

THE KING'S FOLD STORY



To the Glory of God

The King's Fold Story

on the occasion of the
25th Anniversary
of the founding of
King's Fold Retreat and Renewal Centre

Original text by Elsie Loewen (1988)
Calgary Author, Friend of King's Fold

Revision and updates by Carole McIvor (1998, 2003)
Board member and long-time Associate of King's Fold

© King's Fold Retreat and Renewal Centre

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Introduction	5
Hospitality, by Henri Nouwen	7
Chapter One - The Dream	8
Chapter Two - The Vision	14
Chapter Three - Building	21
Chapter Four - Open Doors	25
Chapter Five - Timothy	32
Chapter Six - Spaces for the Heart	40
Chapter Seven - Life in Community	45
Chapter Eight - Pets as Community	50
Chapter Nine - The Vision Continues	53
Afterword	55
Significant Dates	57

FOREWORD

The early years of marriage are usually characterized by passion, optimism and sheer delight in the mysterious exchange of positive energy that flows between lovers. Then come the harder years when all manner of issues arise to challenge the depth of commitment and the strength of love. It is commonly agreed that those who successfully navigate these marital rapids and make it to their anniversary have reached a milestone worthy of celebration and which augers well for the future.

King's Fold was born in an atmosphere of passion, faith and daily delight in the bountiful provision and incredible goodness of God. But it was born into the real world where nothing of value is achieved without struggle. There would be storms to face and rapids to forge.

Janet and I are so grateful for all those to whom God gave the harder task of guiding this tiny, fragile craft through the difficult years. It has been these years of prayerful, often painful grappling with issues of identity and vision that have given King's Fold the maturity and stability it enjoys today.

As we celebrate 25 years of offering hospitality to wayfarers in the name of Jesus Christ, let us resolve to continue this dance with the Creator, always open to learning new steps. And let us relinquish this sacred place once again into the mystery of His loving purposes.

Robert (Bob) Ball, 2003
Founder of King's Fold

INTRODUCTION

“Hello, I am booked into King's Fold for two nights.

Could you tell me how to get there?”

“Certainly. King's Fold is an hour's drive, 64 km west of Calgary on the 1A highway and the #40 Forestry Trunk Road.”

“Which way is west?”

“Toward the mountains.”

“Where are the mountains?”

Not everyone has had the difficulties of direction this guest had. For many the road is a new one. All are struck by the beauty that unfolds as you drive towards King's Fold along the Bow River through the growing town of Cochrane towards the mountains.

Each season has its own beauty. In early Spring there are swans gliding on a small lake adjacent to the forestry road and some of us regularly weave back and forth, driving all over the road looking for the beautiful bluebirds which come to live on either side. At the end of June, the wildflowers delight us with their colorful showing. In summer, cattle, deer, geese and buffalo graze peacefully in the grasslands on either side of the road with the occasional coyote passing by looking for an easy meal. Fall is breathtaking with the poplars turning bright yellow and the low native dogwood a deep red. Even winter is spectacular with the sun shining on the high mountain peaks. Truly, the drive to King's Fold is a *retreat* in itself.

As you pass the village of Benchlands you catch the first view of the imposing *Orient Point*, the most outstanding mountain peak viewed from King's Fold. It is said to have derived its name from being used as an orientation point for the Ghost Pass that led the early natives through to Lake Minnewanka and the valley, which is now Banff. After passing through the village of Waiparous, named after the creek that empties into the Ghost River at that point, and over another Texas gate, you are now in Bar Cee Country, a very large ranch that surrounds the 166 acres that is King's Fold. You have climbed to 1344 meters (4300 feet) above sea level.

King's Fold.

The sign routed out of cedar board blends into its wooded surroundings and you almost miss it. The lane winds away from the main road, over one more Texas gate, through a welcoming arch - and you are there! The pets and ducks may be the first to welcome you at the door.

The main lodge is rather like a large home. It can accommodate thirty guests in bedrooms that are homey, most with private baths. There are many possibilities for privacy in the spaces that have been created for individuals, like the Sunshine, Garden and loft rooms. There is a Conference Room and a cozy Library stocked with some 2000 books. The living/dining area features a large stone fireplace and a magnificent view of the Rocky Mountains and the Ghost River Valley. The property surrounding the Lodge contains three small individual retreat cabins, the Hermitage, Eagles Nest and Hide-Away as well as the Greenhouse and gazebo day-retreat areas.

The Resident Community offers the *Gift of Hospitality* or *Sacred Space* to every individual who arrives at the door, aspiring to live out the words of the much-loved writer, Henri Nouwen, a friend of King's Fold. These words were written independently of the building of the centre but were later found to have embodied the vision.

HOSPITALITY

. . . is not to change people, but to offer them *space* where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead our neighbor onto a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open wide a spectrum of options for choice and commitment. It is not an educated intimidation with good books, good stories and good works, but liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find roots and bear ample fruit...

The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own...

To convert hostility to hospitality requires the creation of the friendly empty space where we can reach out to our fellow human beings and invite them to a new relationship. This conversion is an inner event that cannot be manipulated but must develop from within. Just as we cannot force a plant to grow but can take away the weeds and stones which prevent its development, so we cannot force anyone to such a personal and intimate change of heart, but can offer a space where such change can take place.

— *Henri Nouwen*

Used by permission of Doubleday Publishers



Chapter 1

The Dream

“A vision? Us?”

There were no voices in the night, no bright lights or flashes of inspiration. As is often the case with dreams, the exact moment of conception was difficult to trace. There was no precise moment when it could be said; "I have an idea..."

Bob and Janet never planned to develop a retreat center. In fact, Bob's early orientation was toward farming and to that end his early academic pursuits focused on a degree in agriculture. He made this choice with uneasy awareness. Unless he had misinterpreted the signals following his commitment to follow Jesus Christ at age 14, God's plan for his life might move him from tractor to pulpit. He could almost feel the starched collar and constricting tie chafing his unwilling neck. Divine persuasiveness prevailed, however, and eventually he enrolled in theological studies.

This direction nearly proved to be his faith's undoing while taking a course in philosophy:

"I was 20 years old working on an arts degree at U of S in preparation for seminary. I was a very committed, enthusiastic young evangelical, eager to serve God and help others know Him as I did. I was also pastoring a small Baptist church in Saskatoon, where I shared my fervor with the congregation twice on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. My professor for a first-year philosophy course happened to be an ex-minister who had left the church

because he realized he had nothing to say anymore. He had outgrown God and decided on a career where he could share his views freely with students who were keen to develop their minds.

My Christian training had not prepared me for this experience. The extent of my 'spiritual formation' had been Sunday personal relationship with Jesus. So, my heart was in the right place but I never had occasion to wrestle with the big questions regarding the truth of the Bible and the authenticity of the assumptions on which my faith was built. My faith was unexamined, and little did I know, very vulnerable. Working out of his own life experience my Prof was on a Personal mission to 'enlighten' the many young, bushy-tailed Christians that were in his class. I remember his comment on a paper I turned in at the first of the year. We each had to articulate our own personal philosophy. Scribbled on mine were the words, 'This is not philosophy, it's not even theology!' It was probably a bunch of spiritual platitudes, definitely not an exercise in critical thinking.

The inevitable happened in February as we were studying the theories of Alfred North Whitehead. My mind was just beginning to function, and it soon became abundantly clear to me that my faith was totally unfounded. There was no God. The universe was impersonal. Mature thinkers were able to see and accept this and did not need faith in God as a crutch to help them through life. It was all so clear to me. I was now an atheist.

Rather than try to deny where my mind was taking me and crawl deeper into my faith position, I decided I needed to be honest with myself. I was now an atheist and I needed to try and think like one. One problem! I happened to be a Pastor shepherding a small flock of believers. I had to preach on Sunday. My first thought was to tell all and resign, but my roommate Ed Smith, himself a thoughtful and committed nonbeliever, was wiser than I. He cautioned me not to move too quickly, to give myself time to think it through more thoroughly. So, I drove over to visit Rev. Horace West, the minister at First Baptist Church downtown. 'I have a problem,' I said, 'I'm an atheist, I no longer believe in God. I have nothing to say on Sunday. What can I do?' Without questioning me or showing signs of alarm at my wretched condition he said calmly, 'Well, what

do you believe?' 'I don't know,' I said, 'I don't believe anything.' 'Do you believe in the difference between right and wrong?' he countered. 'Well, yes.' 'Then preach about that.'

And so for weeks I lived this hell, trying to come to grips with my newfound atheism, trying to face into the many intellectual challenges associated with that position, and at the same time trying to find something honest to say at church on Sunday. Needless to say, out of pastoral concern for my little flock, I fudged a little. For one thing, I found it's not easy to be an atheist. It raised more questions than it answered. And so I thought and struggled and agonized and lived a double life for several months. In the end I realized that I just couldn't dismiss the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. I couldn't believe that the disciples, particularly, and others through the years would hazard their lives with such abandon for the sake of a lie. When I thought it through, the apologetics for atheism were tougher and less plausible than the apologetics for Christianity. So, on Easter Sunday I came clean with God and preached with deeper conviction than ever before, and a brand-new appreciation for the wonder of the gospel. Thank you, Rev. Horace West."

Janet wanted to be a teacher or a nurse, although if marriage should perchance interrupt those plans, please dear God let him be a farmer... or maybe a minister. It did and he was.

Bob's farming days may have been over but his planting activities continued nonetheless. Under his cultivation, newborn congregations sprouted from seeds of faith and vision, and were nurtured to mature strength through sun and storm. He gained new appreciation for Christ's seafaring disciples who were diverted from their natural calling and instead instructed to fish for men.

Janet soon found that a church provided natural opportunities for opening one's door to people. In Kitimat, British Columbia, their home was known as the 'manse chapel' where - for a few hours each week - the living room became a meeting place for worship. After the service, people routinely lingered to visit over a cup of coffee, enjoying the unaccustomed informality of the church.

