

SABBATICAL SEASONS

The Rev. Thomas E. Smith, pastor of Presbyterian Chapel of the Lakes in north-eastern Indiana and a busy volunteer and community leader, shared a 10-week time-out with his family, including Isaac, his 2-year-old son.





*“To every thing there is a season,
and a time for every purpose under the heaven.”*
—Ecclesiastes 3:1

*Smith and his wife
Diana enjoy a “free
day” with three of
their five children
(left to right): Ian,
10; Micah, 6, and
Isaac.*

For the Rev. Jonathan Hutchison, the invitation to plan a structured leave of absence after 18 years of nonstop ministry was a “godsend.” After serving as a hospice chaplain in Columbus, Ind., he and his wife Deborah moved to Bean Blossom, where they divide pastoral duties at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Nashville, and Jonathan also serves as vicar.

“I knew I needed some time away,” says Hutchison. “In my hospice work I noticed that I

was having difficulty engaging with a new person and the family surrounding that person. I guess I was beginning to overload on people. Besides carrying 40 to 50 hospice cases, I had the regular responsibility of 80 to 100 people in our congregation.”

In a very different setting, the Rev. Matthew C. Harrison, senior minister at Zion Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., shared Hutchison’s need for some time away from pastoral duties. Harrison oversees a large multicultural congregation that operates a parochial academy and is involved in a partnership with another congregation to revitalize a 10-block neighborhood surrounding the two churches. “We’ve knocked down about 30 dilapidated houses, and we’re in the process of building a dozen homes and have plans for a dozen more in the next couple of years,” he says. “This takes tremendous energy. Sometimes I feel as if I’m running on reserves.”

“A time to seek”

The Rev. Thomas E. Smith was in his 13th year of ministry at the Presbyterian Chapel of the Lakes in Angola, Ind., when he and his wife considered their first-ever “pilgrimage” away from the church. “We saw it as a good time to step back and reflect on our experience and to realize that we’ve been at this for a long time,” recalls Smith. “The congregation, my family and I heaved a collective sigh, but it wasn’t as if we were saying, ‘We’re only halfway up this hill and we’ve got a long way to go yet.’ It was in anticipation of a great opportunity.”

When Lilly Endowment launched the Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations in 1998, the intent was to strengthen Hoosier congregations by inviting the churches to design programs of professional and personal renewal for their primary leaders – the pastors.

The Alban Institute at Bethesda, Md., agreed to lead workshops around the state to inform churches of the opportunity and share research that supports the benefits of sabbaticals. Alban staff members emphasized that successful grant proposals were likely to include activities that ensured

new experiences and perspectives for the pastors and the congregations they served.

The response was positive. In its first year the program drew 107 applications and resulted in awards of up to \$30,000 to 23 Indiana congregations. Based on the initial success, a 1999 allocation for \$900,000 extends the program through the year 2000.

“A time for peace”

Some congregations and pastors found that the grant-application process in itself was a worthwhile exercise because it prompted them to examine pastoral work in new ways. “When this opportunity came along, I was reevaluating my ministry,” recalls Hutchison. “By engaging with the grant program and talking about it with my spouse and people at my church, I sorted out some of my vague feelings about needing to do something new. It brought into focus my desire to write and reconnect with my music. I credit the process with helping me discern my next step in ministry.”

At first Hutchison worried that members of his congregation, in their desire to support his sabbatical plan, would not articulate their fears about maintaining the church’s ministry in the absence of the pastoral staff.

“This is a very loving and warm congregation,” he explains. “I’ve encouraged them to let their misgivings surface. We’ve had conversations where we talk about concerns such as, ‘Who’s going to take care of us while you’re gone?’ ‘What happens if my uncle dies?’ ‘Suppose someone has to go into the hospital?’”

One evening’s discussion was followed by a pitch-in dinner with only “comfort foods” on the menu. This was to affirm that it was all right for members to air their anxieties about the upcoming change. “I would be disappointed if the congregation felt it couldn’t function without us,” says Hutchison. “That would be a major sign of a failure in my ministry.”

“A time to laugh”

The sabbatical plans for Hutchison and Harrison will unfold in the summer of 2000 and will include travel components that combine study, sightseeing and many family interactions.

Harrison, his wife Kathy and their two children will begin their journey in May when they fly to Germany for 10 days. “I’ve never been to the famous Reformation sites, although I’ve taught many classes on the Reformation roots of our church,” says Harrison.

