation with Gerald White-Mobley on September 6, 2005.
60 countries committed to reconciliation. These international Cross of Nails groups provide ICR with a practical and spiritual support base.\textsuperscript{122}

The Rev’d Canon Justin Welby, Director of International Ministry for the International Centre for Reconciliation located at Coventry said, “Our experience at Coventry shows that the journey of reconciliation is neither easy nor short; it is often painful and difficult. Reconciliation is a dynamic complex of events, not a single event or process. The very business of reconciling in turn generates new fears and hurts. There is the need for forgiveness, for justice, for repentance and change, for understanding and new communication, for a commitment to love that can then be developed into action.

Reconciliation, therefore, is a matter of praxis, of developing the right reflexes, almost of genetic modification so that it is a part of the DNA of a group or individual. That takes much time and constant review and refreshing. As time passes a group will become more aware of the issues of conflict and more capable of facing them. The renewal of commitment to continue the journey is a spiritual decision that can only result from the Spirit of peace.”\textsuperscript{123} In other words, reconciliation can only happen when our spirits and wills become one with God’s Spirit and will. Reconciliation is first and foremost God’s initiative; we then follow God’s lead and participate with God as ambassadors for Christ. God makes the appeal for reconciliation through us (2\textsuperscript{nd} Corinthians 5:20).

\textsuperscript{122} International Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral printed materials (Coventry: Prontoprint Coventry 2005).

\textsuperscript{123} Interview with Justin Welby, Coventry, UK, 6 September 2005.
Welby’s statement provides important insight for Nativity’s Center. Engaging the work of reconciliation and practicing this ministry over time will result in a changed spirituality in peoples’ lives and in the community. We will be given the “new heart” the prophet speaks of in Ezekiel.

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people and I will be your God.124

The “land” God gave our ancestors and to us is now that place where reconciliation of people to God and one another is taking place. It is God’s gift to us as we claim God’s work of reconciliation for ourselves and engage in this ministry in Christ’s name in our own time and place. A spirit of reconciliation will be embedded in the life and ministry of the Church of the Nativity as it becomes an embodied practice in peoples’ lives through the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation, through parish worship and prayer disciplines, through outreach ministries, and through opportunities for people to meet together to study and reflect upon the work of reconciliation in their lives and in the world. It will take time, perhaps a long time, but the journey has begun. Our parish pilgrimage toward reconciliation is underway.

124 Ezekiel 36:26-28, NRSV.
Our trained companions in reconciliation are the nucleus of an energetic mass that encourages and supports this work. A group that can articulate this ministry and provide leadership, as well as serve as a catalyst for reconciliation ministries in the parish and in the wider community, is important for any parish or organization hoping to begin this work. These people will be the natural “bridge builders” of reconciliation. Raising up parish leadership and providing this leadership training is “yeast for the three measures of flour”\(^{125}\) for this particular aspect of work of the Kingdom of God.

Outward and visible signs of this ministry serve as signposts and also regular reminders of this ministry. Reconciliation will become ingrained in the life of Nativity, not only through ministry praxis, but through subtle and not-so-subtle “reminders” and recognizable tokens of ministry. A sacred place of reconciliation will be a specific location set apart for prayer, healing, and reconciliation. People desiring reconciliation can go and bid God’s presence and reconciling love here and find prayers and materials that will lead them toward the many ministries available in the parish and in the Center specifically. Printed materials about the Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation, prayers for reconciliation, the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation and other information easily available will encourage familiarity and participation in this work and people’s knowledge of the Center. Worship specifically designed for the pilgrim, to connect our individual spiritual journeys to pilgrimage faith, is another important outward sign. Regularly offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation of a Penitent before this worship experience will enhance our sense of the spirituality of reconciliation permeating this

\(^{125}\) Matthew 13:33.
service. Striving to work for justice and peace in the community through outreach opportunities, especially an outreach ministry of restorative justice, is another way reconciliation becomes accessible and outwardly visible, over time changing the hearts of the people involved.

Connecting to other places where Reconciliation is recognized as a primary ministry is critical. The network of the Community of the Cross of Nails is an established channel of cooperation and shared learning. Participation in CCN enables support and collaboration. Looking at other communities of reconciliation’s structure, ministry, and challenges informs our own. CCN is also an easily recognizable organization and expression of reconciliation ministry. People who at first have a difficult time grasping the work of reconciliation, upon hearing about CCN, begin to “get it.” Its easily understood history, the weekly litany, the visible Cross of Nails displayed in a prominent place, the fact there is a website explaining its work around the globe, a new network being established by St. Mark’s Cathedral, and other factors make this organization a logical association for synergy and understanding. This is not a journey any group has to undertake alone and neither do we have to “reinvent the wheel.” Our hope is that our model of ministry unfolding in the Nativity Center for Pilgrimage and Reconciliation will be taken to other parishes and, with modification to suit their particular calling to the work of reconciliation, be implemented and embedded in their community life, exponentially building the spirit of reconciliation throughout the church. This is a huge dream, but like
the Kingdom starting off as small as a mustard seed and then growing into a tree large
enough for the birds of the air to nest in its branches, this ministry will grow.