Ideas about an alternate ministry began to crystallize during their pastorate in the Jasper Park Church. The church was small with no organized outreach program despite the hundreds of young people who thronged to the park every summer to find work. Their need for friendship and somewhere to relax was evident, but the Ball's knew that a church was the last place they would go to find it. Perhaps there was a way of bringing part of the church to them.

Bob and Janet recruited students from several Bible colleges and university campuses to come work in Jasper during the busy summer tourist season. Besides earning their way through further education, they would develop friendships with other seasonal employees. Bob and Janet encouraged them to 'live their faith openly', and their friends often found their way into the Ball's home and family life. Many issues were hashed out while making cookies, washing dishes or sharing a simple cup of tea. The students were always made to feel welcome and were quite happy to blend in with whatever was happening at the time, whether it meant weeding the garden, washing windows, or swapping stories around the fireplace over popcorn and cocoa. It provided a taste of home life that many of them sorely missed. Exciting as it was, this 'open door' policy was extremely taxing and frequently got to the point where they hated to answer the doorbell. To have an evening alone they had to turn out the lights and sit in the dark.

One day, when the house was already full of students and relatives, the doorbell rang. On the step stood two boys from Argentina 'traveling the world for Jesus.' Janet was in the bedroom, already at the end of her endurance. When Bob introduced the opportunity of more guests, even the possibility of *angels unawares*, Janet sobbed, "I'm not interested in any more angels!"

Although the house remained a key place of connection for the summer visitors it became apparent that the young people needed a separate place specially designated for their use. Thus the Bedford Inn Coffee House was born. It flourished in spite of the insistence of several members of the congregation that the Holy Spirit could not possibly work in a smoke-filled atmosphere!

Until this time, the Ball's experience with extending their home and family life had occurred within the parameter of a pastorate. Was there a way of living in

community where that community itself provided the focus of ministry rather than being a spin-off from church leadership? The book, *The God Who is There*, by Francis Schaeffer, a renowned philosopher and theologian, further challenged Bob, being always open to new ideas. The story of the development of L'Abri, a teaching community in Switzerland founded by the Schaeffers, unleashed a host of new possibilities in his mind.

"Honey, I think we should go to L'Abri." In 18 years of marriage, Janet had grown accustomed to Bob's bursts of enthusiasm but he seemed to have forgotten that a small-town pastor with five children could ill afford the financial implications of what he was proposing, particularly if he meant the *we* part. She had learned that an obstacle to some was a challenge to her husband and there was no harm in discussing it.

Discuss it they did. To go or not to go; Bob to go on his own or everyone to go. If a miracle was required, it might as well be a big one, so Bob decided to pursue the possibility of taking his whole family. The family at this time consisted of Nathan 16, Douglas 14, Anne 12, David 10, and Timothy 9. A letter from L'Abri confirmed that the troops were welcome so they decided to make the financial requirements a family prayer project. Bob had unexpectedly been asked to perform a wedding ceremony and the \$10 fee was pinned to the kitchen bulletin board so each family member would be regularly reminded to pray.

To demonstrate their own commitment, the family car was sold. Then Bob's father passed away, leaving them a small inheritance. Two separate donors contributed \$2000 each toward Project L'Abri. By the time they were ready to leave, the bank account registered \$10,000... a milli-multiple of their original \$10 seed of faith.

The six months spent at L'Abri filled the whole family with new impressions and experiences. The children saw Christianity being lived out in new ways, apart from the shelter of their traditional denominational background. Timothy had been diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor at age three and had lost his sight at age seven, so the family was hesitant about bringing him on this adventure. But in this tiny Swiss village of Huemoz, there was a renowned clinic for children with cerebral palsy, which regularly brought in the finest medical experience in

Switzerland. Tim was accepted in a day program and received much help with his mobility. While L'Abri's focus on study did not parallel the Ball's own growing vision of extended family, certain principles of communal living were demonstrated that would be totally relevant. The Schaeffer's unconditional acceptance of their guests, particularly the young people who often arrived cynical and disillusioned with life, made a major impact on Bob and Janet. Through dealing with some deep personal pain of their own, Edith and Francis Schaeffer continually sought to live out the theme of being instruments of peace, sowing love in the midst of hatred; hope amid despair.

It was difficult for Bob to return to the small pastorate of Jasper after the continuous stimulation of L'Abri. How their own dream would ultimately find expression was no clearer now than before they had gone. However, they were able to pursue it with greater awareness and understanding of the inner resources that would be necessary to sustain them through the inevitable challenges ahead. With that awareness came caution against the urge to move faster than they were being led. They would need every ounce of preparation that God had in store for them.

Chapter 2

The Vision



First Baptist Church, Calgary, 1972... God seemed in no hurry to lead them anywhere but to another flock in need of a shepherd, this time in a city. Other plans were put on hold as the demands of a large congregation occupied Bob's time and attention, much of it in counseling. He experienced a growing frustration with the limitations of the across-the-desk contact. There had to be a more effective way of helping the hurting than the formality an office setting allowed. He longed to invite some of them to his home, to offer them a comforting place in which to unwind; or a place to fall apart if need be. Family considerations made his idea impractical, at least for the moment, but he was convinced there had to be a better way to minister health and healing. Ever mindful of the needs of youth for a place to call their own, he started another coffeehouse called the Burning Bush... the basis of the existing Mustard Seed ministry.

As they expected their tenure at First Baptist to be long-term, Bob and Janet finally made the decision to invest in their first home. A succession of sometimes less than adequate manses for a growing family had given all of them a well-defined list of criteria for the ideal house, if and when they would ever be able to afford one. Now here it was! This was a two storey older home with lots of potential. After investing five years of tender loving sweat and toil, they finally had a home suited to everyone. And for the first time in their married lives, the furniture they lived with actually belonged to them.

Knowing that the real values in life do not lie in acquiring *things*, did not change the sense of *rootedness* that came with the new dining room suite and the monthly mortgage payments. It was good to belong somewhere.

There was as yet no clear-cut green light regarding the “hospitality centre/retreat” that they envisioned but there was no harm done in investigating potential sites. If they accomplished nothing else through the exercise, they would at least give their dream the opportunity to either develop or die of natural causes.

The vision still lacked complete definition, but, as with their new home, there were some basic requirements to be met. A river and lots of trees were essential, as was a view of the mountains. It must be sufficiently removed from the city to offer seclusion from the usual distractions of daily life, yet close enough for guests to reach it within an hour's drive of Calgary.

These expectations should not have been difficult to meet as, a few scant miles west of Calgary, forests flourished against an uninterrupted horizon of the Rocky Mountains. Realtors quickly learned, however, that any commissions which might result from their frequent excursions into the country with the Rev. Ball, would be hard earned. Each location submitted for his consideration met with a firm "Nice... but not nice enough."

During the last few years of their five-year stay at First Baptist, the church was undergoing its own change of direction, with mounting pressures placed on the pastoral staff as they attempted to deal with the uncertainties of the transition. For Bob and Janet, the time seemed right to consider a move of their own. There were several calls from other churches but their praying yielded no clear discernment that God was directing them to another pastorate. Could He now be allowing them opportunity to move toward making their dream a reality? But how did one begin to put wheels under a dream? And what really did they envision the finished product to be? Was it enough to open their doors in the concept of *hospitality* to extended family? Or did they need a more formal set of goals and objectives to guide them through the maze ahead?

Feeling the need to gain clearer perspective, Bob and Janet, contacted Ted Van Dyke, a friend from their Jasper days and a successful hotel manager. He strongly recommended that they establish a support group with whom to share this new direction and to whom they might be accountable. It made sense. They realized, even at the outset, that for this venture to come to its full potential, God's provision

for every stage in the development would come through the wisdom, insight and gifts of His people.

In response to Ted's suggestion, they compiled a list of a dozen individuals who were mature in faith and whose judgments they respected. As they shared their vision, the responses were unanimously favorable. There was no question of the need for a place apart from the church where people could find refuge. So that the planned centre of Christian hospitality could proceed, they incorporated as a charitable foundation and Bob and Janet were endorsed as the ones to spearhead the project.

Bob's resignation from First Baptist was effective in the summer of 1976. Bob became a salesman and did interim preaching while Janet worked as a cook at the Baptist Leadership Training School to provide the necessary income. Meanwhile, the group began to meet every two weeks, to exchange ideas and information, and to pray. Their sometimes-discouraging quest for the right property continued. Finally, there it was... the ideal combination of water, trees and mountains! The quarter section straddling the Ghost River in prime recreational country offered both *adequate separation from* and *ready access to* the city.

Others did not share Bob's enthusiasm. One board member admitted that as they stood knee deep in prairie grass, it was difficult to visualize anything of magnitude. They did agree on one matter: long hours of work lay ahead before the dream could take on the reality of concrete, wood and nails. By now all were accustomed to Bob's role as visionary and theirs as pragmatists, in God's ability to coordinate their efforts toward reaching their now common goal.

Even Janet had difficulty in visualizing the potential of the proposed site. Her commitment to her husband, and trust in God's guidance, as well as a sense of preparedness for this venture, sustained her in the moments when she was overwhelmed with the (humanly speaking) madness of what they were doing. Cutting down trees in order to build a house that nobody had money to pay for, and which had the express support and interest of relatively few people, was difficult to justify from any point of logic. It also meant she must relinquish the newly found roots that she now realized were very important to her. At the same time, there was

a recurring pattern in her life of God not asking her to give up anything that He would not multiply back to her in some way and time.

Finding property so suited to their wish-list placed a sense of urgency on their need for a structured identity. A formal presentation of the proposed ministry must be more specific than "y'all come!" Ted Van Dyke had also encouraged them to prepare a document for distribution that would answer questions certain to be forthcoming from potential supporters.