The Rev. Jonathan Hutchison and his wife Deborah hope to find the time to revive their musical skills. The renewal period granted by their church involves travel to Britain and writing seminars for him in Ireland and New Mexico.

From Europe they will travel to Australia where Harrison will study with two professors at Luther Seminary in Adelaide. He also plans to take his family to visit an aboriginal mission station at the invitation of a pastor near Alice Springs.

On each end of the three-month sabbatical are a few days that Harrison calls “gear-shift time” when he and his family can catch their breath, have some fun, and either rev up for the experience or wind down from it.

Jonathan and Deborah Hutchison will spend two months in the British Isles visiting landmarks and holy sites including the sacred island of Iona. Jonathan will enroll in two writing courses, one in Ireland and one in Taos, N.M., where he will spend the second half of his sabbatical working on a book about his hospice experiences.

“This won’t be a how-to book,” he says. “This will be my reflections on some of the people I’ve encountered in hospice. I want to tell their stories and share some of the lessons they tried to teach me.”

In keeping with the intent of the program, both pastors and their churches have worked hard to ensure that the congregations will not merely



mark time during their absences. St. David's Episcopal Church has teams of members trained in outreach, pastoral care, worship, music and finance. Zion Lutheran Church has multiple clergy and may recruit two seminarians to help with specific ministries.

"A time apart can be a very positive thing," says Harrison. "It will remind everybody that no matter what pastor is here, God is still in charge and taking care of His business."

"A time to build up"

Smith, whose sabbatical last summer took him, his wife and three of their five children to England and Scotland, knows that Harrison's assessment is on target.

"I came back to a session of the board of elders who for the first time saw themselves in a new way," says Smith. "Before the sabbatical they tended to be 'pastorally dependent.' In other words,

they looked to the pastor as the sort of resident Christian who is supposed to take care of things. But last summer the whole congregation saw themselves as responsible for the care of each other and for the coordination of that care. They grouped together and galvanized in a fresh way. That was the healthiest thing about this experience."

It was so healthy, in fact, that Smith and the congregation want to nurture the new participatory style of ministry.

"The church leaders have planned a retreat," says Smith. "We're going to talk about and reflect on what we learned and make plans for the church's future and administration in that light."

(The Endowment was so pleased with the Indiana program that the National Clergy Renewal Program was launched in December. The program will provide 100 Christian congregations and their pastors from around the country with grants of up to \$30,000 each.)

(opposite) Zion Lutheran Church (background) has served Fort Wayne since 1882. The Rev. Matthew Harrison talks with a neighborhood leader about the planned renovation of a 10-block area in the inner city.

INSPIRING RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Two grants totaling almost \$4 million will support complementary research on religious leadership in two American faith communities – Christian and Jewish. These multifaceted projects will result in findings that could influence the recruitment, formation, retention and renewal of current and future religious leaders.

A \$3.4 million grant to Duke University will support a four-year, comprehensive study to survey the current state of parish ministry in major Christian denominations, describe elements of excellent ministry in different kinds of congregations, and suggest ways ministry can be supported.

The second award – \$470,370 to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in New York City – enables JTS to study similar issues concerning the rabbinate and develop the intellectual foundations for a new Jewish Religious Leadership Institute.

Help for a "troubled profession"

Seminaries and theological schools in several denominations are beset by a shortage of pastors; others wish more leaders of a higher caliber were available to their congregations.

"In some ways, ordained ministry is a troubled profession," says Jackson W. Carroll, the Williams professor of religion and society at Duke Divinity School and project director. "American culture has changed considerably in the past 25 years, and theology schools and the clergy are facing new issues."

A Lilly Endowment planning grant enabled Carroll and his research team to define leadership-related topics that warrant further exploration. "We consulted with pastors, church leaders and seminary faculty," explains Carroll, "to confirm key issues that we need to address."

"We need to find out about the state of pastoral leadership now and what trends indicate about the next generation of leaders," Carroll says. "We also need to describe what 'good ministry' is, how it happens, how it can happen more often and how it can be nurtured and supported."



Time to plan

The JTS project will provide an excellent opportunity to compare issues common to both Christianity and Judaism, since both must deal with many of the same cultural, social and economic forces operating in contemporary American society.

“We hope this will be a bilateral process and that we will be able to contribute to the thinking in other faith communities,” says Jack Wertheimer, JTS provost, Mendelson professor of American Jewish history and director of the Endowment-supported project.

