

# - FINAL ISSUE -



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*Thin Places*, an ecumenical sampler of events and resources for spiritual growth, with a particular interest in the contemplative spiritual journey, is published by the Spiritual Life Community of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

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## Block-by-block... Sit-by-sit... Issue-by-issue...

by *Samuel Rahberg*

Plans having been delayed, it was late November before three semi-trucks arrived at our tree farm to deliver over thirty-four tons of retaining wall blocks. The trucks dropped their loads and pulled away, leaving me, my wife, and our two teenagers to set 864 eighty-pound blocks in place—before the deepest cold, the heaviest snows, and the building crew arrived in less than six weeks.

When our family imagined building a wood shop with a guestroom attached, the dream did not include erecting a retaining wall ourselves, certainly not in the winter. Still, engineering discoveries, cost overages, and calendar shortages added up, so we set to the task. We'd only finished a half day's work before we had to shovel the first snow off the worksite. Then, from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, we lifted and set those blocks in place one-by-one until they became a wall one hundred-fifty feet long and eight feet tall.

We followed the supplier's instructions to the letter: compacted layers of geo-grid fabric, drainage rock, and backfilled soil. Layer-by-layer a protective perimeter for the building site was reaching upward. At one point, my daughter rightly said, "Dad, we're not building a wall. We're building a hill!" Push-by-push, often working under flood lights in ten-degree weather, we set the last top blocks just as a major storm was blowing in.

There's a sacred kind of satisfaction that comes with throwing your shoulder into a dream with people you love. The wood shop and guestroom would encourage spiritual practices rooted in the natural world—contemplation, manual labor, and hospitality. Despite the challenges and discomforts, together we had created a wall and a story that would stand for generations.

Until the following spring thaw! As warming days brought frost up from the ground, unstable gaps kept growing between the layers of blocks. What could possibly have forced this much weight to buckle? We learned from professionals that it had likely been impossible for us to sufficiently compact the frozen soil. And then, as those chunks thawed and collapsed, the entire wall quietly settled away from its joints.

Those weeks I was beyond psychologically stunned and physically spent. I had done the best I possibly could to steward a dream, pressing hard with the resources I had available. Unable even to imagine any next steps, I just let the frost and my weariness keep thawing, sometimes doubting whether I'd ever trust my discernment muscles the same way I did before this project failed.

By summer, the building frame was up. and I had caught my breath enough to accept what had to be done and to enlist the help of family and friends. We pulled down every one of those blocks and hired a backhoe operator to dig out the hill and the remaining materials. We reset every block—this time filling in with rock, not soil—to reclaim the dream of building a sacred space.

As we worked—often in 90-degree temperatures—I meditated on the fact that this project had become more about my inner world than about any grand accomplishment or physical outcome. Best intentions will eventually meet limitations. Supremely humbling encounters can hold grace and mystery. And when it's not working, begin again. I find this ongoing process of reflecting under the work to be much like the way of contemplative prayer. Sit-by-sit, I seek to sink below my daily experiences and surrender to solidarity with the wider world. In contemplation my struggles can be

better seen as part of a much larger story. Day-by-day, I try to return to the task at hand with a sense of presence and giftedness that might bring healing. But because it takes me to the edge of my knowing and my capacities, the process is not without difficulty. As Matt Licata notes in *A Healing Space*: “The [contemplative] invitation is not into certainty, resolution, or even simplicity, but into the core of the contradictions, paradoxes, and complexities of the human soul.” Thank God I do not go alone.

“Block-by-block . . . Sit-by-sit . . . Issue-by-issue . . .” As we mark together the final issue of *Thin Places*, I am reminded of an observation made by John Philip Newell (and recorded in *Thin Places*) at a gathering at St. Jane House in north Minneapolis. “The Contemplative Community here,” he said, “is more tightly knit than anywhere I go.”

*Thin Places* maintained a humble yet significant role in this connectedness, coming to us for twenty-five years. Issue-by-issue, *Thin Places* offered lead Meditations and Afterwords reflections, remembered Words and recent Books, and an array of upcoming Opportunities—events that have helped contemplatives come together in-person to pray, to learn, and to feel connected. Equally important, *Thin Places* seems to have also provided a virtual sense of connection for contemplatives. Over the years, the most frequent comment made by readers to the editors indicates gratitude for this: “I don't get to many of the gatherings, but I love knowing that they are happening.”