The net result of many hours of thought, prayer, writing, and rewriting was a twenty-page prospectus, ready to be mailed to a list of three hundred friends, acquaintances and former parishioners. It described the proposed new community "as a centre of healing for the whole person - spiritually, intellectually and psychologically." It was tentatively identified as the *Napi Foundation* (pronounced nawpee), a Blackfoot term meaning *looking to God*. Bob's intention had been to find an indigenous equivalent for *house of healing* but there seemed no parallel term. The name met with mixed reviews, including a suggestion that the right voice inflection made it sound like an Australian diaper. When they attempted to register the name with the Government, they discovered that *Napi* was already in use by an indigenous group. A new name had to be found soon.

None of the suggestions thus far reflected the purpose to which they felt God was calling them. Those that were feasible were already in use elsewhere and the original ideas were just *too* original. They were quickly running out of time and had to find a name before their incorporation meeting.

Bob was flipping through a hymnal when he saw it. In tiny block letters under the title "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," the word KINGSFOLD seemed to stand out in bold relief. It was the name of the hymn tune. Now here was an idea with real potential: Fold, a place where sheep come for safety and security and where the shepherd, King Jesus, reigns.

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest.
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast!"*

*I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.*

~ Horatius Bonar

The board unanimously approved the choice, dividing it into two words and adding an apostrophe.

When it first appeared on the signpost at the gate, a curious public added their own interpretations. Some hoped it was a new subdivision, and stopped in to inquire about buying a lot. Others were apprehensively certain that a motorcycle gang was moving in!

Years later, one who was closely involved with King's Fold heard her hairdresser insist that the place was a nudist colony. She claimed that her husband had seen it with his own eyes! And perhaps he had! A frequent guest, who loved to explore the pathways in the forest, returned to the lodge one winter day all hot and sweaty from her long walk. She asked Janet for a towel to wipe down and went back outside. Freed by her European roots, she promptly took off all her clothes and rolled about in the snow. Fortunately, there were no men around to be distracted from their solitude by her solo performance... or were there?

The next order of business was to acquire the property, now owned by Lester Beck of the neighboring Bar Cee Ranch. It was listed for \$120,000, a price comparable to that for which other property in the area had recently sold. There were no apparent resources to pay any price, reasonable or otherwise. For the moment, a small deposit to consummate the agreement to sell would suffice, and to that end, Bob paid a visit to his friendly bank manager. Always eager to accommodate a tried-and-true client, the man's checkbook was already in hand. What did Bob need the money for?

"To buy a quarter section of land."

"How much are they asking?" The book was opening.

"\$120,000."

"Oh. How are you planning to pay for it?"

"Don't know yet. We haven't really thought about it."

"Oh-h-h. What is it for?"

"Well, we'd like to build a big house with lots of rooms so people can come and stay with us."

"Oh. How are you going to do that?"

"We don't really know yet but we feel that God wants us to do it. He will provide and friends will help."

"Oh."

The man had a healthy banker's skepticism about people actually contributing to something unless there was a sure cut in it for them. He couldn't quite relate to what he was hearing about God telling them to do it or about providing the means. It was not his usual practice to loan money to anyone who was unemployed with no hope of a paycheck in the foreseeable future. Yet there was a ring of integrity about what he was hearing, and without too many inner qualms, he granted the loan.

In their subsequent meetings, he always inquired as to how things were going. It was apparent that his interest went beyond checking a potentially bad investment, so Bob added his name to a growing mailing list, sending him regular progress updates. He wondered how the *faith language* of the bulletins was received a - radical change from the financial journals that a man in his position of influence might be expected to read. (And, two years later after the center was up and running, the banker and his boy drove up on a motorcycle, obviously, to see for himself if such a project could really come together.)

Just when they all felt the growing momentum, Lester Beck changed his mind. The property was not available after all. It was a blow to all of them, but particularly to Bob and Janet who had continually prayed that they might not interpret the signals received as green lights if God did not want them to proceed. Bob had little reason to hope that meeting with his would-be neighbor might change his mind, but it was worth a try. Lester, though small in stature, made it clear that any pressure brought to bear on his decision would not easily sway him. He was no longer interested in selling and even if he was, he would not reduce the

asking price of \$120,000, even though the spectacular spread of property visible from his kitchen window made him (as Bob pointed out) a *very blessed rancher*. If he were inclined to give away his money, he alone would decide where it would go! He was likewise unmoved by the prospectus which Bob pointed out was by now in the hands of an entire mailing list, describing his 166-acre parcel as "the ideal site."

Thoroughly humbled by his failed appeal to Lester's sense of charity, Bob relinquished his role as negotiator. If God intended them to buy this property, He would have to give them some clear indication as to any further action. Meanwhile, this abrupt halt to their plan left them feeling suddenly drained of all energy. Perhaps some time away would help them regain some perspective and it was an opportune time to visit friends in Nova Scotia.

To their surprise, upon returning home a month later, Lester was willing to sell the land and had dropped his price to \$85,000! On January 1, 1977, the transfer of title to the King's Fold Foundation was official.

One final real estate transaction remained to be completed and despite the excitement of new beginnings, there were tears from a very real sense of loss when the house on Elbow Drive passed to a new owner. The *sold* sign on the front lawn symbolized more than just another closed real estate deal. For Bob and Janet, it represented the closure of a phase of their lives, both as a family and in ministry. As the real estate market was on the rise, there was a handsome profit on the house, which they assumed was simply God's way of providing seed money for the centre. Having put their joined hands to the plough, they must move on into uncertainty of a new furrow, secure only in the One who can ultimately bring fruit out of labor.



Chapter 3

Building

The dedication and ground-breaking ceremony took place on the afternoon of Sunday, June 19, 1977. Approximately, one hundred and twenty friends and supporters gathered at the site to launch this faith venture. The *hills were truly alive with the sound of music* that day as the first shovel of sod was uprooted.

Construction of the garage, which would temporarily house the Balls, began the next day. All but one of their five children had elected to live on their own so the space required for Bob and Janet to function was greatly diminished. They were able to move in the following week.

Roger Woods, the architect responsible for the design of the lodge, was directed to make it architecturally interesting. "We want you to create an intimate, homelike environment that will be an invitation for guests to relax. There should be numerous nooks and crannies in which people could be secluded as well as a separate family suite for the Balls and room for 16 guests.

Work crews began arriving immediately and the garage became the hub of meal preparation. Whether it was a full meal or cinnamon rolls with coffee, Janet cheerfully cooked for the often-unpredictable numbers who were always needing to be fed. She had often done this before, whether for drop-in guests in Jasper or church suppers for 300 in Calgary. Only the scenery around her had changed. Repeated comments about her ability to cope in less-than-ideal domestic circumstances made her realize that she was actually quite calm in the midst of

what could have become utter chaos. She also had a new sense of God's presence and enabling in the routine and mundane activities of life.

This awareness of God's presence eased some of the of living in very makeshift quarters. There was ice in the wash basin each morning as winter approached. On extra chilly mornings, Bob would rise first to build a fire and then warm their clothes before they dressed. All the water for washing, cooking and drinking had to be brought up the 200-foot climb in pails from the river. To provide more storage capacity for drinking water, Bob talked a local brewery into donating a beautiful oak barrel. More than one person mentioned how great the river water was as they went for a second dipper full. What they didn't know was that for years the barrel had been filled with fine Jamaican Rum! This is the barrel that now holds the walking sticks outside the lower door.

Bob and Janet had not underestimated the work involved. Although they wanted to leave as many trees standing as possible, there was much brush to clear before the actual construction could begin. A trench for the uniquely designed water system had to be dug all the way from the river to the top of the hill, one of the more arduous tasks. They were delighted when the taciturn Lester Beck unexpectedly offered his services and equipment for excavating the basement. In fact, Lester was living proof that God's provision extended beyond "all they could ask or think." While their search for the right location had largely focused on aesthetics, God had added a friend and neighbor whose help in subsequent building projects would be invaluable. If questioned about his involvement, Lester's response was simple... "I believe in what they are doing".

An amazing army of approximately 200 volunteers participated during the entire construction period. Nathan Ball and his friend Clarence, both attending Waterloo University, volunteered their whole summer. Doug Munson left his job in Banff to be part of the core crew for three months. Doug Ball drove down from Jasper many weekends to volunteer his professional carpenter skills. Carpentry skills were not a prerequisite (though much appreciated when available) and workers arriving for a day of manual labor might be handed a hammer, paintbrush or shovel, depending on the day's agenda. Walter Babowal, a civil engineer and early member of the board, ensured the timely arrival of equipment and at prices which often

represented significant savings below current market values. George Love, a retired carpenter from Jasper, was appointed as project manager and it was his task to coordinate the efforts of those who came to help.

The new commotion with its accompanying sights and smells did not go unnoticed by previous tenants of the property. Bears and deer, unwilling to relinquish squatters' rights without investigation, occasionally allowed their curiosity to draw them close to the action. On one occasion, upon raising their heads after the supper blessing, the Balls noticed a bear at the window, its snout pressed to the glass and saliva dripping from jaws open in tribute to Janet's best meatloaf. Another time, a friend had left a chocolate cake on a table in front of the garage, while they were away. Other than her word for it the only evidence of the gift was a big set of chocolate paw prints on the table!

To enable Tim to go to the outdoor facility on his own, a rope was stretched from tree to tree to guide him. But, to ward off any black bears, Tim would sing a hymn at the top of his voice. The workers always knew when he was doing a bathroom trip.

They lived in the garage a full six months before the new lodge was ready. The demands of the construction period and a growing struggle to ward off winter's chill in the garage exacted a physical toll on Bob and Janet.

The bed sheets were often found frozen to the not yet insulated wall. When shopping in Calgary, Janet decided she was not going back without an electric blanket... when they first tried it, they thought they had died and gone to heaven!