Set for completion in two years, the JTS project will allow leaders at the 113-year-old seminary to conceptualize a leadership institute that will enhance the training not only of rabbis but also of congregational lay leaders and religious educators. Wertheimer hopes to explore new ways of helping leaders already in the field or soon to enter the field.

“We need to inform ourselves about a range of leadership initiatives taking place in other faith communities and other sectors of American society,” says Wertheimer. “We want to develop educational initiatives for our degree programs and for training leaders already serving in congregations.” As part of the process, Wertheimer and his colleagues are convening groups that will provide direction for the proposed religious leadership institute.

Applying the findings

Both Carroll and Wertheimer are determined that the research will have practical application. Duke researchers will disseminate the results as soon possible and in many ways – conferences, focused reports, a Web site. The process will culminate in a book designed for a wide audience.

“The issues will have policy relevance for the denominations,” Carroll notes. “We’re also recruiting a group of church leaders who will be a kind of first audience for the research findings. As we expose them to our research, they will feed us ideas on issues that need to be considered as we move forward through the project,” Carroll says.

INDIANAPOLIS CENTER FOR CONGREGATIONS HANDS-ON HELP FOR CHURCHES

Southport Baptist Church has an old-fashioned, narrow narthex that doesn't permit fellowship. "We call it 'the gauntlet,'" says the Rev. Fred Oaks. The "gauntlet" problem was never obvious to the 625-member, 167-year-old Indianapolis congregation until two years ago when Oaks and the lay leadership attended a workshop called "The Inviting Church: Ministering to New Members."

The workshop was sponsored by the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. Lilly Endowment first funded the center in 1996 with a grant to the Alban Institute, a national research, publishing, education and consulting organization based in Bethesda, Md. The center's mission: to help Indianapolis-area congregations find solutions to problems by connecting them with resources from around the city and across the nation.

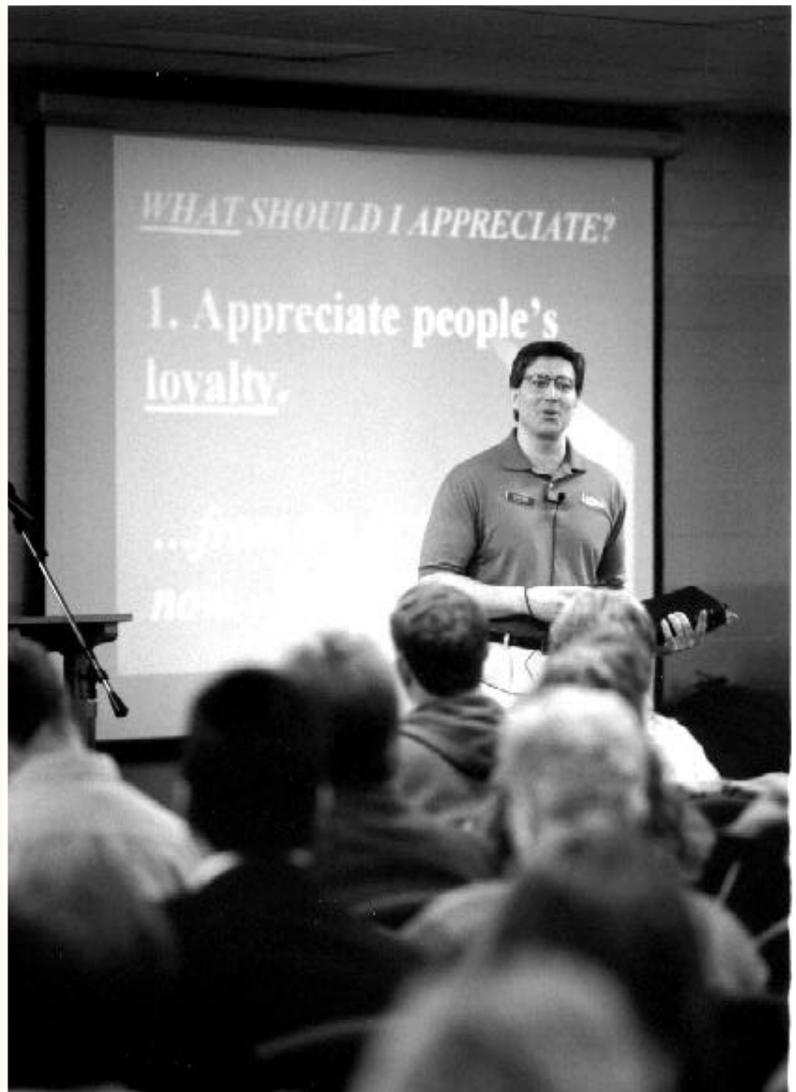
"The workshop helped us to see our church through the eyes of a visitor," Oaks says. "We realized we needed a more welcoming space and a second service to allow room for growth."