Can we really become a community of reconciliation? Can other places also live into this
calling? I believe the blueprint for this ministry is expressed in these words from
Colossians:

So, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above,
where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God....But now you must get
rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language
from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped
off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new
self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its
creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and
uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in
all! As God’s chosen one, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with
compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one
another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other;
just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. Above all,
clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect
harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed
you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ
dwell in you richly....

May the Church in all corners of the globe meditate upon these words and take them to
heart as we seek to become Christ’s ambassadors for reconciliation. Alleluia, Christ is
risen, and we are, too! This is God’s doing and not our own. But, God invites us to
participate in God’s work. And so, let us pray, and as we do, unite our spirits to God’s
Spirit:

126 Colossians 3:1, 8-16, NRSV.
Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ’s Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with your and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.  

127 The Book of Common Prayer, 223 (Collect for Thursday in Easter Week and for the Second Sunday of Easter).
APPENDIX A

Pilgrims' Eucharist
Order of Service

The people gather in silence
The people remain seated or kneeling until the Gospel is read

Silent Reflection - Opening our hearts to God's presence (five minutes)

Taize' Chant

The Celebrant greets the people
Blessed be the one, holy, and living God. 128
The people Respond
Who has reconciled himself to us through Christ, and has given us the ministry of
reconciliation. 129

The Celebrant then says,
May God be with you. 130

The People respond
And also with you.

Celebrant
Let us pray.

The Collect of the Day (the propers are for the upcoming Sunday)

The Lesson

At the conclusion of the lesson the reader says
Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. 131

The People say
Thanks be to God.

Silent Reflection (three minutes)

Gradual Psalm

The Gospel 132 (all stand)

The Deacon (or Gospeller) says
The Holy Gospel according to ______

The People respond
Praise and Glory to God.

129 2 Cor Corinthians 5:18b, NRSV.
130 Supplemental Liturgical Materials, 32.
132 Ibid. (for the entire Gospel announcement and response).
After the Gospel reading is said by the reader
This is the Gospel of Christ.
The people respond
Praise to Christ, the Word.

Meditation

Silent Reflection (five minutes)

The Prayers of the People (these prayers are varied from time to time using various sources)

(First Form of Intercession and Thanksgiving from A New Zealand Prayer Book)

Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear when we pray in the name of your Son. Therefore in confidence and trust we pray for the Church:
(Particular intercessions/thanksgivings may be offered.)

Father, enliven the Church for its mission
That we may be salt of the earth and light to the world.
Breathe fresh life into your people.
Give us power to reveal Christ in word and action.

We pray for the world:
(Particular intercessions/thanksgivings may be offered.)

Creator of all, lead us and every people into ways of justice and peace.
That we may respect one another in freedom and truth.
Awaken in us a sense of wonder for the earth and all that is in it.
Teach us to care creatively for its resources.

We pray for the community:
(Particular intercessions/thanksgivings may be offered.)

God of truth, inspire with your wisdom those whose decisions affect the lives of others
That all may act with integrity and courage.
Give grace to all whose lives are linked with ours.
May we serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us.

We pray for those in need:
(Particular intercessions/thanksgivings may be offered.)

God of hope, comfort and restore all who suffer in body, mind or spirit.
May they know the power of your healing love.
Make us willing agents of your compassion.
Strengthen us as we share in making people whole.
We remember those who have died and those who mourn:

(Particular intercessions/thanksgivings may be offered.)

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in the faith of Christ, and those
whose faith is known to you alone.
Father, into your hands we commend them.

Give comfort to those who mourn.
Bring them peace in their time of loss.

We praise you for (N and) all your saints who have entered your eternal glory.
May their example inspire and encourage us.

We pray for ourselves and our ministries:
(Particular intercessions/thanksgivings may be offered and the prayers conclude with
one of the following.)

Lord, you have called us to serve you.
Grant that we may walk in your presence:
your love in our hearts,
your truth in our minds,
your strength in our wills;
until, at the end of our journey,
we know the joy of our homecoming
and the welcome of your embrace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. 133

The Confession of Sin and Absolution

Jesus said:
There is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.
Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

God has promised forgiveness to all who truly repent, turn to Christ in faith, and are
themselves forgiving. In silence we call to mind our own sins.

Silence

Let us confess our sins.

Merciful God,
we have sinned in what we have thought and said,
in the wrong we have done and in the good we have not done.
We have sinned in ignorance; we have sinned in weakness;
we have sinned through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry.