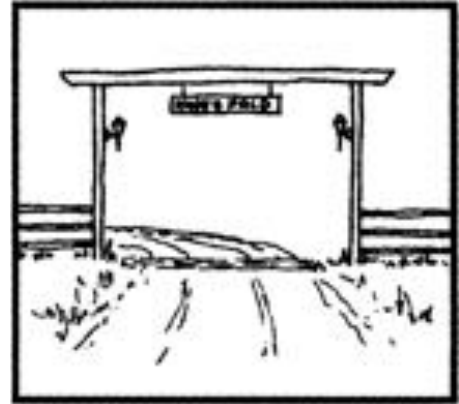
They had few real breaks during this time, except for the generosity of friends who would periodically come to relieve them for brief interludes. They could not have anticipated when planning their wedding twenty-five years earlier that their silver anniversary would be so opportunely timed. Gifts of money allowed them a Hawaiian vacation in December and the luxury of each other's company, uninterrupted by the incessant organizational details around which their lives had revolved for so long.

Then, there was the added excitement as recipients of yet one more of God's miracles. Walter Babowal, ever mindful of the operating budget, had contacted several interior contractors to obtain estimates for kitchen cabinets. The company submitting the lowest bid was approached with respect to any possible discount, which might apply to a non-profit organization such as King's Fold. There was one. In fact, the company decided to donate the cabinets, charging only a small sum for the oak frames, where were made by a subcontractor.

The store's generosity did not stop there. Bob and Janet were also given their choice of furnishings for the entire lodge at cost price! Shopping had never been this much fun before. With an entire showroom at their disposal, they wandered up and down the aisles picking one of this and a few of that and all at lower prices than a year's worth of bargain hunting could have netted. Beds, desks, chairs, and lamps would soon fill the echoing emptiness of the guest rooms.

Chapter 4

Open Doors



"Okay, we're ready for you as long as you don't mind a sheet hanging in the doorway of your room!"

A woman had called several times in January 1978 inquiring when she might be able to visit. The paint was dry but the smell of newly laid carpeting permeated the building. There were still minor details to take care of but as long as the stove was ready to cook meals, the water was running and the furnace generated heat, why should the lack of a few doors stand in the way of hospitality?

She felt the same way and became their first guest. Bob's counseling sessions with her affirmed his previous conviction throughout years of pastoring that those with deep needs needed sustained care beyond that afforded in an office visit. Now there was no desk calendar between him and his visitor, reminding him of other appointments and meetings that fragmented his attention and made him continually aware of the clock.

Actually, both he and Janet now seemed to have more than enough free time. Apart from the finishing touches that were gradually being completed, there was a definite lull in the pace from that to which they were accustomed. But guests were scarce and the sight of all those empty beds with their decorative coverings undisturbed awakened an anxiety within them unprecedented during the planning and formative stages. Had this been a mistake after all?

It was now Bob's turn to review their journey thus far. He knew his own ability to manipulate circumstances and events to achieve a desired result and had prayed from the beginning that if this was truly from the Lord that it would happen in such a way that others would know that it was not a *Bob Ball Special*. It had been different this time. Both he and Janet had a strong sense of participation in a plan that was already well orchestrated; of running alongside something that was unfolding in a natural way. On their own, they could never have spread the vision of King's Fold to even a small support group. Nor could merely their own enthusiasm have brought together the giftedness of those who had given unreservedly of their time and talents in building the lodge. All they could do was trust that "He who had called them would surely bring it to pass."

People did come, not in droves, but in a steady trickle as word about King's Fold spread throughout the community. Many were sorting through the painful wreckage of broken relationships and welcomed the availability of a listening ear. For some, just time away from an environment filled with conflict or stress was healing.

The first year passed as a kind of honeymoon period. Bob and Janet were able to spend considerable time with their guests, listening, counseling or just being there for them. They were excited to see the continual evidence of God's healing touch at work. For all their years of experience in addressing the inner needs of people, the actual process of wholeness replacing holiness in a life never lost wonder for them. There was no formula for bringing the light of insight into eyes darkened with pain and confusion; no technique for releasing the flood of tears cleansing away years of guilt. Nor was ministry the domain of any particular individual. Sometimes guests could relate to one another's needs, and for others, the library stimulated new directions of thought. It seemed as though God's creativity relieved everyone of the need to take center stage responsibility. He could use anyone as an instrument of healing, or He could choose to speak by His Spirit to a listening heart. The assignment seemed to be just to create *sacred spaces* for people so that God and they could use them as they would.

They were aware, however, that success for King's Fold could not be quantitatively measured. Even as God brought people to them, only He could know the full extent of how He had touched their lives. He alone knew the unresolved issues

represented by each name in the guest book. Their prayer for each visitor was that God would meet him or her at some point of need, however brief a visit might be.

"What kind of a screening process do you have for people coming to King's Fold? How do you know if you have the expertise to deal with their problems?" The question came from a pastor acquaintance that had recently obtained a doctorate in psychology.

How indeed? Bob was not sure he had the expertise to devise a screening process. Besides, when your purpose for being was to be a family to anyone who might need you, how could you select one against another? They did make a point of interviewing guests shortly after arrival to find out why they had come and how they might best serve them. That is, until they realized that this process was somewhat intimidating to the new visitor.

Nevertheless, Bob was becoming aware that the surrounding church community perceived their role as something other than what they intended. Calls would come from pastors asking if they could take in people in varying stages of misfortune. Or perhaps a homeless individual had wandered into the church during the evening service and subsequently responded to an invitation to accept Christ. The first impulse was often to send him or her to King's Fold for care.

One Sunday evening a Calgary church phoned to say they were bringing out a young woman who needed a place to stay. As Janet showed her to her room, she seemed distant and said very little. About 5am Bob and Janet were awakened by noises from the dining area and found that their new guest had been up all night, prowling about the Lodge. She looked different, and it soon dawned on them that she was wearing different things. She had entered Lois' room, a staff person who was away, and exchanged clothes.

"Those are Lois' clothes," said Bob. "You must go to her room and take them off and put your own back on!"

"No, I like these better."

"But that is stealing, and they don't belong to you."

"I don't care."

She was also carrying Lois' guitar case and wearing 5 or 6 of her necklaces. Bob and Janet spent the next half-hour unsuccessfully trying to persuade the young lady to return what wasn't hers. No way! She was happy with her new outfit and wanted to be driven back to Calgary.

"I will gladly do that," said Bob, "as soon as you return what you have stolen. If you refuse, I'll have to take you to the police." Half an hour later, about 6am, Bob phoned Lester Beck, next door.

"Will you come and ride with me and a guest to Cochrane. She's acting quite irrationally and I'll feel safer with you along." An hour later Bob presented her to the R.C.M.P. in Cochrane.

"I don't want to press charges. Just have her exchange the clothes she is wearing for her own and release her."

Yes, he would have her do that. But being no more persuasive than Bob, he finally made a brief phone call. A few minutes later in walked a burly woman officer and shortly thereafter Lois' clothes and necklaces arrived at the desk in a paper bag. One of the officers on duty was kind enough to drive her back to Calgary and Bob returned to King's Fold for breakfast and the normal routine of a retreat director.

At first they accepted these referrals as a matter of course, but when it became apparent that King's Fold was gaining a reputation for being a therapeutic center, Bob realized that they had to foster a new understanding. No one should consider a visit to King's Fold automatic testimony of marital problems or fuel for eager rumor mills.

It had never been their intention to relieve the established church of its responsibility toward the stranger within its gates. Neither did they see themselves as an alternative to the necessary shepherding of a pastor to his own flock.

Before they could effectively communicate this to the church constituency, they needed to review their aims as set forth in the prospectus. How could they show all that King's Fold was a place of growth? A house of prayer? A place for healthy

people to come if they wanted to stay healthy? To help the public understand the role of King's Fold, the board of directors agreed to the qualifying description, *Retreat and Renewal Centre*.

The process of public awareness needed to start at the point of contact with a prospective guest, usually during the initial telephone inquiry. It was not easy to turn people away but there were times when they genuinely felt that the expectations or needs of the caller were at best addressed in other ways. They also found it necessary to ask guests to make their own reservations, finding that others, no matter how well meaning, could misunderstand the needs of an individual. Within two years the Balls experienced first-hand the consequences of an open-door policy. Janet particularly felt that she had to escape the unending cycle of meals, dishes, laundry, and cleaning that relentlessly propelled her through each week. She struggled futilely against the feeling of entrapment that closed in around her, wondering how the dream that for so long shaped their thoughts and plans had effectively become her prison. She longed for her own space, for the opportunity to call her kitchen her own without the need for supervising either staff or guests. When was the last time she had cooked any recipe with only the specified quantity of ingredients? Her mind automatically multiplied every measure by 4 or 5, and organized her grocery shopping by case lots. Letters of appreciation from guests often referred to the wonderful meals at King's Fold. But these, though gratifying, did not still the rebellion that seemed to be mounting daily.

She had to leave. She could not keep the lid on her pent-up emotions indefinitely, but she didn't want to fall apart at King's Fold. How could she maintain any credibility before the guests if they saw her in apparently worse condition than themselves? Where do keepers of a refuge go for refuge themselves, even as they had opened their home to those needing solace? A condominium in Calgary became available for their weekend use at just the right time.

Finally, away from all expectations, Janet's reserve crumpled. Her tears welled up from a seemingly bottomless reservoir of frustration and fatigue, and since Bob was a part of it all, she found it difficult to receive comfort from him. How could he understand her need for space when so much of his time was spent doing office

work or counseling while she was up to her elbows in bathrooms that needed cleaning or sheets that needed washing.

The tears showed no signs of subsiding even as they returned to King's Fold on Sunday night. Bob had thoughtfully arranged for a side door to be unlocked for them so Janet could avoid a chance meeting with any guests. She didn't want to come back but knew that she could not ask Bob to leave even though he would have done so for her. Once back in their suite, Bob laid hands on her and prayed. When she awakened in the morning, she was able to face the day secure in the knowledge that God was somehow working this out for their personal good as well as the good of their ministry.