Through the center, Southport Baptist received \$6,750 to hire architects to plan a new, more welcoming narthex, as well as office and multi-use space to accommodate growth and change. Two years after the workshop, the church still has the gauntlet, but it also has a building plan, a new small-group ministry, and a second, nontraditional worship service, called "Living Water," to appeal to visitors of all ages.

Solving problems

Since 1996 the Indianapolis Center for Congregations has worked with 220 Indianapolis congregations from three faith groups – Christian, Jewish and Muslim – and has hosted 800 participants in dozens of programs and workshops, according to John R. Wimmer, director of the center. In 1999 the Alban Institute received a second Endowment grant for \$6.4 million to expand the center's capacity to disseminate information to congregations around the country.

"Churches are where people go to make sense of their lives, faith and relationships. They are such



a strong presence, but congregations do have problems,” Wimmer says.

“We’re still running into churches where the church secretary is spending two days a month typing out labels for the newsletter,” he notes. “And some churches don’t have a database, yet we know that the better you communicate with members, the better you can build your community of faith.”

Computers and conferences

Churches like First Baptist Church in Indianapolis have benefited from the center’s interest in the marriage of technology and faith. The congregation recently received a \$4,700 grant from the center to upgrade its computer hardware and software. The new church database allows the Rev. George Tooze to keep track of members’ birthdays, track visitors, and correspond by e-mail with members of the congregation.

“My e-mail messages might include a thank-you note, messages from leadership and dialogue about my sermon,” Tooze says. “The contact creates a better sense of family.”

Churches in central Indiana will have a chance to boost their understanding of information technology with the center’s Computers and Ministry Grants Initiative beginning in 2000. Up to 50 congregations will be selected to participate in a special “Computers and Ministry” course, receive on-site visits from consultants, develop a technology plan that fits their own goals, and then have a chance to submit a grant proposal to help pay for up to half the cost of implementing their technology plan.

The center also links congregations and addresses issues such as conflict management, practicing faith, nurturing families and youth, leading change and managing repair and renovation projects. Some congregations have sent church staff or lay leaders (three-quarters of attendees at educational programs are laity) to center-sponsored forums. Other congregations have tapped into the “Congregation Resource Guide,” a list of national and international resources on subjects



ranging from church-management software to stained-glass repair.

Expanding the audience

A new pilot program, “Travel in Learning,” will allow congregational leaders to travel to other regions of the country to study a church that has met with success in a matter of particular concern to their home congregations.

Ultimately, the fruits of the center’s work will help congregations elsewhere, according to James P. Wind, president of the Alban Institute. The center’s “Congregation Resource Guide,” for example, initially designed for Indianapolis congregations, will soon be accessible via Internet for churches everywhere.

The center is a sort of living laboratory. “It helps us understand how congregations learn, how they use resources, how they operate in spite of financial challenges,” Wind says. “We’re always learning new ways to work with congregations.”

The Rev. Fred Oaks of Southport Baptist Church in Indianapolis uses a multimedia presentation (opposite) to attract younger worshippers, while a more traditional service (right) pleases others. Oaks has benefited from the programs of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations.

When Charlotte Robinson accepted a pastoral call to lead the congregation of First Church of Almond Springs, Calif., she did not anticipate the series of problems that awaited her there. Among the challenges she faced: crafting an initial sermon that would convince skeptics of her ability to practice ministry; dealing with a staff member who was determined to undermine her leadership; consoling the community when a much-loved resident died; and serving as mediator during a politically charged local controversy.

SEMINARIES USE E-TOOLS TO BUILD TEACHING RESOURCES

Fortunately, she received – and continues to receive – thoughtful counsel from students enrolled in graduate classes at the Claremont School of Theology. Each week they log onto the Almond Springs Web site, read about Robinson’s latest predicament and prepare responses based on their logic and the articles and tutorials that accompany the episode.