133 Ibid., 413-414.
We repent and turn to you.  
Forgive us, for our Saviour Christ’s sake,  
And renew our lives to the glory of your name. Amen.  

*The Absolution is declared by the presiding priest.*  

Through the cross of Christ, God have mercy on you, pardon you and set you free.  
Know that you are forgiven and be at peace.  
God strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life.  

The Peace  

The Peace of Christ be always with you.  
And also with you.  

Taize’ chant is sung while the Table is prepared. When the Table is ready, bread and wine are offered by members of the congregation. When all is ready, the Celebrant continues  

*An Alternate Great Thanksgiving Celebrating the Grace of God from “A New Zealand Prayer Book”*  

The Lord is here.  
God’s Spirit is with us.  

Lift up your hearts.  
We lift them to the Lord.  

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*It is right to offer thanks and praise.*  

Honour and worship are indeed your due, our Lord and our God, through Jesus Christ, for you created all things; by your will they were created, and for your glory they have their being.  

In your loving purpose you chose us before the foundation of the world to be your people; you gave your promises to Abraham and Sarah and bestowed your favour on the Virgin Mary.  

Above all we give you thanks and praise for your grace in sending Jesus Christ, not for any merit of our own but when we had turned away from you. We were bound in sin, but in your compassion you redeemed us, reconciling us to yourself with the precious blood of Christ.  

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In your Son you suffered with us and for us, offering us the healing riches of salvation and calling us to freedom and holiness.

Therefore with people of every nation, tribe and language, with the whole Church on earth and in heaven, joyfully we give you thanks and say:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, 
heaven and earth are full of your glory. 
Hosanna in the highest.

All glory and honour to you, God of grace, for you gave your only Son Jesus Christ once and for all on the cross to be the one perfect sacrifice for the sin of the world, that all who believe in him might have eternal life. The night before he died, he took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said: Take eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this to remember me.

After supper he took the cup, and when he had given you thanks, he gave it to them and said: 
Drink this, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins; do this as often as you drink it, to remember me.

Therefore heavenly Father, in this sacrament of the suffering and death of your Son, we now celebrate the wonder of your grace and proclaim the mystery of our faith.

Christ has died. 
Christ is risen. 
Christ will come in glory.

Remember God, rich in mercy, infinite in goodness, we were far off until you brought us near and our hands are empty until you fill them. As we eat this bread and drink this wine, through the power of your Holy Spirit feed us with your heavenly food, renew us in your service, unite us in Christ, and bring us to your everlasting kingdom. O the depths and riches of your wisdom, O God; how unsearchable are your judgments and untraceable your ways.

From you, and through you, and for you are all things. To you be the glory for ever. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer (the contemporary version)
The Fraction (in silence)
The Invitation to Communion
The Communion
Taize’ Chant

Ibid., 436-438.
Postcommunion Prayer (prayed silently)

"Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world."

Recognizing I am a part of your pilgrim people, I offer my life to you in my journey (over this weekend, or, over these days of pilgrimage). May I discover your life and grace given anew. As Christ’s ambassador of reconciliation, may I share the ministry of restoring all people to unity with you in Christ; to him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Silence (the people may remain in the chapel for the next half hour if desired)

137 Ibid., 428-429.
APPENDIX B

The Cathedral Church of St. Mark
A Center for Hospitality & Reconciliation

Handbook
for
Hospitality & Reconciliation Circles
Hospitality & Reconciliation Circles  
(HRCs or Circles)

Introduction

The purpose and focus of HRCs (and for each person in each circle) is to provide a safe haven (hospitality) for each participant to reflect on and share her/his relationship to the Divine and the consequential "calling" or ministry this relationship brings forth (reconciliation).

There are between five and ten participants in each circle. Each circle meets once a month. Each participant in the circle needs to be able and willing (committed) to attending each circle gathering because group dynamics (including safety and intimacy) are critical aspects of this kind of gathering/sharing.

Each circle decides where they will meet, either rotating between participants' homes or staying in one place. (The church is not available for any individual HRC gatherings, sorry).

Each circle is responsible for deciding how they will rotate the position of facilitator and the responsibilities of this position.

There is a resource person available to any circle that, for any reason, wants outside feedback. Call the church and ask for the HRC resource person's phone number.

About every six months, all circles will be invited to the church for an informational/testimonial-type mini retreat.

Once a year, each circle will be invited to add new members, be invited to switch to a different circle, or start new circles.
Hospitality & Reconciliation Circles

Suggested Circle Format

Environment
The “atmosphere” or ambiance of the room in which the circle gathers needs to set a contemplative tone. Set up chairs in a circle. Have a centerpiece in the middle of the circle with a candle in the middle and, possibly, other relevant objects that help focus everyone’s attention on God. It is recommended that you do not sit around a table as this invites being more in one’s head and less in one’s heart.