They were, however, confronted with the need to re-evaluate their own lives and priorities since King's Fold had opened its doors. Without really intending for it to happen, they had allowed the daily demands to distance them from friends and a support group back in Calgary. Even their weekly day off was not a real break, as there was always a list of errands to do in the city, which left no time for socializing or group commitments.

Of more significance was a certain emptiness that had crept in, a tendency to *Martha-like* busyness with little time remaining for attention to inner nurture. They were realizing that unless they were able to create regular space in their own lives for quiet retreat, they themselves would not be living the kind of life that they were seeking to encourage in others. They needed designated time in which to renew their focus on God, even if this meant putting aside the mounting pile of ironing for a few more hours or leaving the bookkeeping until tomorrow.

They also needed to change their approach to the guests. They had naively assumed that they must be available at all times, offering them tea and a chance to talk. Were they perhaps doing a disservice, not allowing guests enough time to be on their own and at the same time placing themselves under unnecessary pressures? Should those who really needed to talk rather be allowed to take the initiative?

Though Janet still at times longed for her own space, apart from community property, the recurring message from God was that her roots were to be in Him and not tied to people, buildings or things. He had begun bringing this to her attention in Switzerland when all that was familiar and important to her lifestyle as a pastor's wife was gone, including her circle of friends and club involvements. Psalm 27 with its single-minded desire of worshipping in God's temple presented both a gentle rebuke and a challenge to her. Did she really know what that meant, or were there always other desires that came first?

This process of becoming rooted in God received its most rigorous testing during the Balls' sabbatical a few years later when they traveled extensively throughout the U.S. and Canada, visiting various retreat centres and Christian communities. For Janet, the prospect of spending every night in a different household and bed was cause for some anxiety, and she often requested prayer for grace to experience her true home in God wherever she might be. Struggles would continue to surface from time to time as a reminder that the process was not complete, but more and more there was a sense of inner *settledness*, regardless of outward circumstances. Many of the places they visited on their journey were long-established, well-funded centres with a rich history. They spent long hours talking with retreat directors and program coordinators, all of whom were very experienced in retreat ministry. Most of the centres were located in very attractive, natural settings, some stunningly so. Most of the facilities were spacious and well-maintained. Bob and Janet were impressed again and again by a sense of stability and maturity, in sharp contrast to their own fledgling centre.

As they traveled, they became aware that each place that welcomed them was wonderfully unique in its own way, and that King's Fold was no exception. They realized that while the larger, older centres had a distinctively institutional feel about them, King's Fold offered something very special with its warm, family-like atmosphere. This confirmed their commitment to the original vision of a small, intimate centre where individual guests would feel very much *at home*. Subsequently, the Board affirmed that King's Fold's ministry would always be directed primarily to individual retreatants and King's Fold would never grow to become a conference centre, as many had.



Chapter 5

Timothy

The greeting, "It's so good to see you again!" often accompanied by a hug, is not unusual at any reunion of friends... but from Tim Ball, it had extra significance. Tim had not actually seen anybody since the age of seven. The move to King's Fold with Bob and Janet at age 17, without his three brothers and sister, presented a major adjustment from what had been a well-ordered home life.

For Bob and Janet, his presence there at all was nothing short of miraculous. They could recall in vivid detail the day when their doctor had arranged to see them in their home, requesting they send the children outside to play so that they could talk freely. There was no easy way of either giving or receiving the news that their baby, only three years old, had as many months to live. The frequent falls that had been attributed to normal toddler awkwardness were the early manifestations of a malicious brain tumor that was soon expected to claim his life.

It didn't, being thwarted for a further 21 years by prayer and medical science, though at no small cost to Tim. Besides losing his sight at an age where any day is too short to see all there is to see, he never grew beyond 4' 7", had no use of his right arm, and had greatly reduced mobility in his right leg as well. The prescribed treatments involved a series of agonizing choices for his parents who lived with the knowledge that their decisions might render him physically and mentally helpless. Radiation therapy and surgeries succeeded each other in the war against the slowly growing malignancy. Each time it seemed that the battle was lost, he would rally with new strength. His inability to see beauty for himself sometimes brought tears, but his frequent requests for a description of fields, trees, and hills aroused new appreciation in those around him for colors and textures easily taken for granted.

The family was never so aware of the poverty of words as when describing the glories of a sunset or the terrifying majesty of a lightning storm.

Their words, inadequate though they may have seemed, did not hinder his awareness of God as the Creator of it all and Tim loved Him for it. It did not seem to trouble him that anyone who could speak mountains and oceans into existence might have been able to prevent the calamity that had befallen him. His favorite Sunday school choruses inevitably praised God for His goodness and loving care.

He was not so sure, however, about heaven as a fun place to go. For his family, each day that Tim's precarious condition allowed was a gift, but they could not ignore the possibility that things could change very quickly. They often talked about going to be with Jesus in heaven, as much, they realized, for their own preparation as for his. He had decided, however, that any place where skates and hockey sticks were not standard equipment could wait, particularly if "Mother dear" and "Father dear," as he called Bob and Janet, could not stop by for regular visits.

The move to King's Fold presented a new set of challenges to Tim. Well able to find his way unassisted around a house that over time had become familiar, the total dependence on others in this new setting with its variety of obstacles was difficult. He learned his way around the crowded garage, which was home for six months, but otherwise needed someone to steer him clear of the construction clutter any time he wanted to go outdoors. He didn't mind the company, but with all the activity going on around him, he knew that no one had a lot of extra time to accommodate him. It was difficult not to feel like a burden sometimes. He longed to be contributing to the chorus of hammers that echoed across the valley. He could hear his brothers' voices amongst those of the others donating their time and would have given anything to join them as they sawed and pounded the new building into shape.

His parents encouraged Tim to be as self-sufficient as possible trying to balance their natural protective instincts against his need to be independent. He managed well but sustained many bumps and bruises in the process of familiarizing himself with his new environment. One day, a summer breeze drifting through the open

glass doors drew Tim. However, the porch was not yet built. Stepping out, he fell five feet to the ground, breaking his good leg.

For the next several months, the weight of the cast limited his mobility to areas negotiable by wheelchair. Prolonged inactivity greatly weakened his leg and when the heavy plaster was finally removed, Tim was unable to walk. The wheelchair loomed as a permanent fixture in Tim's life. Everyone hoped that he would walk again, but no one was willing to force the issue. How could they impose their own agenda on Tim when it meant adding to his burden?

Ultimately the choice was Tim's and he made it. If he were to have a hope of walking again, the wheelchair would have to go. Now he crawled on all fours guiding himself along the walls. Though discouraged at times, he never lost his capacity to find something for which to praise God. He did learn to walk all over again. With the help of a guest, Dr. Gerry Hankins, and a lightweight aluminum cane, he was eventually able to navigate on his own, albeit slowly and painstakingly.

His physical limitations did not prevent his assisting with the smooth operation of the community and there were certain jobs which were Tim's to perform. Following a meal, he would always sweep the crumbs from the lace tablecloths, careful that none should escape into the holes of the design. Unloading the dishwasher and loading the firewood box were also his responsibilities and regardless of the activity, his strong baritone singing or humming of a favorite chorus was a constant indication of his joy of life.

Always ready to be helpful in any way that contributed to the general good, there remained in Tim a need for an occupation, something that was uniquely his to do; which could afford him the dignity of a small independent income. The options were limited, but operating a tuck shop at the centre emerged as a possibility. Besides the basic tissues, toothbrushes and chocolate bars, handicrafts made by Tim expanded the small inventory, which he maintained out of his own finances. With patient instruction, he became adept at creating woven lampshades and leather wallets. Guests enjoyed watching Tim, seated at the kitchen nook (a good sunspot!) amid yards of lacing and yarn, painstakingly weaving them into

keepsakes that would remind their purchasers in days to come of the special grace of God in human weakness.

Once, a guest who was accompanying Tim into a darkened room momentarily forgot his blindness, hastening to turn on the light before realizing that the flip of a switch brought no further light across his path. Her own reflex avoidance of darkness brought a sudden poignant awareness of the permanence of his. "Tim is your darkness scary?" She had to ask.

Tim cocked his head in the direction of her voice. "Oh no, my darkness is quite light. It's a fine place to be." The surprise in his voice made her realize that the common associations of *cold and alone*, with darkness, had no reality for Tim. It reminded her of a Bible passage that referred to darkness being as light to God. The converse was equally true... real darkness could be present in well-lit places.

Though unable to participate in much of the activity and bustle around him, Tim was never inwardly alone. It was a rare day that he did not spend one to two hours listening to recorded Scripture on his cassette player. He loved to pray. The child's delight in talking to God never left him as an adult and he regularly updated God on the needs and desires of those at King's Fold at times when others might lack the time or energy to do so. When it was his turn to ask the blessing at a meal, Bob and Janet would sometimes jokingly remind him that some of the food was best eaten hot, lest he lose himself in prayer while healthy appetites waited.

Tim was sensitive to people. Lacking the visual means of forming judgments based on physical criteria, he was keenly tuned to the inner climate of those around him, often aware of turmoil, conflict or deception in ways that escaped others. He also quickly recognized a kindred spirit whose heart likewise desired to know God.

A Calgary pastor, who spent a month at King's Fold working on a doctoral thesis, was always amazed at Tim's depth of empathy. Occasionally, when progress in the manuscript seemed at a standstill and the volume of books and paper spread around him in the *Prophet's Chamber* was overwhelming, he would stand at the dining room windows. In moody silence, he would stare at the distant mountains, oblivious to anyone's presence until he felt an arm slip around his waist in a

reassuring squeeze. "It's tough, isn't it?" The question did not come from any personal experience of writing a thesis. Tim couldn't have seen the weariness in his friend's eyes, but he knew.