Knowing well the importance of a strong foundation (for retaining walls and communities), I would like to add my heartfelt appreciation to that of many other readers: “Thank you, *Thin Places*, for helping shape our region's contemplative community in such a trustworthy and enduring way.”

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**Remembered Words**

The *Thin Places* Twentieth Anniversary Community Worship Service—In-the-Round in Westminster Hall, with torrential wind and rain outside, and with the Taizé Cross in the center and with Twelve Prayer Stations placed on the surrounding walls, each with an appropriate Work-of-Art and a brief passage from a spiritual master—was a powerful experience for many. Afterwards, a woman said, “I've been a reader for many years, but I can never calm my monkey mind. Tonight, the silence wasn't long enough.”

These twelve Remembered-Words begin below:

“What we are asked to do is, not so much to speak about Christ, as to let him live in us . . . so that people may find him by feeling how he lives in us . . .

Thomas Merton

“Grace is given not to lead us into another identity . . . but to reconnect us to the beauty of our deepest identity . . .”

John Philip Newell

he bought a tree farm and co-founded Wood & Water Retreats.

If you were to come by, you'd likely find Sam, his spouse, and their two young adults out in the woods or resting on their front porch—admiring a fine and stable retaining wall.

Connections welcome: sam@samuelrahberg.com.

## Looking Back . . .

This issue of *Thin Places* . . . will be its last. Looking Back over its twenty-five-year journey, and Looking Ahead, it is intended as a reference that can be kept (on paper and electronically) as a means of staying in touch with the region's thriving Contemplative Community.

From the beginning, *Thin Places* was envisioned as "a modest ecumenical newsletter, with a particular interest in the contemplative spiritual journey." And so it seems to have been. Sent free to all who ask, its three thousand readers range from Mennonites and Quakers to Episcopalians and Catholics and include many clergy and religious.

But, gazing at a saved stack of completed issues, the thought occurs that it might also be called,

### A Thousand-Page Accidental History of the Region's Contemplative Community over the Last Twenty-five Years

And so it probably also is:

With a few exceptions, each issue's **Lead Meditation** was written by a different person, including many leaders from the local Contemplative Community. From the early years, for example, leaders like the **Rev. Dr. Tim Hart-Andersen**, Senior Minister, and **Mary Adams**, head of the Spiritual Growth Committee at Westminster. **Carol Weber**, founding member of Minnesota Contemplative Outreach and long-time volunteer with Fr. Thomas Keating at Snowmass Monastery in Colorado. **Dr. Jeannette Bakke** from Christos Center for Spiritual Formation and the **Rev. Matthew Linn** from Sacred Ground. **Mary Kaye Medinger** and the **Rev. Barbara Lund** from Wisdom Ways, and **Terry Shaughnessy** from Men's Ministry at Wisdom Ways and other spirituality centers. The **Rev**

"Waking up this morning, I smile. Twenty-four brand new hours are before me. I vow to live fully in each moment and to look at all beings with eyes of compassion . . ."

Thich Nhat Hanh

**Dr. David Keller** and the **Rev. Ward Bauman** from the Episcopal House of Prayer and **Abbot John Klassen, OSB**, from St. John's. **Srs. Virginia Matter** and **Mary White** from St. Paul's Monastery and **Samuel Rahberg** from the Benedictine Center. The **Rev. Jim Dodge**, founder of City House and **Tom Allen** from Loyola and City House. The **Rev. Canon Peg Chamberlin** from the Minnesota Council of Churches, **Dean Seal** (now the Rev. Dr.) from the Minnesota Fringe Festival, and the **Rev. Dr. Jill Geoffrion**, the labyrinth maker.

And, from further afield, Meditations by the **Rev. Dr. Tilden Edwards**, founder of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, **Brother John of Taizé**, and a previously unpublished Meditation, "Prayer, The Way to a Transparent Life," by **Henri Nouwen**.

Over two hundred churches, spirituality centers, and other organizations have offered several thousand **Ongoing** and **One-Time Opportunities** for people to come together for worship, a workshop or retreat, or a prayer group—like the long-time **Centering Prayer** groups at St. Olaf Catholic and Incarnation Lutheran Churches, led by **Sr. Joan Tuberty** and **LeAnn Linder Scholer** . . . and like the **First Friday Taizé Prayer** and the **Taizé Evening Prayer** at Sts. Luke and James Episcopal and Minnehaha United Methodist Churches, led by **Larry Reynolds** and the **Rev. Becky Sechrist**.