Opening
The facilitator for that month presents a simple, short opening ritual that helps participants quiet down and turn inward towards their connection with God. For example, lighting the candle, prayer, silence, and/or short reading.

Silence (A minute or two to help focus on the next segment).

Check-In
Divide the total amount of time available for check-in by the number of participants. Each person has that fraction of the time to share, as well as hear any feedback, if desired. Plan for a minute of silence between speakers.

Silence (or break)

Study Time
St. Mark’s CCN steering committee will continue to provide each circle with study materials focusing on reconciliation, its promotion and practice.

Silence

Short Business Meeting
Announcements, deciding where and when next circle gathers and who will facilitate the meeting.

Silence

Closing
A simple, short ritual that invites/blesses/focuses everyone present back into the world-at-large.
Hospitality & Reconciliation Circles

Suggested Focus in Check-In

Each participant has only a few, short minutes of sharing what is probably one of the most important issues in a person’s life: their relationship with God. So it is suggested you give a little thought to what you want to share before you arrive for your circle gathering. Leave a little room for Spirit to work, in other words, it is not necessary to write notes about what you think is relevant to share. Instead, a little before circle meets, think back over the last month since you met last in circle, remembering the events that impacted your relationship with God and/or the moments in your prayer life that have most impacted or touched your daily life.

There are two suggested ways to approach your check-in:

1). Share (briefly) what has been happening in your life since you were last in circle. Reflect on how these events and situations have impacted/changed/affected your prayer life (if, what, or how have you been praying?) or how your relationship with God or awareness of God’s presence in your life has been affected. (Do you feel closer to God or more distant? Is your sense of God’s presence one of protection, strength, accountability, love, etc.?)

OR

2). Share how your prayer life has been going, your sense of God’s presence in your life and your sense of God’s will for you. Also, share how you’ve responded to God’s presence and God’s will for you. Have you been resisting in any way? What could that resistance be about? How has God’s presence in your life been affecting you?

The benefits of consciously reflecting on your relationship with God, God’s presence in your life and God’s will for you are both subtle and profound. Each of us yearn for a more intimate relationship with God and each of us long to more accurately discern God’s will for us so that our lives are full of purpose and contentment. The format and process suggested above has been used for centuries to grow in an ever deeper embrace with the Divine.
Hospitality and Reconciliation Circles

Suggested Study Format

General:

CCN members regularly are involved in the study of some serious book or article as part of The Common Discipline. The Bible may be one of the books to study. Study should involve understanding the text from the writer’s point of view, probing its meaning for oneself and one’s world, and evaluating the work overall from a theological perspective. Such theological reflection allows members to reform the way they see the world and to respond to it as God’s calls.

Study in the Hospitality and Reconciliation Circles:

A portion of each gathering circle, or perhaps alternating gatherings, may be devoted to study and theological reflection. Such study supports the promotion and practice of reconciliation by deepening the understanding, expanding the articulation, and broadening the perspective of God and the created world. This study informs the work of reconciliation and supports that learning in a loving and nurturing community.

A study guide is being developed to support the members’ practice of study and theological reflection. The guide will offer choices in process; that is, each HRC may choose one of several approaches to the study practice for the year. Examples of these choices may include the study of the Bible or other book, meditation, or prayer. The guide will offer structure as well as resources. It will be important for each circle to agree on a plan for the year, and then maintain the discipline that achieving that plan will require.

Decisions by the group are to be made by consensus. The word consensus is derived from SENSES, meaning a “mental process” not from CENSUS meaning “counting.” Thus, consensus refers to “minds coming together.” There are two rules, which must be followed in order to achieve true consensus:

1. Every person individually expresses their opinion and is heard.
2. Every person individually expresses a will to support the decision.

Study and reflection time will be governed by the same principles of listening, respect, confidentiality, honesty, trust, and shared leadership that mark all other portions of the circle gathering.
Hospitality & Reconciliation Circles

Listening

Sharing your story and, thus, becoming more consciously aware of God’s will for you (and your response to God’s calling), is only half of the purpose and benefits of participating in one of St. Mark’s Hospitality & Reconciliation Circles.

Listening, deeply attending to, getting to know and understand, and praying for another’s spiritual journey, is the other purpose and benefit of Circle. Reconciliation begins when two things occur. First, when you become more aware of your own relationship with God and share this awareness with others. Second, when you deeply listen to others and their sharing of their faith journey. Only then do the participants begin to experience a common ground and, thus, open the doorway to reconciliation and peace.

Listening is a learned behavior. Not everyone has learned to listen well. We often give the appearance of listening. This is not surprising since we are able to listen four times more rapidly than people can speak. If we do not truly concentrate on what the other person is saying, our minds wander.