Tim was very demonstrative in his affection for those closest to him, frequently affirming the love that seemed to flow naturally outward. Anything he could do of a practical nature, particularly for his parents, was a special pleasure. One guest was particularly blessed as he watched Tim carefully washing his father's car, all the while singing at the top of his voice. "He lives. He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!"

In fact, as guests observed Tim going about his chores, which by average standards would be considered quite menial, they gained new perspective on the concerns which had brought them to King's Fold. Blessing of health and physical wholeness, often taken for granted, were newly appreciated. Visitors to King's Fold were often faced with the uncomfortable realization that for all Tim's limitations, he had an inner peace that often eluded those with all faculties intact. The simplicity of his faith and his frequent expression of gratitude for the commonplace brought conviction to more than one questioning heart. Blue skies or gray, sun or rain, all merited the same enthusiastic, "Isn't it a beautiful day?"

While Tim accepted his limitations without reservation, there were difficult times of trying to reconcile the healing ministry of Christ as described in the gospels with the seeming failure in the early quest for his own healing. He had experienced the prayers of individuals renowned for their healing ministries and knew without doubt that the power operating in their meetings could restore him as well. Why didn't it? Tim's desire to understand this was almost greater than his desire for healing.

Bob and Janet had scheduled a sabbatical for September 1983, planning a term of study in Jerusalem. None of the necessary arrangements, however, seemed to fall into place and eventually, after many setbacks, they decided that perhaps the timing for this particular trip was not right. They still needed to get away. Bob had been undergoing his own trial by fire about King's Fold and needed a time of restoration. The vision had been realized and though it was everything and more

than he had anticipated, he struggled with an unexpected sense of anticlimax. He would look around him at the lodge, the greenhouse and all of the development that had taken place in the past five years and see only buildings, as though completely detached from the hours and years of commitment that they represented. They decided on an extended vacation in Mexico in lieu of the pressures of studying. Tim's health, which had been cause for some concern in recent months, added some uncertainty but their doctor assured them that he would be all right and encouraged them to go.

Safely away from King's Fold, Bob was finally able to release his own pent-up emotions, weeping like never before as he confronted the poverty of his spirit. For a long time, he had suppressed the pangs in favor of all the endless planning, building and development that a retreat centre could generate. In his eagerness to make a place of refuge for the hurting, he had missed the invitation to himself. It seemed as though God might be reminding him that unless He remained first in their sometimes-scrambled list of priorities, what they were left with was a mere collection of rocks, boards, and nails. Janet could only encourage him, much as he had supported her a few years before. When he was ready to address the issues that had led to his present burned out state, he would recognize for himself what practical changes he needed to make.

Two weeks after arriving in Mexico, they received a call advising them that Tim required surgery. This would be his sixth brain operation, always a grueling experience. Their previous disappointment about the Jerusalem trip was nothing compared with the gratitude they felt about being able to return home easily to be there with Tim.

It did not seem likely that Tim would recover this time. He said that he was tired, that he didn't want to go through another surgery.

For his parents, the time had come that they knew was inevitable — when they would decide to abandon any heroic means of prolonging Tim's life, the quality of which had deteriorated considerably even in the past few months. He was finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between sounds, particularly in a group,

hearing only a bewildering tangle of noises, which to others was conversation and laughter. Speech was also becoming more difficult.

For a few days in the hospital, Tim raved as though in battle with an adversary who was trying to thwart him in his desire to be with the Father. Nurses reported him to be "talking about church again."

The Ball's son, Nathan, rented a house in Calgary where Tim could be brought home from the hospital and where Bob and Janet could look after him. People from Barnabas Fellowship of Calgary, as well as other friends, furnished it for the family's use, complete with pictures on the walls, a stereo, and groceries in the cupboards. Thus, surrounded by the love and care of those closest to him, he was able to live his remaining days in peace.

The day the family took him home from the hospital, they lit a candle to symbolize the light that Tim had been. As each candle burned itself away, it was replaced with a new taper, so that the flame was continuous. Each night the family would gather around his bed to sing and say the Lord's Prayer. He was unable to respond, but the doctors and nurses had encouraged them to believe that he could understand. No longer able to verbally express his love for *Mother Dear* and *Father Dear*, he would silently squeeze their hands. Their natural desire was to keep him alive by urging him to accept nourishment, but it soon became apparent that he was in danger of choking on it as his ability to swallow diminished. It was time to give him up. Gathering around his bed, the family released him to die, to go to his Father in Heaven.

Tim died January 1, 1984, his father's birthday. "How like Tim," Bob smiled through his tears, "to start the New Year off right!"

The family looked after almost all the funeral preparations, including building the casket. It did not seem right, having carried Tim in various ways throughout his entire life, to leave these final ministrations to strangers. For his parents, it was important that everything done at this time be in accordance with the meaning of death to a true believer in Christ. While grief should be expected and expressed, it is also an occasion for rejoicing.

Knowing all through Tim's life that he could suddenly be taken from them, they had given careful thought to his funeral, periodically revising their plans as he grew up and matured in faith. One thing never changed. There would be music.

It was truly a celebration, from the lone bagpipe's rendition of "Amazing Grace" to the passing of the flame which had been lit upon his last arrival home, from one waiting candle to another throughout the entire congregation that filled First Baptist Church. Relatively few of those present considered themselves close friends of Tim. Many, however, had been touched through his gentle presence at King's Fold, far more than he had ever recognized by name or by voice.

Others now sweep crumbs from the tables and empty the dishwasher. Responsibility for the wood box has been reassigned and the supply of wallets and lampshades for the tuck shop has long since run out.

But Tim's spirit remains. It may be possible that his constant spoken, "Praise the Lord!" and songs of praise have remained *in the walls* as part of the atmosphere of King's Fold... part of what makes it different from a hotel... *a praised in* atmosphere. Those who knew him best remember him in his favorite corner of the hearth where he would tilt his head in the direction of the most interesting conversation. Others remember his enjoyment of a good tease, particularly if it might lead to an arm-wrestling match. For Bob and Janet, the opening strains of a certain Zamfir recording bring him poignantly to mind. They know that Tim is still singing at the top of his voice, "He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today." And we who remain at King's Fold today thank God for gracing this place, for a time, with Tim's presence.

Chapter 6

Spaces for the Heart



***"For the next hour and a half,
I want you to observe complete silence."***

The directions were simple. The participants in the weekend seminar on *Listening Prayer* were invited to experience solitude. They could go anywhere they chose but were to be by themselves and refrain from any talking or reading. Several faces registered panic but with the firmness of one accustomed to launching the timid into uncharted waters, the leader sent them on their way. They went, uncertain what was expected of them, unsure about the practical application of what they had been hearing, unaccustomed to the idea of God actually speaking to them. By the time they reconvened, a sense of discovery replaced confusion. There were no dramatic encounters or bright lights as they had wandered the trails. No one shared any momentous decisions made during a solitary walk along the river, but there was discovery nonetheless.

Visitors to King's Fold frequently become fully aware of their need for respite from daily pressures... perceiving a change of scenery as the source of whatever energies they need to resume the same frantic pace a few days later. They are unprepared and even fearful of the major emphases here on spiritual formation, solitude and quiet. Occasionally, someone is unable to relinquish his or her compulsion to be *doing*, and find themselves homeward bound a few hours after arriving, discomfited by the apparent lack of structured activity.

Some guests welcome the lack of structure. One pastor struggling with multiple tragedies of suicide and homicide within his parish wanted only to be left alone to weep out his grief against a background of haunting questions. He remained there for three months and though for a time he was incapable of much interaction with anyone else, he responded to the love and support offered by the community. When he was ready to talk, someone was there to listen; to help him sort through the destruction which the untimely deaths had left in their wake. The greenhouse became his special refuge. As he tended the plants, he sensed a gentle reminder in his spirit that although he might do all the right things, only God could produce the desired results.

Recognizing that people live in a society that discourages reflection, the King's Fold community felt the need of some organized provision for introducing guests to the practice of quiet. A psychologist who had recently joined the community, felt strongly that while a totally silent retreat might well be out of the average person's comfort zone, there might be ways of incorporating the benefits of solitude into the regular routine. And so the practice of *silent lunch* was initiated. This was a regular practice from Monday to Friday unless the Lodge was hosting a group. Guests were served buffet style and sat wherever they chose, indoors or out, the only directive being that they should avoid verbal communication. Soft music played on the stereo, creating an atmosphere conducive to personal reflection, muting the sounds of chewing (and nervous giggles of those who were uncomfortable in silence with others around). Visitors realized with some surprise that just being together is good, that talk is not always the prerequisite of fellowship. In fact, they were not always aware that mealtime conversation, while enjoyable, can also be a source of pressure, particularly when meeting people for the first time.

Currently, silent mealtime occurs only at Thursday noon, but it is hoped that when the time is right more *silent spaces* will again be a part of the regular routine.

Weekend seminars occur regularly throughout the year, with guest speakers exploring topics such as single parenting, communication, journaling and marriage enrichment. Topics of a more contemplative nature have been introduced including prayer, worship and meditation. Retreatants are not only provided with the theory

of a subject in question, but also given the opportunity to practice the principles presented. Easter and Christmas are times for special weekend retreats when the community guides guests in meditation and celebration of the season.

Three prayer cabins offer special spaces for people who have grown to value the adventure of solitude and wish to spend an extended period, perhaps several days, in prayer and meditation. They are sufficiently removed from the lodge, and related activity, to offer full seclusion.

The *Eagle's Nest*, was built into the hillside on the south side of the river by volunteers who first carved stairs into the hill, and then carried all the materials on their backs up that steep slope.

The *Hermitage*, a small, pan-abode cottage was donated to King's Fold by a dear lady who won it in a raffle thinking it would make a good prayer cabin. It came out on the back of a huge truck and was moved to its site looking east from the property.

The *Hide-away*, was originally built as a tree-house for staff children. When there were no longer children here, it was seen as a special *space* close enough to the lodge to give a feeling of security to those who felt the other cabins were too isolated. Also, this cabin is close enough to have electricity.