And many hundreds of workshop and retreat Opportunities touching on the contemplative have been announced—like "**The Deepest Belonging, A Story**," "**Let Mystery Guide You: Jump and the Net Will Appear**," "**The Subversive Power of Kindness**," "**Spiritual Grandparenting**" "**Brother Sun: A Collage-Making Experience**," and "**A Weekend of Wisdom with Parker Palmer**."

### The *Thin Places* Logos

The Logo at the top of the first page of this issue—drawn by artist, **Barbara Beshoar**—is one of the nine she created to grace the great majority of the issues.

*Grateful thanks to Barbara for these gifts from her gift.*

"What we take in by contemplation, that we pour out in love. What we plant in the soil of contemplation, that we shall reap in the harvest of action. . ."

Meister Eckhart

There are significantly fewer **Reading Opportunities** sections than there are issues—when space was short, it seemed better to drop a book than to reduce the number of up-coming Opportunities. But many remain, written by classic, contemporary, and local authors. From early issues, books like *The Celtic Soul Friend* by **Dr. Edward Sellner** and *The Critical Journey, Stages in the Life of Faith* by **Janet Hagberg**. And the just published *Receiving This Life, Practicing the Deepest Belonging*, by the **Rev. Kara Root**, was written and ready for the Spring 2024 issue, when space ran out. (It's well worth exploring.)

And finally, the **Afterwords**— back-page reflections on subjects like the deeply accurate insight, **“Deus semper major . . . ”** and **“Psalms, our oldest examples of journaling”** **“Atonement, spelled At-One-Ment”** and **“Being There, the hermitage experience . . . ”**

Altogether, an accidental yet richly detailed history of a flourishing Contemplative Community.

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### The Hermitage at Clearwater Forest

Set apart on the Retreat Center's one thousand wooded acres, overlooking the lake, with its own small dock and canoe or kayak, the Hermitage is a year-around, isolated, and comfortable special place, for a time way, for quiet and prayer, reading and writing, hiking and paddling, resting and reflecting.

The Hermitage is open to all, but it was established by *Thin Places* especially to be **made available to clergy, religious, and church professionals of any denomination . . . totally free of charge.**

For additional information or to make a reservation:  
[www.clearwaterforest.org](http://www.clearwaterforest.org) or 218.678.2325 or [office@clearwaterforest.org](mailto:office@clearwaterforest.org).

“The distance to the Beloved is only one step—  
 Why not, then, take that step? . . . ”

Rumi

Many thanks for the kind emails and letters that have been received. As the Rev. Dr. Tim Hart-Andersen observed when the decision was first made,  
*“The Thin Places journey began in hope and is ending in gratitude.”* Amen.

For additional information or if you have questions, the *Thin Places* email address and phone will remain open for the next two years:  
**[thinplaces\\_us@msn.com](mailto:thinplaces_us@msn.com)**  
 and **612.866.8752**.

In addition, issues from the final five years will remain available on the webpage  
[www.westminstermpls.org/media-room/thin-places](http://www.westminstermpls.org/media-room/thin-places)

## Principal Partners, Looking Ahead

Although *Thin Places* is ending, the many groups and organizations that have been its **Principal Partners** over the years remain open and active. Here is some key information about each of them so that you may learn more about them and their up-coming Opportunities.

*[You might wish to keep this information at hand, physically or electronically, for possible future use.]*

### ARC Retreat Community, Stanchfield, MN

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [retreats@arcretreat.org](mailto:retreats@arcretreat.org) or 763.689.3540 or [www.arcretreat.org](http://www.arcretreat.org).

### The Benedictine Center, St. Paul's Monastery 2675 Benet Road, St. Paul

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [info@benedictinecenter.org](mailto:info@benedictinecenter.org) or 651.777.7251 or [www.benedictinecenter.org](http://www.benedictinecenter.org).

### The Center for Action and Contemplation Albuquerque, NM

For information about up-coming opportunities or to be added to Fr. Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation mailing list: [info@cacradicalgace.org](mailto:info@cacradicalgace.org) or 505.242.9588 or [www.cacradicalgrace.org](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org).