Listening is hard work! The burden of understanding what is said, is on the listener. The listener will, however, interpret the message based on her/his own experience and values. We often hear what we expect to hear. The communication process becomes even more difficult when there are cultural, gender, age, etc. differences between the sender and receiver of messages.

Language, itself, can often become a barrier to communication since the 500 most commonly used words in English have over 14,000 meanings. The meaning is not in the words people use, but in what the person means when they use those words. This means that we must learn to listen not just to the words, but listen to the sound of the voice, listen for feelings and pay attention to non-verbal signals.

Becoming a better listener also helps a person become a better communicator and helps a person understand themselves better. People need to be aware of their own attitudes, feelings, prejudices, and boundaries so these things don’t get in the way (as much) when they are listening to others. It is not necessary that we all have the same values in order to respect people and to be able to get along with them. We do need, however, to learn to acknowledge and appreciate that people are different in physical and emotional makeup, family, cultural and faith background, education, and other life experiences. We, also, need to learn to understand that we are alike in our basic needs to be loved, have security, achieve and be recognized. Listening is how we learn to recognize this. The possibility of reconciliation improves as our listening skills improve.
Suggested Circle Guidelines

Confidentiality
What is said in the circle stays in the circle. Each circle needs to take time during their first gathering to thoroughly discuss and agree to the level and specifics of confidentiality that everyone is comfortable with.

Feedback
Each circle needs to decide if feedback is permitted during a person’s check-in. If feedback is permitted, during your circle’s first gathering, discuss the “art” of giving feedback. Be aware that feedback does not mean giving advice or criticizing or judging. Healthy feedback includes asking clarifying questions, “mirroring” back or paraphrasing what you just heard the other person say and sharing your emotional reaction to what the other just said, “I’m sad your dog died.” Remember, too, that, if circle decides that feedback is permitted, each participant has the right to state that they do not want feedback this time.

Shared Leadership
Even though one person is designated this month’s facilitator, each circle participant is responsible for being aware of the process of circle and the smooth running and staying on course of circle. During the first circle gathering, take time to discuss the role and responsibility of the facilitator. It is suggested that the role of facilitator be kept to a minimum; the facilitator conducts the meeting, puts together the short opening and closing ritual, keeps time, (or asks for a volunteer to be timekeeper), and is, generally, more aware of keeping the circle focused on the agreed upon format. If circle decides to rotate from one member’s home to another, does that particular month’s host also act as facilitator that month?

No Interrupting
When an individual is “checking-in,” it is suggested that there be no interruptions. Save feedback, if permitted, until that person is done with their check-in. The only exception to this is if the person is running out of time, the timekeeper may as politely and as unobtrusively as possible, let the speaker know their time is up. Timekeeping is important! And everyone is responsible for keeping an eye on the clock when they are speaking. Remember, too, that, if feedback is wanted and permitted, stop talking several minutes before your time is up to permit others to give you feedback.

Openness
Keeping an attitude of openness and hospitality is also key to a healthy circle. It is suggested that each circle always set an extra, empty chair to remind everyone that we gather with the intent of fostering hospitality and reconciliation.

Periodic Re-examination of Guidelines
Every once in a while, allow a little time during the business portion of circle, to discuss if something is not working or if circle wants to try something different.
APPENDIX C
Open Your Hearts
A Journey into Reconciliation

Hospitality and Reconciliation Circles
2003-2004

Prayer, Reflection and Action Guide
St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral
The Diocese of Minnesota
Acknowledgments

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We acknowledge that there will be no peace amongst people if there is not peace amongst religions, and so we work closely with other faith traditions. We seek to try and create an atmosphere where leaders, political and religious, are willing not just to look to the wrong of the other but to examine the wrong of their own tradition. We will only begin to understand the other when we know the pain of the other; when we can move from sympathy to empathy. When we can transcend being spectators of the pain of the other, to being partners in their pain.

—Revd. Canon Andrew P. B. White
Director of International Ministry and Director of International Centre for Reconciliation, Coventry Cathedral, England

**What Is the Community of the Cross of Nails?**

On November 14, 1940, the 600-year old Coventry Cathedral was bombed by the Germans leaving only a three-sided shell standing. Into those ruins walked the Dean of the Cathedral and upon seeing the words “Father, Forgive” still intact at the front of the church, he called his parishioners to the wreckage a day later. He asked that they pray for the Germans, and welded together three nails from the ruins to form a cross. Instead of seeking revenge and nurturing hatred, the Cathedral sought friendship and reconciliation with those that had caused them great harm. They reached out to their counterpart in Dresden, Germany, a Lutheran congregation, which had been bombed by the Allies.