The Way of the Cross is a prayer walk depicting Christ's final journey to Calvary. Passages of Scripture and meditative readings are mounted on posts spaced at regular intervals along a marked trail which winds downward across the face of the hill towards the river. This can be an individual or group experience of reflection and prayer, culminating with a view of three rugged crosses on a bleak hill.

Worship, often with the Eucharist or Communion, is celebrated weekly and guests are invited to participate, if they wish to do so. It is an invitation for them to celebrate the grace and goodness of God.

In the Fall of 2001 King's Fold launched an internship program focused on community living and the practice of spiritual disciplines. Seminary and college students are now able to do internships in spiritual formation for credit as they prepare themselves for effective ministry. Several of the staff are trained Spiritual Directors and are able to offer this resource to our guests.

"Alone and therefore lonely" may be true in city lifestyles, but for guests of King's Fold, the lofts and lounges designed into the lodge invite them to receive moments of solitude as gifts, brief islands of time in a sea of schedules and deadlines. Many visitors, upon climbing the vertical staircase up to the Prayer Tower, have a sense of discovering *their place*.

Over time, other sacred spaces have emerged from the creativity of many community members. We now have the *Gracenotes Room, Sun Room, Friendship Room, Garden Room, and the Gazebo, outside, with a glorious view*.

In the 1980's a Greenhouse had been built as a therapeutic *space* and it was that for many years as guests and community *gardened with God*. It was designed by the *University of Calgary Faculty of Environmental Design*, complete with its own solar system. And while it produced huge amounts of tomatoes and zucchini in abundance, it was expensive in upkeep and the wooden beams were rotting so it was decided to dismantle it for safety reasons. The building part was saved and renovated in 2001 as an especially lovely *space*, still called the *Greenhouse*, for use by individuals for reading and reflection or just enjoying the unexcelled mountain and river view. There is also the added delight of terraced outside *spaces* where BBQ 's and other group activities can take place. The *Greenhouse* was re-dedicated in October of 2001.

Each spring there is a *Gardening Retreat*. This is a special spiritual formation time of creating beauty on the grounds together with God. Largely because of this, the grounds are a more beautiful *space* each summer.

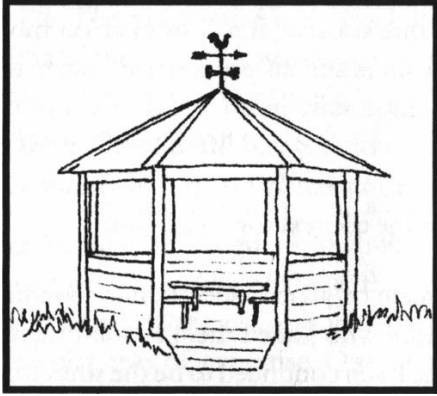
While it would be nice to grow veggies as well, when it was tried, Lester's cows ate them one year. With the short season and watering difficulties it was not worth

the effort and was given up. The library, an especially important *space*, has been evolving over the years and now has over 2000 books. There is a special emphasis on books conducive to Spiritual Formation. All books have been put on a computer database for easy searching.

It has always been the hope of all the King's Fold Community over the years that in the ministry of creating *spaces* for guests, they might experience answers to *Adrian Van Kam's* meaningful prayer:

*Lord, help me find back
The lost treasure of time:
Time for gentle listening to a friend,
For sharing the play of a child,
For consoling a suffering fellow man.
For thinking without strain,
For labor without pressure.
Time to delight in the birds and flowers,
Blooming trees and lustrous green.
Time to enjoy music, friends and meals,
Time to be silent and alone,
Time to be present to your mystery.*

*Free me from the tyranny of time urgency.
Let no time possess me
Neither the pressure of daily concerns.
Let me not cram every moment
With useful and exciting things
To do or say.
Let my life be a gentle preparation
For the pure and precious moments
Of listening to you
So that I may not drown
In the rushing waters
Of practical pursuits.*



Chapter 7

Life in Community

"This must be such a peaceful place to work..."

She lingers at the dinner table after the other guests have gone, as though unwilling to miss even one changing cloud formation etched in gold above the blackening mountain range. The wistfulness in her voice bespeaks a less ordered existence than must surely be the norm here.

Community members learn to respond somewhat noncommittally to comments such as this. They are only too well aware of the sometimes-thin organizational tightrope they walk in order to preserve that peacefulness for guests while trying to keep up with the accompanying administrative details that ensure a smoothly run operation. They also recognize that if pressures are allowed to build in themselves and their relationships with one another, it will soon affect those whom they are there to serve. Tensions and differences are a normal part of life for all of us. Living in community in no way diminishes this reality, so they have learned to speak openly and often of the need to forgive quickly and freely. The environment that is created as they seek to live by these principles becomes the context for hospitality.

Bob and Janet's dream of an extended family soon began operating on two levels: with those who joined them as full-time workers and those who came as guests. Each continued to be the source of joy and sadness, harmony and conflict, and always many challenges.

They knew at the outset that when King's Fold became well known and was being used as intended, they would require additional help, but they had never specifically outlined the logistics of recruitment. The nature of the centre made it difficult to advertise for help. They could almost visualize the ad in the classifieds:

"Wanted: Individuals with unlimited energy to work 16-hour days with one day off per week for errands. Must have: chef experience, mechanical mind, degree in counseling, horticultural expertise, medical and veterinary knowledge, carpentry and accounting skills, leadership qualities, the gift of teaching, musical talent, a sense of humor, and sensitivity to the needs of others. Salary \$50/month plus room and board."

It has never been the practice of the King's Fold Community or the Board to invite persons to become community members merely to maintain a certain level of staffing. In fact, during extended periods of personnel shortages, they have learned through experience, the wisdom of declining potential candidates if there has been a sense of restraint or caution against proceeding. They have likewise learned the importance of waiting for God to bring those of His choosing to their attention, together with the discernment necessary to recognize them. The process rarely happens quickly and may begin at a point where no one would have reason to suspect God's ultimate plan or purpose.

One worker's first contact with King's Fold was as a referral from her doctor in the midst of a severe emotional breakdown. She visited King's Fold periodically for a few years as gradual healing brought together the fragments of her life. The vision of King's Fold unconsciously wove itself into her heart and the question, "What do I do with my life?" was answered through a gentle but persistent nudging toward a commitment to community. Her quiet strength encouraged and ministered to guests.

Whether by invitation or by offer to serve, all staff and volunteer workers come with a unique set of gifts and abilities to contribute. By encouraging a merging and blending of these, the community receives the maximum benefit of the talent available without restricting any one individual to a particular area of expertise.

One of the most desirable qualities for a potential community member is the willingness to live adventurously. Staff must reach beyond the limits of experience to learn new skills in the kitchen, garage, office, housekeeping, library or chicken pen. Men must become as adept with a vacuum cleaner as they are with a hammer. Women might be required to clear brush on the property.

Full-time workers arrive with their own individual needs and expectations. Living in such close community invariably requires them to make significant adjustments to their lifestyle and habits, and invariably opens up sensitive growth areas. If not adequately addressed in advance, these adjustments can be an unexpected source of mounting frustration for a new member, and the community as a whole.

Loneliness and a sense of isolation are also not uncommon. The same distance from Calgary that makes King's Fold an ideal location for retreatants, becomes part of the cost to its workers. Even contact with friends in the city who lead *normal* lives becomes difficult. Also, it cannot be assumed that living at the *Fold* together facilitates a lot of *togetherness*, because of varied tasks and different days off.

Some may struggle with an opposite issue. Naturally inclined to spend time on their own, they feel pressured by continually meeting new people, and responding to old questions with grace and patience. These must be newly appropriated each day. Many have previously enjoyed the luxury of having the personal space they desired. The tension between relinquishing this as part of his or her commitment to community, yet needing it more than ever, is something each worker must resolve.

The need for individual time is common to everyone. Even a brief association with King's Fold however, is sufficient to make one very aware of the endless work involved - particularly the cycle of cooking, cleaning and laundry - which allows no seasonal respite, unlike many of the outdoor projects. If personal time is not made, it is not likely to be found, despite good intentions. The most well-ordered days have been known to harbor one unscheduled surprise after another. A bloodbath in the chicken pen courtesy of a neighborhood dog, a hot water geyser erupting at a kitchen faucet, and a carload of unexpected lunch guests, are just a few examples.

Sundays are anything but a day of rest at King's Fold, particularly after a full weekend's complement of guests has departed after lunch. Instead of the well-deserved nap to which all could do justice in the ensuing quiet, everyone is equipped with a generous supply of dust rags, furniture polish and an assortment of cleaning materials. Now the troops disperse to the far corners of the lodge to spray, scrub, vacuum and brush their way to a state of readiness for the next arrivals.

However, the community has learned the importance of maintaining their relationships with one another so that what they are able to offer to their guests is a true extension of healthy family life. One day a month, a volunteer comes to take charge of King's Fold while the staff enjoys a community day in which to talk and to play together as a family, and to interact on a level that is not always possible in the normal day to day routine. On other Wednesdays the volunteer makes lunch while the community has Worship and Staff Meeting.

It comes as a surprise to new community members that while a daily quiet time with God may have been a regular routine in their lives, it is more difficult to schedule at King's Fold. Because the day already begins with a breakfast devotional, which they take turns leading, time for personal inner maintenance is easily deferred in favor of the more tangible urgency of an overflowing laundry basket or lawn waiting to be mowed. In ways, however, God quietly reminds them individually that the work is not greater than the worker and that what they do *for* Him is not more important than what He would do *in* them.

Community members are encouraged to find regular quiet times for refocusing themselves, be it simply wandering the paths around the lodge, or enjoying the wild flowers on the hillside. Each is encouraged to attend a church or bible study whenever possible and each member has a spiritual director.