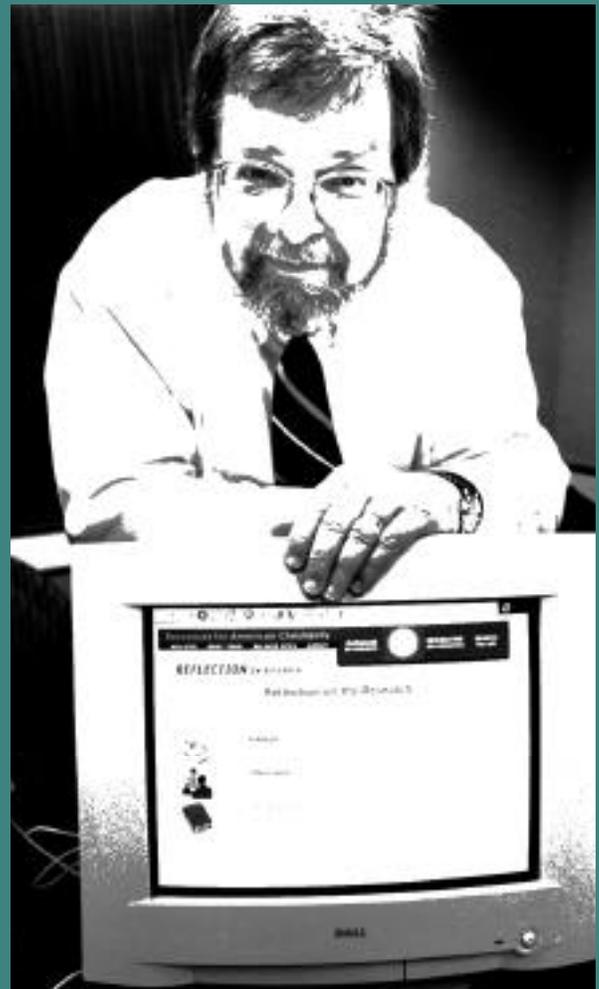
Truth to tell, “Charlotte” is a fictitious composite from several congregations. She appears online for teaching purposes. “Because Robinson’s story is a ‘scripted scenario,’ technology has allowed us to create a totally different kind of case study,” explains Scott Cormode, the George Butler associate professor of church administration and finances at the California seminary.

Under the old model, which Cormode calls a “paper situation,” case studies were issued to students in their entirety rather than in unfolding segments. The characters had little depth – “they were like cardboard cutouts,” says Cormode – and did not motivate students to get involved.

By contrast, students (and others) can visit www.christianleaders.org and then select online scenarios to find biographies of the fictitious characters, pictures of the mythical community, and extensive background information about conflicts that confront Robinson and her church.

“Students begin to treat Robinson as if she is

real. We teach students to ask questions and research answers,” says Cormode. “We’re teaching the very skills that we want pastors to have when they become leaders of congregations.”



*Milton (Joe) Coalter
“revs up” the
soon-to-be-released
Web site that will
display information
about religion
research projects
funded by the
Endowment.*

Charlotte's Website

As recently as 1996, the school lacked the infrastructure to support the classroom activities that Cormode describes. With funds provided by two Lilly Endowment grants, the campus now is fully wired; each faculty member has a desktop computer, and the school's Web site offers a variety of tools such as interviews with parish leaders, articles from Christian and secular journals, and, of course, Robinson's ongoing saga. Cormode says the school will expand its use of technology in the classroom, but it will do so at a pace that is comfortable for the campus community.

"We did collaborative evaluation in the midst of the grant-implementation program and discovered that some of our goals were way too lofty and some were not nearly lofty enough," he says. The technology task force decided to wait until professors were comfortable with simple functions such as e-mail before offering them advanced training.

The process has moved quickly and smoothly. "When I arrived in 1996, people couldn't imagine how to use technology on campus," recalls Cormode. "It is now thoroughly embedded in the way we relate to one another, and we use it to collaborate on projects large and small."

Computer camp, anyone?