“This place where you are right now, God circled on a map for you . . . ”

Hafez

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**Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo, MN**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [christtheking@kingshouse.com](mailto:christtheking@kingshouse.com) or 763.682.1394 or [www.kingshouse.com](http://www.kingshouse.com).

**Christos Center for Spiritual Formation  
1212 Holly Drive, Lino Lakes, MN**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities in the Twin Cities, Chicago area, and Online: [info@christoscenter.org](mailto:info@christoscenter.org) or 651.653.8207 or [www.christoscenter.org](http://www.christoscenter.org).

**Earth & Soul, with John Philip Newell**

Offices: Box #254, 2921 W. 38th Avenue  
Denver, CO 80211

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [info@earthandsoul.org](mailto:info@earthandsoul.org) or [www.earthandsoul.org](http://www.earthandsoul.org).

**The Episcopal House of Prayer,  
14215 Fruit Farm Road, Collegeville, MN  
and**

**St. John the Evangelist, 60 N. Kent St., St Paul**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [houseprayer@csbsju.edu](mailto:houseprayer@csbsju.edu) or 320.363.3293 or [www.ehouseofprayer.org](http://www.ehouseofprayer.org).

**Flying Cloud Zen:**

**A Contemplative Spiritual Practice Community  
at Aslan Institute,  
4141 Old Sibley Memorial Highway, Eagan**

For information about them and their upcoming Opportunities: [www.flyingcloudzen.org](http://www.flyingcloudzen.org) or [bussho@flyingcloudzen.org](mailto:bussho@flyingcloudzen.org).

**Franciscan Spirituality Center**

**920 Market Street, La Crosse WI**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [fscenter@fspa.org](mailto:fscenter@fspa.org) or 608.791.5295 or [www.fscenter.org](http://www.fscenter.org).

**Franciscan Retreats and Spirituality Center**

**16385 St Francis Lane, Prior Lake, MN**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [secretary@franciscanretreats.net](mailto:secretary@franciscanretreats.net) or

“Music needs the hollowness of the flute; Letters, the blankness of the page; Light, the void called a window; Holiness, the absence of the self . . . “

Anthony De Mello

952-447-2182 or [www.franciscanretreats.net](http://www.franciscanretreats.net).

**Loyola Spirituality Center**

**389 North Oxford Street, St. Paul**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [info@loyolaspiritualitycenter.org](mailto:info@loyolaspiritualitycenter.org) or 651.641.0008 or [www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org).

**Minnesota Contemplative Outreach**

Co-coordinators:

Adam Gordon, 612-719-2636

John Keller 612-201-6625

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities:

[mncontemplativeoutreach@gmail.com](mailto:mncontemplativeoutreach@gmail.com) or [www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org).

**The Ministry Lab,**

**United Theological Seminary**

**767 Eustis Street, Suite 140, St. Paul**

**Minnesota’s own Taizé Cross**

Brother Eric, for many years the principal artist at the Taizé Community in France, made two five-foot tall, wooden, painted Crosses. One of them has traditionally been used at their Friday Evening Prayer for “Praying Around the Cross.”

The second, made as a back-up, was never used. Due to a long friendship between Br. Eric and a retired Lutheran Pastor, the ELCA Bishop’s Office, Minneapolis Synod, and *Thin Places* were able to bring it to Minnesota in 2001. It is housed at Westminster Presbyterian, but—over the years—has been used in worship services at many churches (Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Catholic, Presbyterian) and Spirituality Centers throughout the region.

If you are interested in borrowing it for worship at your church or prayer group, contact the Rev. Dr. Meghan Gage-Finn for details at 612.322.3421 or [MGage-Finn@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:MGage-Finn@wpc-mpls.org)

“Here alone with you in the gathering darkness, it would be easier, Lord, if I could reach out and embrace you with the power of my mind. But only love can pierce the darkness in which alone you can be found . . . “

from *The Cloud of Unknowing*

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For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [ministrylab@unitedseminary.edu](mailto:ministrylab@unitedseminary.edu) or 651.279.1677 or [www.theministrylab.org](http://www.theministrylab.org).