This was the beginning of the Community of the Cross of Nails and it's associated International Center for Reconciliation. St. Mark's Cathedral has committed itself to becoming a Center for the Cross of Nails using Coventry Cathedral as our inspiration and model. Members of the the Community of the Cross of Nails make a commitment to daily prayer, meditation or silence, to practice in community, to be involved in self-education and reflection. and to be of service in a suffering world, all of which is based on a Benedictine model.

**The Common Discipline**

The Community of the Cross of Nails is sustained by the Common Discipline, which is based on the Benedictine Rule of Life for lay persons. Outlined here, the Common Discipline is a means by which members may dispose themselves to God's Grace in Christ, so that they will be open to transformation and become the people they are called to be.

**Silence, Prayer, and Meditation:** Members should regularly devote time to silence and solitude. Such withdrawal from one's world is a basic source for the spiritual life. Finding a rhythm for withdrawal and involvement is an individual responsibility. Time for prayer and meditation might be as little as ten minutes four times a week, or as much as an hour a day. The Daily Devotions on pages 137 and 140 of the Book of Common Prayer can be used.

**Study and Theological Reflection:** Members regularly are involved in the study of some serious book. They may seek the help of study groups or a spiritual friend for this portion of the discipline.

**Intimate Relationships:** Members regularly set aside the time, energy, and honesty necessary for intimate relationships, for it is within the openness of this kind of love that the transforming grace of God begins to show itself in change and growth. For those who are married, family members along with special friends and colleagues will be the focus for intimacy. For those who are single, an intimate circle may
The purpose of our Circles is to deepen our spiritual awareness, awaken our spiritual consciousness, walk with others on a challenging spiritual journey and love the holy in self and other.

—JoAnn Ward, Chair, Cross of Nails Steering Committee

encompass a larger group of persons who touch their lives daily.

**Community:** Members involve themselves in the life of a community in order to become less self-centered, more self-giving, and open to the Spirit of God in all creation. The communities begin small with a church, a Foyer Group, or a neighborhood, and widen into larger circles.

**Worship:** Members participate in the life of the church community, recognizing that personal prayer is fully realized only when it pours over into the corporate worship of a church.

**Service:** Members respond to Christ’s call to a ministry of service: “… whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:43-45)

**What are Hospitality and Reconciliation Circles?**

Our Hospitality and Reconciliation Circles grew out of a very positive experience which started at St. Mark’s Cathedral in Minneapolis, but shared with many churches of the diocese during Lent, 2003, when we gathered in small groups of 8 - 10 and worked with a 5-week curriculum called “Open Your Hearts: A Journey into Reconciliation.” This had been stimulated by a call to understand more deeply the work of the Community of the Cross of Nails and to explore one of its disciplines - to practice in community. The guidelines suggest that we commit to gathering as a group once each month for the purpose of deepening our relationships with each other and God. A course of study is useful so that this experience differentiates itself from a social group, although we found friendship to be a wonderful benefit. We commit to common reading, study, contemplation and sharing as we learn from the curriculum that is offered. The curriculum offered for the 9-month period beginning in September, 2003, will also revolve around the many facets of hospitality, forgiveness and reconciliation explored through the richness of “Story”.

The image of the circle became our way of seeing the progression of concentric levels of reconciliation from the most intimate at the center, between individuals and God; to our interpersonal relationships; out into our communities; and most expansive, with all of life. We are discovering that the opportunities for understanding reconciliation are vast, indeed. Who knows? Sequels to this manual may never end.
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Waiting, Expectation and Surrender
Welcome to the Journey

Review of Format for Each Session

Light Candle

Open with Prayer

The Prayer of Reconciliation

Sit in Silence

Reflection from Last Month's Stories

This is the "meat" of the meeting when we grapple with deeper meanings we find by interpreting these stories, especially regarding hospitality, healing and reconciliation. The "Soul Questions" are made available at the end of each session to stimulate imagination.

Break

Meant for clearing the mind and being open for new material

Stories from Two Traditions

Important to be read aloud, not just read silently.

First Questions

Comparison between cultures, symbolism, issues of reconciliation that are raised, images used - our cultural understanding of the images, etc.

Soul Questions

For reflection in the coming month.

Closing Collect

Extinguish Candle

It Starts with Story

In May of 2003, Canon Andrew White, Director of the International Center for Reconciliation, associated with Coventry Cathedral in England, paid a visit to St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Minneapolis, MN, to teach us about his work in the arena of global reconciliation, especially in the Middle East. It was a day that none of the participants will forget. He was asked how the actual process of reconciliation begins, and he replied, "It starts with story. Each party listens to the story of the other." This, then, was the true motivation for this coming year's program. Stories shared bind people together.