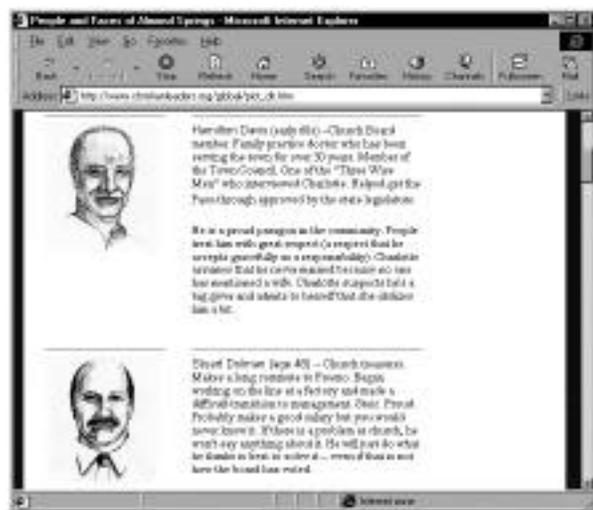
The Claremont school is not unique in these technology efforts. Seminaries across the country are using online resources. Endowment support for these programs exceeds \$23 million and began in the mid-1990s after a comprehensive study confirmed that emerging technologies had potentially powerful teaching and learning applications.

Early grant programs encouraged schools to conduct audits, engage consultants and design plans for technology-based instructional initiatives. Subsequent awards, made in 1997 and 1999, enabled seminaries to build infrastructure, train faculty members, equip laboratories and create partnerships and networks. More than 75 theological schools and seminaries have benefited from the Endowment's information technology program.

The congregation in Almond Springs, Calif. – its people, problems and progress – is just a click away on a Web site of the Claremont School of Theology.

One successful collaboration involves the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools, composed of five seminaries that prepare students for ministry in the Roman Catholic Church and three Protestant denominations.

To stretch their grant monies, the schools pooled resources two years ago and hired one expert to conduct training sessions on four campuses. Jim Rafferty, the consortium's technology resource administrator, has worked to break down barriers and make learning sessions nonthreatening and fun. A laid-back "computer camp" was such a hit last summer that he plans to repeat it in 2000.



Rafferty has packaged another series of lessons as "Five Interesting Things You Can Do With ____." The blank at the end of the sentence varies. "I offer the 55-minute sessions at each seminary and follow the classes with hands-on time in the computer labs," says Rafferty. "It's fun to watch people start with tentative baby steps and

then break into a run. They say, 'Oh, I can do that,' and, of course, they can," he says.

Tapping the "niche market"

Technology's support of theological education also extends deep into the library stacks. A \$3.9 million Endowment grant to the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) soon will give seminaries, scholars and ministers unprecedented access to key journals.

The organization's new ATLAS Project (American Theological Library Association Serials) will place current issues and decades of back issues of the 50 most significant journals in religion on the World Wide Web, making all articles accessible from desktop computers anywhere in the world.

"We're what is called a 'niche market' academically," says Dennis A. Norlin, executive director of ATLA, based in Evanston, Ill. "Some publications in our discipline have circulations smaller than 1,000 and are published by scholarly societies and theological schools. Because large database vendors prefer to negotiate deals with a single publisher who publishes a hundred or more titles, we decided to establish a Web site. ATLA, a premier index to religious literature, wanted to make sure that religion wasn't left behind as an academic area."

600 journals online

The ATLAS project eventually will encompass all journals currently included in the ATLA index of religious periodicals. "Our ultimate goal is to offer more than 600 journals online," confirms Norlin. "People, including the general public, will be able to search our database, find the article they want, click on a hotlink and go directly to the article. We believe that religion and faith should be topics of widespread discussion, and this electronic collection is one way to raise the public's level of understanding."

Having a library collection just a few easy and convenient keystrokes away has led to an interesting phenomenon. ATLA is in the process of phasing out the print versions of two of its three

key indexes. "This is the last year we'll print an index of book reviews in religion, and next year we'll print our last index of essays," says Norlin.

Disseminating research findings

A third technology-related initiative supported by the Endowment during 1999 is an Internet Web site that offers information about religion research projects it has funded in the past several years. The material presented online will be available to all visitors to the Web pages but will be directed especially to pastors and other religious leaders and to scholars in the field of religion. The project's principal investigator, Milton J. (Joe) Coalter of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, anticipates the Web site's unveiling in the summer of 2000.

"Besides a database of projects and products, we'll offer a section called 'Reflections on Research' that will include essays written by scholars and religious leaders," says Coalter. "There will be interviews with project directors, who will give overviews of their work and will talk about findings that may not have gotten into print. Another section will offer study guides."

Initiatives in Religion, the newsletter of the Endowment's Religion Division, also will be available. All the elements on the site can be searched by keyword, subject, faith community, author and project director. A final section will list related Web sites devoted to specific Endowment-funded projects, regranteeing agencies and organizations that are pursuing projects which parallel the religion interests of the Endowment.