### **Pilgrim Lutheran Church**

**1935 St. Clair Avenue, St. Paul**

For information on this or other up-coming opportunities: [communications@pilgrimstpaul.org](mailto:communications@pilgrimstpaul.org) or 651.699.6886 or [www.pilgrimstpaul.org](http://www.pilgrimstpaul.org).

### **Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality**

**Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph, St. Paul**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [info@sacredgroundspirit.org](mailto:info@sacredgroundspirit.org) or 651.696.2798 or [www.sacredgroundspirit.org](http://www.sacredgroundspirit.org).

### **The Six Faiths Taizé Evening Prayer**

St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church, Prospect Park  
United Methodist Church, Faith Mennonite Church,  
Compassion of Christ Catholic Community,  
Dignity/Twin Cities, Church of Gichitwaa Kateri

For information about them and their truly ecumenical Taizé Evening Prayers: [chris@cabrinimn.org](mailto:chris@cabrinimn.org) or 612.339.3023, ext. 115 or [www.cabrinimn.org](http://www.cabrinimn.org)

### **Spirituality Center, Saint Benedict's Monastery**

**104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [mholicky@csbsju.edu](mailto:mholicky@csbsju.edu) or [eantony@csbsju.edu](mailto:eantony@csbsju.edu) or 320-363-7112 or [www.sbm.osb.org](http://www.sbm.osb.org).

### **St. Scholastica Monastery**

**1001 Kenwood Avenue, Duluth**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [retreat@duluthosb.org](mailto:retreat@duluthosb.org) or 218.723.6699 or [www.retreatduluth.org](http://www.retreatduluth.org).

### **Westminster Presbyterian Church**

**1200 Marquette Avenue Minneapolis**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [jteliczan@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:jteliczan@wpc-mpls.org) or 612.322.3421 or [www.westminstermpls.org](http://www.westminstermpls.org).

### **Westminster Town Hall Forum**

**1200 Marquette Avenue Minneapolis**

For information about them and their up-coming speakers: [info@westminsterforum.org](mailto:info@westminsterforum.org) or 612.322.3421 or [www.westminsterforum.org](http://www.westminsterforum.org).

### **Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality**

**Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [office@wisdomwayscenter.org](mailto:office@wisdomwayscenter.org) or 651.696.2794 or [www.wisdomwayscenter.org](http://www.wisdomwayscenter.org).

### **Wood & Water Retreats**

For information about them and their up-coming Opportunities: [info@woodandwaterretreats.com](mailto:info@woodandwaterretreats.com) or 320.428.0371 or [www.woodandwaterretreats.com](http://www.woodandwaterretreats.com).

## **Reading Opportunities**

***How to Be Compassionate: A Handbook  
for Creating Inner Peace and a Happier World,  
by His Holiness the Dalai Lama***

### **On retreat, as the Dalai Lama entered and quietly took his seat**

“In the silence, a bond of trust and openness for what was to come began to grow. Then, at last, he bowed his shaved head over the text and tracing the script with his finger, like a rabbi, read,  
*‘How blest are those of a gentle spirit . . .  
How blest are those whose hearts are pure . . .’*

And as he read, it was impossible not to be moved, almost stunned, by the power of these familiar words, re-cadenced and re-keyed by a Tibetan voice, and a Buddhist sensibility . . .”

Robert Kiely, in the “Preface” to *The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus*,  
by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

“Are we not called to communicate a mystery of hope to those around us by the lives we lead? . . .”

Brother Roger of Taizé

“The days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall send hunger upon the land, not hunger for food or thirst for water, but a hunger to hear the Word of God . . .”

*Amos 8:11*

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Along the Way, all of us (at least from time to time) and some of us (more often) may be tempted to feel that our (or our denomination's, or our faith tradition's) spiritual path is the right or best one. And it certainly may be that our personal path *is* the best path for each of us. But most of us will probably acknowledge that every sincere spiritual path can be equally viable and consequential, . . . that we are *all* Children of God, . . . that we are all made in God's image, . . . that the Beatitudes were not offered as being descriptive of only some of us.

Some of us may consider a "bleeding heart" to be a liability, but most of us probably do value and admire the personal quality of Compassion. . . . *Com-passion*, literally, *suffering-with*, but enriched and filled out by its consequent senses of *fellow feeling*, and *empathy*, and *understanding*.