John H. Westerhoff III provides a beautiful understanding of the importance of Story in our Christian life in his book A Pilgrim People: Learning through the Church Year (1)

The church is a story-formed community. Baptism is our adoption into a story. ...In the context of our liturgies we are initiated into God's story and we appropriate its significance for our lives so that it might influence our common life day by day. And as we journey through history and traverse life-cycle passages, the retelling of God's story sustains us and moves us on.

We were blessed to have had Rev. Canon Mark Kelm walk us through the Christian liturgical year as a structuring principle for these. We ground our work in our Christian faith while remaining open and reconciling to other faith traditions, part of our spiritual journey as members of the Community of the Cross of Nails. So, each month will be based on a theme that is relevant to the Christian calendar with stories that are a reflection of that theme in many faith traditions.

The purpose of our Circles and spiritual friendships is to more deeply comprehend and live into Hospitality and Reconciliation. This is not an adventure for the weak of heart. We look outside of ourselves, our own culture and yes, even our own faith, for those places where we share common ground.

Who of us cannot understand a longing to know God? Is this a different experience for a Native American, for a Hindu, for a Muslim, or for a Jew? We come to our knowing in many different ways. For us, as Christians, it is through the life and teachings of Christ. As Christians, we are specifically called to the task of reconciliation. For this reason, each month we take baby steps toward this end as we meet the "other" in the stories and other materials. Stories open and soften our hearts. Sometimes the stories will be Biblical, many will be the story of an individual life; some will have been passed down in traditional cultures and some will be from other faith traditions. Regardless the source, all offer us an opportunity for comparing and contrasting the many faces of God, our call to reconciliation with ourselves, our community, and all of God's creation. Keep an open heart and mind.

After the telling of the stories, we will share some brief observa-
tions and dialogue around what we have called the “First Questions”. They will review such matters as:

+ Where are the similarities and differences found in these two stories?
+ For what might these images be a metaphor?
+ The purpose of these questions is to begin a dialogue on the images themselves. To what is the story pointing?
+ What is seeking reconciliation in these stories?

We hope this the questions will have the effect of “getting the wheels turning” as we share our individual observations.

At the end of the meeting, just before our closing Collect, we will be presented with another series of questions to take home and work with during the following month in order to keep the images of our stories alive. This becomes the “inner” (or Soul) work. “Soul” in this context is used to identify questions that invite a deeper, more personal or heartfelt relationship to the stories. The initial questions are to stimulate immediate, intellectual, connect-the-dots, “Ah-Ha!” response to the stories. “Soul” response takes longer to work and discern, giving the stories time to work their way into our spirits. We will consider where Christ calls us to reconciliation in our own lives as stimulated by the stories. You may consider many ways to work with the images. Journaling, praying, meditating.

For one final place to look for these images at work, it may be useful to remember Carl Jung’s words:

*We are so captivated by and entangled in our subjective consciousness that we have forgotten the age-old fact that God speaks chiefly through dreams and visions.*

—C. G. Jung

This is your group, your own work and the important thing is that you are inspired by it. We hope these ideas will help you.

When our circles meet again the following month, everyone who wants to talk about their experience over the past month in working with the images is invited to do so.

And the cycle begins again with the telling of the new stories.

For additional information on both the facilitation of and effective participation in these Circles, please refer to the Guide for Facilitators and Rules of the Road.
Guidelines
Reconciliation Circles 2003-2004

The purpose of a learning circle, conversation or community is to support the movement from individual intelligence to collective wisdom through reflective dialogue about subjects that attract and have meaning for participants.

—Dr. Kathleen E. Allen
We ask that all Participants in the Circles for the 2003-2004 year read Moore's book to give a basic understanding of this approach to suffering, reconciliation and the important, but often neglected work of the soul. This work takes great patience and time. It is to our advantage to have this course of study take nine months. We will have the opportunity to be still, be quiet, be angry, be discouraged, be energized, be moved, be whatever we are called to be. Parker J. Palmer describes his version of “care of the soul” in a lecture to fellow teachers based on his work “Teaching from the Heart: Search and Renewal in a Teacher's Life.”

As we go into these meetings together, let us remember one thing about the soul. It is like a wild animal: tough, self-sufficient, resilient, but also exceedingly shy. Let us remember that if we go crashing through the woods and yelling for the soul to come out, it will evade us all day and all night. We cannot beat the bushes and yell at each other if we expect this precious inwardness to emerge. But if you are willing to go into the woods and sit quietly at the base of a tree, that wild animal will, after a few hours, reveal itself to you. And, out of the corner of your eye, you will glimpse something of the wild preciousness that these meetings are looking for. (3)

This brief description of Depth Psychology in conjunction with the reading of Moore's book will open many to a new way of thinking about our whole selves and the tendency in our culture to want to amputate that which is undesirable. In our work we will use Storytelling as a way to access the Soul. Stories “help us see themes that circle in our lives, the deep themes that tell the myths we live,” according to Moore. Many of these myths are collective ones, from our past as Christians from the Bible, as members of Western Civilization Greek, Roman, and Celtic myths and of the world-wide human community, including Buddhist, Hindu, Native American tales. All of these will be woven together in such a way that we begin to see the common threads between cultures and faiths. And at an entirely different level, the stories may touch participants personally.