"We can disseminate information very quickly," says Coalter. "We don't have to wait for a publisher to release it, and we have thoughtful religious observers responding to the literature. Pastors will have quick access to information, and they'll have their colleagues' reflections on the most important of those findings."

SPIRIT & PLACE

David Bodenhamer, director of the Polis Center at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, credits the successful launch of the Spirit & Place civic festival in 1996 to a casual conversation and a rare opportunity. “As part of our Religion and Urban Culture Project, we were trying to create public discourse about the relationship between religion and community,” he recalls. Susan Neville, a professor of English at Butler University, mentioned to Bodenhamer that author John Updike was coming to campus and was well qualified to address the topic.

The idea took shape and then grew threefold. If the presence of one famous writer could spark interest in the connection between religion and community, what might be the impact of a trio of well-known writers?

“We decided to invite Kurt Vonnegut and Dan Wakefield to join John Updike in a conversation about the spiritual and moral themes that their works embrace,” says Bodenhamer. Vonnegut and Wakefield, former residents of Indianapolis, could also comment on the link between the city and their spiritual formation.

The program drew the largest single crowd in the history of Butler University’s Clowes Memorial

Hall. “It was like a celebration of place,” says Neville of the standing-room-only turnout. “The authors focused on their spirituality as writers and on their connection to the landscape they wrote about. The event started conversations among local artists, writers, religious leaders and historians.”

Spirit & Place has emerged as an annual festival, and the three-way “conversation” is its signature event. With the theme of “changing landscapes,” the 1999 festival featured author-keynoters Barry Lopez (*Arctic Dreams*) who focused on natural landscapes, Kathleen Norris (*Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*) who talked about the connection between spirit and landscapes, and Sister Helen Prejean (*Dead Man Walking*) who focused on moral landscapes.

Increasing the “voices”

Community involvement has grown. Now almost 40 partnering organizations offer related programs at venues throughout the city. Sponsors

Citizens crowded the Murat Centre in downtown Indianapolis to hear the Spirit & Place keynote conversation on “changing landscapes.”



Keynoters Barry Lopez and Kathleen Norris (right) addressed other audiences around the city. So did Sister Helen Prejean (below) who spoke at Martin University and with its president, the Rev. Boniface Hardin.

include religious, cultural and educational groups, and their contributions include art exhibits, dramatic performances, panel discussions, readings, sacred concerts and a mock trial that probes a hypothetical community issue.

“We call Spirit & Place a ‘civic festival’ because its main purpose is to foster discussion about community by using the traditions of the arts, humanities and religion,” explains Bodenhamer. “We’re not out to prescribe action, but we know that action is likely to happen when people reflect seriously about issues and make connections with people who have similar interests.”

Two such connections have led to ongoing relationships among diverse groups. A church was the setting two years ago for a dramatic presentation written by an Indianapolis playwright and based on two female characters from the Old Testament. The host church invited women from local Jewish, Muslim and Christian congregations to attend. “The women talked after the performance and agreed to continue the association that bridged their faiths,” says Bodenhamer.

The second collaboration evolved between two dance companies – one a professional troupe and the other a group of physically and mentally challenged performers. Because of their joint effort, members of the second group now are being integrated into the city’s larger arts community.



Moving to the next level

With a Lilly Endowment grant for \$500,000, the Polis Center will stage three more Spirit & Place festivals and will develop a strategic plan to guide the annual event as it expands geographically, attracts new partners and adopts a permanent structure of governance.

Part of the challenge of planning the next year’s round of activities is to expand the scope of events, participants and locations without losing the festival’s original appeal and audiences. Supporters of Spirit & Place do not want the event to be stereotyped as an arts festival. “We want everyone to understand the value of having a range of voices at the table,” says Bodenhamer.

“As a former BBC producer, I was trained to mix, match and put together a cast of speakers who will address a topic from various points of view,” explains Sallyann Murphey, producer and host of the 1999 Spirit & Place keynote conversation at the downtown Murat Centre. “We’re focusing more on the issues now than on any individual’s writing. Our goal is to get people talking, thinking and interested in issues of community and spirituality so that the discussion goes on long after they’ve left the theater.”

Many longtime Spirit & Place advocates believe this goal already has been achieved. “At its best, Spirit & Place focuses our attention for a short time on what this place means and what makes it special,” says Neville. “It makes us think about the connection between meaning and landscape.”