And some may place a value on exclusiveness (be it by maintaining "strict standards" or by liking to live in a literal or figurative gated community). But most of us know that viewing the world as made up of "us and them" often encourages conflict and/or a sense of superiority—while inclusiveness often fosters acceptance and an accompanying sense of inner peace.

This has been a roundabout introduction. But ***How to Be Compassionate: A Handbook for Creating Inner Peace and a Happier World*** is, at its core, about compassion leading to inclusiveness, and inclusiveness nurturing inner peace. And, permeating it, an underlying sense of separate spiritual paths leading to essentially similar spiritual outcomes, based in love.

The Dalai Lama's insights, naturally, do reflect basic teachings from Tibetan Buddhism. But—even more—he draws upon the experiences of his long and active life (he will be eighty-nine on July 6th). He shares them in more general chapters on "**The Malleable Nature of the Mind**," and "**We Are Our Own Troublemakers**," and in more focused chapters on "**Compassion, the Road of Relationships**," "**Compassion, the Road to Relief**," and more.

A gentle spiritual leader's understanding of inclusiveness . . . and inner peace . . . based in love.

"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out until sundown—for going out, I found, was really . . . going in . . . "

John Muir

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**Afterwords:** continued from page 8

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The concept of Thin Places was based on the belief that there are at least two levels of reality: the world of our ordinary experience and the reality of God's Being. It was also based on a belief that there are places or times or situations where the boundary between the world of our ordinary experiences and the world of the sacred may become porous, where the veil momentarily lifts, and we experience or behold the sacred.

All of us probably remember having experienced a Thin Place. It may have happened in some actual place, perhaps in some treasured spot in nature—as it was for Sigurd Olson and for many. Or perhaps during a moment in worship or through sacred music. Or perhaps this experience of briefly but intensely feeling God's presence came through prayer or silence.

In a sermon at House of Hope Presbyterian Church last March, Marcus Borg declared categorically that "the creation of Thin Places . . . should be the purpose of much which we do as a Church."

Believing this to be so, the Spiritual Growth Committee is launching this Periodic Sampler of "places" at Westminster, at other churches in the Downtown Coalition, and throughout the area.

If this first Sampler speaks to you, please accept it as an invitation to a journey. We all live most of the time in our own world or ordinary experience. But if we want to, we may seek to welcome Thin Places, where our hearts can be opened.

[September/October, 1999]

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Concluding thought, after walking with *Thin Places* all these years:

The ultimate thin place is not in a specific place, or in a brief period of time, or in a special happening.

The ultimate thin place is the divine spark within each of us.

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart, and try to love the questions themselves . . . "

Rainer Maria Rilke



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**-FINAL ISSUE-**  
“Block-by-block . . .”  
“Looking Back . . .”  
“Principal Partners, Looking Ahead . . .”  
“Afterwords: ‘Alpha and Omega . . .’”

## Afterwords: “Alpha and Omega . . .”

The beginning and the ending. Perhaps in them a measure of wholeness. Offered as the “Afterwords”—in this final issue of *Thin Places*—are the opening words from the first issue:

### “Invitation to a Journey . . .”

Welcome to this first issue of *Thin Places*. But what is a Thin Place?

Perhaps some of you may have recently been exploring the Boundary Waters and may have been reading Sigurd Olson and remembering his love for that North Country. If so, you may remember his many accounts of wilderness epiphanies where he had experienced a deep sense of connectedness, a spiritual feeling that brought inner peace.

In *The Singing Wilderness*, Olson recalled his sunset climb to a great ridge called Robinson Peak. He remembered sitting there looking out over the lakes and rivers and rugged hills of the Quetico-Superior, watching the sunset, listening to the soft sound of the thrushes and his own breathing:

“The sun was trembling now on the edge of the ridge. It was alive, almost fluid and pulsing, and as I watched it sink I could feel the earth turning from it, actually feel its rotation. Overall there was the silence of the wilderness, that sense of oneness which comes only when there are no distracting sights or sounds, when we listen with inward ears and see with inward eyes, when we feel and are aware with our entire beings rather than our senses.

I thought as I sat there of the ancient admonition, “Be still and know that I am God,” and knew that without stillness there can be no knowing, without stepping back from the outside influences we cannot know what spirit means.”

Here on Robinson Peak, Sigurd Olson describes what Houston Smith and Marcus Borg—drawing from medieval Celtic Christianity—have called a “Thin Place” experience.