As both facilitator and participant, you will walk a fine line between the two roles. We will define the framework within which the groups will work and this will help the facilitator straddle this fence with greater ease. As a jumping off point in this work, the job of the facilitator is beautifully described by John Epps in an article for Facilitation News.

Facilitation in a profound sense means calling out the authentic humanity among participants in a group and assisting the group to become more than the sum of its parts. It’s a task of reconciliation; of individuals with the group, of people with the organization, and of people with themselves. (4)
Belief System:

Based upon the work of Depth Psychologists and Thomas Moore in his book *Care of the Soul*, we will approach each other as inherently whole and meet each other where we are.

- Collaborative and diverse wisdom is found when our individual intelligence combines with others
- Tensions are a precondition for generative learning
- There is a passion for inquiry expressed simply in our being here.
- Pluralism is enriching to the soul.

Environment:

As meetings will take place in the homes of individuals, members of each group should follow these basic guidelines and then, in the first meeting, determine other logistical guidelines to which they may want to adhere.

Welcoming and Non-distracting environment - consider animals, children, phones ringing, fragrances, etc.

Use ritual - Candle-lighting, small bell or Tibetan bowl or rain stick for transitions - especially into and out of meditations.

Gathering in a circle for seating as much as is possible without anything in the center blocking each other's faces.

Consider removing shoes as a symbol of “leaving the world behind.”

Turn off cell phones, of course.

*If someone needs to take a phone call (say a parent with young children), let the group know you will need to leave your phone on in case of an emergency. Then leave the Circle to take the call.*

Consider low music as people enter the room, but if turned off as you “open the circle,” it will add to the symbolic nature of entering a common, quiet place together.

Food is fine but perhaps not during the actual meeting. Have it before or after. Serve water, tea, coffee during meeting if guests would like it.

If you are unable to attend a session, please let group facilitator or host know ahead of time. This is also true if you must leave early. Each meeting will end with ritual prayer or collect.
Processes:
Create a sense of shared power and equity. Facilitator will be cognizant of every one having equal time if desired.
On other hand, Facilitator should be sensitive to someone who dominates and ask that they come to a close to allow others the opportunity to speak.
Create a spirit of inquiry and curiosity with good questions.
Notice how individuals are connecting the conversation to other topics and making meaning of the conversations.
Reflect each week on the process as well as the content and make notes in your journal.
Reward risk-taking in the group.
Celebrate our work and the quality of the relationships.

Structures:
Meetings are to be held once each month from September 2003 to May 2004.
Meetings should be 1 1/2 to 2 hours in length, depending upon the agreement of the group.
Meetings take place in the homes of participants, usually on a rotating schedule. However, one participant may choose to host all meetings with the agreement of the group.
Participants should arrive on time and prepared for the study and conversation.
Everyone participates - no one dominates.
Serious personal issues will be discussed with great care and an eye for the need to refer to a professional.
Everyone has equal power in using this intuition. However, it may be best to mention this to the injured party privately following the meeting. Discernment must be used in these matters.
Flexibility will be necessary at times. However, with a change in the meeting's agenda, the Facilitator will check this out and get agreement with participants.
Outcomes:

This Circles process is central to the overall purpose of the Community of the Cross of Nails. It is to allow us as members to:

Use this learning to create change in ourselves, our relationships and our community.

Sustain the lessons we learn and teach them to others because we have integrated and explored them deeply.

Develop a more compassionate attitude towards the souls of ourselves, our partners and families, our coworkers and our communities, and to understand that being whole means loving, living with and accepting all parts of the earth, ourselves and others. It does not necessarily mean liking all of those parts.

Apply that compassion as we deepen our understanding of hospitality and reconciliation.

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The redemptive mystery of our salvation should be centered on the theme, at the same time biblical and patristic, of the identification of God and of the human being, between which there is a double movement of conferring and receiving love. St. Athanasius, inspired by St. Irenaeus of Lyons said, “God became man so that man might become God.” This short, incisive formula sums up the mystery of salvation. St. Paul already spoke of “the generosity that our Lord Jesus Christ had, that, although He was rich, he became poor for our sake, so that you should become rich through His poverty. (2 Corinthians 8:9) This great christological theme of kenosis, of the voluntary humbling of the Son of God through obedience unto death, even death on the cross (Philippians 2:6-9), also announces His exaltation above every name.

— Boris Bobrinskoy, The Compassion of the Father
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