JANE ADDAMS – IN HER OWN WORDS

When Mary Lynn Bryan agreed to assemble and edit the papers of Hull-House co-founder and Nobel Peace Prize winner Jane Addams, she envisioned the outcome as a roll or two of microfilm and a modest collection of letters. Now, 25 years later, Bryan and her two co-editors have produced 82 reels of film with 2,000 images on each reel, a comprehensive index to the filmed documents, a soon-to-be-published volume that traces Addams from birth to age 23 (she was 75 when she died in 1935) – and plans for four subsequent books.

All this for a woman whose papers we initially thought might fill a single volume,” says Bryan, a former curator of Jane Addams Hull-House in Chicago.

Although the Duke University project has involved more work than expected, the results have proved more valuable than anticipated. The microfilmed record of Addams’ speeches, correspondence, diaries, articles and books is helping historians better understand Addams’ formative years, her social-reform efforts and her contributions to the development of American philanthropy. Depending on a scholar’s area of interest, the documents offer insights on issues as diverse as child labor, health care, immigrant education, women’s

suffrage and the peace movement. Addams was all about responsible change.

Still, not every researcher has the stamina to peruse such a massive collection of film. “It’s daunting,” admits Bryan. “I get letters all the time asking, ‘When will the books be available?’”

Her answer comes as good news: Volume I is slated for publication next year by the Indiana University Press; Volumes II and III are in the works, supported by a Lilly Endowment grant and an award from the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Jane Addams and her colleagues at Hull-House on Chicago’s near west side taught immigrant families everything from citizenship to performing arts to woodworking.

Search and salvage mission

Several factors have slowed the publishing schedule. Challenges have ranged from finding the documents – the papers were scattered in a thousand repositories on three continents – to winnowing their number. “By the time we were ready to do the book edition, we had decided to publish the ‘selected’ papers of Jane Addams,” explains Bryan. “There isn’t enough paper to publish all that is contained on 82 reels of film.”

Even more obstacles surfaced after the documents were assembled and selected. “Addams’ handwriting is almost illegible,” says Bryan, “and she really struggled with spelling.”

During her busiest years the social activist wrote in a cryptic, almost shorthand style that historians unfamiliar with her scribbles would find



For her social-reform efforts over 40 years, Addams received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

difficult to decipher. “That’s something we can do for other researchers. We’ve read her handwriting for so long that we know it better than anybody else,” Bryan says.

If part of Bryan’s task is to clarify Addams’ words, another part is to fill the gaps where no words exist. Records from the early days of Hull-House met with tragedy when the University of Illinois leveled all but two of the settlement’s 13 buildings to erect its Chicago campus. The “wrecking-ball” crew, not realizing that a treasure of Addams’ papers was stored in the basement, doused the building with water to keep down the dust during the demolition. The water collected in the basement. The resulting “trash” was transported to a city landfill.

“We had to reconstruct the record in the best way we could,” explains Bryan. She and her associates collected newspaper clippings and searched for persons who might have access to random pieces of Addams’ correspondence or scrapbooks of Hull-House history.

“Our goal is to let Jane Addams tell her own story. We add text only when we can present hard

evidence of events that occurred. We’re not making guesses, and we’re not trying to analyze her. We want her to speak for herself.”

Contemporary applications

Of particular interest are the documents that reveal important influences on Addams before she achieved worldwide fame. Religion was one. She attended church every week in her tiny hometown of Cedarville, Ill., where church was the center of social life. She later enrolled at Rockford Female Seminary where she studied the Bible and heard teachers encourage their students to consider careers as missionaries. But Addams also realized the value and power of the larger education she received at Rockford and became keenly aware of her own individuality. These educational experiences strengthened her sense of morality and began to shape her attitude toward charity.

Her later travels exposed her to the urban poor and prompted her to take up their struggle to improve their circumstances.

“She believed in giving people opportunities to better themselves,” says Bryan. “She found ways to help others stand on their own, gain self-respect and not be kept as an underclass.”

Many programs that Addams introduced in the early years of the 20th century may serve as models for programs in the 21st century. “If we look at what was done well in the past, we can pick from the best of it,” says Bryan.

As an added benefit, any scrutiny of Addams’ work causes a renewal of interest in and appreciation for the social reformer who Bryan believes is one of America’s most significant women.

“In many ways Jane Addams has become my best historical friend. I know her well, and even after all these years, my admiration for her continues to grow,” Bryan says. “She was entirely human and certainly not perfect by any means, but I respect her enormously for what she achieved for the people of her day and for the path she opened for the people of our day.”