In addition, members take one, three-day personal retreat at another retreat center each year. Twice a year the entire community goes on a retreat together for renewal and visionary planning. Each Tuesday one of the staff is freed from normal responsibilities to spend the entire day in prayer for themselves and the community. At the Wednesday staff meeting they share with the others anything that God may have impressed upon them in their solitude. As well, the rhythm of

stopping for a half hour of community prayer at 3 o'clock has become very significant. The tolling of the bell that calls them to this break in the busyness is a daily reminder of who they are and what they are about.

An extended community of workers and volunteers has provided an invaluable service to King's Fold since its inception, particularly through the implementation of the Associates program. Individuals committed to the concept and ministries of the centre usually donate three or four weekends a year to assist in any way they can, from meal preparation to the cleaning blitz.

Although Associates, like the Staff, are usually too busy to experience much of a retreat, they keep coming back again and again to enjoy the scenery, meet delightful new people, and to be supportive of the community.

Chapter 8

Pets as a Community



Over the years, animals have become an integral part of life at King's Fold, their presence a natural extension of the wholeness of life that is a community goal. The story would not be complete without telling the favorite pet stories.

In the early days for Bob, his *petting zoo* and greenhouse, with a flourishing plant population, was a fulfillment of his farming dream. The pigs, however, were his pride and joy, particularly one named Marigold who never tired of a good scratch behind the ears.

Other staff were somewhat less enamored and with some encouragement from the workers, the King's Fold board eventually dropped pigs from the community roster and Marigold and friends were promoted to *baconhood*, survived by ducks, geese, rabbits, chickens and turkeys. Eventually, the 'stock' was reduced to chickens and ducks. Even that becomes quite an adventure when it is time to dispose of the old ones. It seems most people don't 'do' chickens any more.

The original Lodge pets were Tasha, a female St. Bernard/ Collie cross, and Samantha a female Russian Blue cat. Pets are regularly introduced to guests as 'staff'. Tasha and Sam were always on hand to greet guests. Both seemed to have a sense of responsibility for keeping track of the guests anywhere on or off the property. Most guests were delighted to have their company especially if they thought a bear might be in their path.

Once, Sam disappeared for three days. It was presumed that *her time had come*. Then a pastor returning from three days at the Eagle's Nest said, "There was this

gray cat who came right in and stayed with me the whole time." Samantha was back, her duty done.

Tasha's *gift of community* soon became evident as she daily checked on each person no matter where they were if only for a moment, even off the property. One guest held a highly demanding job requiring a great deal of international travel. She was not only stressed out physically and emotionally but was also experiencing a time of spiritual disorientation. She hoped her retreat might restore a sense of God's loving presence in her life. After lunch one day she expressed a desire to go for a long hike across the river. "Can I get lost?" she asked in a concerned voice. "Don't worry," said Bob, "You can always head down to the river and follow it back to the Lodge." Comforted by this council she set out and within several hours was thoroughly lost. As evening approached and the sun dropped below the mountains she began to panic. Huddled against a spruce tree feeling even more abandoned by God, she was suddenly startled by the sound of an animal approaching through the underbrush. To her astonishment the animal that appeared was Tasha.

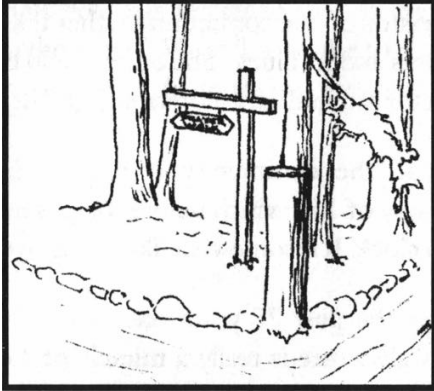
Tasha had come to lead her back to the safety of the retreat house. By now she had been gone for over five hours. How did Tasha know where she was? What instinct had set the dog off to search for her? As she hugged her furry rescuer, she was overwhelmed by a profound awareness of God's loving presence. He, too, cared for her in her state of emotional and spiritual lostness and would bring her safely home.

Tasha passed on to her reward, possibly heaven. C. S. Lewis apparently once observed that heaven could not be heaven without his beloved dogs. Tasha's passing is a lovely story.

A group of former welfare children, now young adults, were visiting King's Fold videoing "success" stories. They got to know Tasha well over two weekends. On the second weekend Tasha became very ill, so they brought her inside and covered her with a blanket and sat with her... one sat there until 3:30 am. By the next day she had died so they dug a hole in the hillside and each young person and each staff member took turns lovingly covering her with dirt and not a few tears.

Missy, a Golden Retriever, came with new community members all the way from Kansas in 1992. She quickly seemed to take on Tasha's *mantle*, greeting guests and accompanying them on walks. Some of the men got some good-natured ribbing when they were often seen driving around with *a redhead* snuggled up close in the truck. Missy left us to join Tasha in dog heaven in June, 1998. Samantha, possibly twenty, passed on in 2000 and KC a black and white cat volunteered to take Sam's place. Casey, another Golden Retriever, had severe leg injuries but recovered from surgery not only to walk with guests and entertain them by waiting patiently in the path for sticks to be thrown, but as a sort of *doggy spiritual director*. He literally directs guests to the prayer walk with strong nudges in that direction and then will sit down at each station and wait while each is read before taking them on to the next.

One guest, with very little faith, was *directed* this way and right up to the three crosses. Later, he wrote in the guest book, "I found God today." Another came with anxiety over business concerns hoping to talk to someone at the lodge. But it was Sunday morning and as no one was around, decided to go for a walk. Casey joined him, directing him along the Prayer Walk. After, he said he knew this was more what he needed than a talk. King's Fold has been blessed by *discerning* pets!



Chapter 9

The Vision Continues

Every community or associate member has felt inadequate to the task of communicating God's loving presence to those who come. And yet there are many stories of guests leaving with a new view of their value because someone ministered, even out of their own poverty. Each community member and each guest is *in process*. No one comes without some baggage, and there have been some difficult times working out community in practice.

A special time for discernment was given to the Board when there was no Director for one and a half years. The few staff who were there bravely carried on while it was determined just what role a director should have in this unusual, non-denominational retreat center. It was decided, after much prayer, that the Director should be charged with visioning and as pastor of the community rather than with also taking care of the accounts and facilities. She or he would be free to function as a Spiritual Director rather than a *hotel manager* type of Director.

Membership for all the community is not a job. It is, rather, a commitment to a way of life, which neither begins nor ends according to the dictates of a clock. It is somewhat like *living over the store*.

Looking back over the past 25 years one can only say King's Fold Retreat and Renewal Centre is really a miracle of God's grace to the larger community. There have been no wealthy people to pay the way, but rather Bob and Janet Ball risking all to bring about their dream and hundreds of wonderful people who caught glimpses of that dream and who have given generously of what they had in time,

skills or money. Bob and Janet retired from King's Fold in 1992, to move on to more creativity in Calgary.

The bridge has been washed away three times... twice just a few months after being rebuilt. The logs and gravel on the path down to the river have had to be replaced. The chickens were moved to their mansion, in 2003, complete with a mural painted by summer staff to improve their contemplation and perhaps improve their egg laying ability.

Tapestry, a five-day retreat program that is open to all people living with cancer, was started by staff of the *Tom Baker Cancer Centre* using the whole lodge five or six times a year. This has been a wonderful extension of our Mission of Hospitality. These folks have been a delight to work with and for.

Several years ago, a beautiful young lady, who had experienced abuse, was greeted at the door for her first visit. As she passed the threshold she was overcome with relief and in tears said, "I feel so safe here."

Many of God's dear people continue to pass through the doors as community members, volunteers and guests. It would be nice to tell all the stories that they represent but this would fill many books - not just one.

Through it all King's Fold has remained true to the original vision of *creating spaces for the heart*. We will continue to make this the core of our ministry and thank God each day for this great gift He has given us.

AFTERWORD

It has been three years since Irene and I were invited by the Board to give leadership to the King's Fold community.

We had been involved for eighteen years as retreatants, teachers, facilitators and friends of the Balls. Our passion for this ministry was in total agreement with the vision of the Board.

The three years since I have been Director have been guided by the slogan *Completing the Vision*. This focus was defined one warm Sunday afternoon in July 2001 when the King's Fold Board, the resident staff and Bob and Janet Ball gathered for an envisioning meeting. It soon became apparent that there was a wonderful unanimity of vision regarding the timeliness of building the chapel. We emerged from the meeting with a basic design concept and agreed to begin fundraising. I was asked to chair a Chapel Steering Committee that would see the project through to completion. A clear set of goals and objectives were agreed upon and October 13, 2003 was set rather ambitiously as the date for dedication. The meeting also emerged with plans to include a prayer garden as an extension of the chapel and a *Keeper's House* to accommodate a new person or couple who, among other things, would lovingly care for the chapel.

In September 2002 I was thrilled when nearly 140 people attended a sod-turning service for the chapel. What an exciting and monumental day!

As the current Director, I am driven by the same passion that fuelled the founders 25 years ago. Their focus was the creation of a spiritually live and welcoming community of persons who understood hospitality, friendship and how to live their faith holistically... a community that would come alongside visiting pilgrims and support them in their search for truth and wholeness. As we celebrate 25 years of ministry let us give thanks to God that He continues to bless us with such a community of people.

At the sod turning we reflected on these words from the first promotional brochure printed to launch the chapel project. The chapel and prayer garden will become the central focus of all we stand for and do at King's Fold:

*A quiet place for prayer and spiritual reflection,
A place to come aside and experience personal and small group worship,
A place nestled in the center of God's creation to hear Him speak,
A place of repentance, renewal and growth,
A place to experience the wonder of the Divine One
and to touch again the inner silence,
A place to prepare for re-entry into a busy world
with a heart rejuvenated and quieted.*

The celebration of 25 years of ministry and the dedication of the chapel on October 13, 2003 will be a defining moment for King's Fold as we *Complete the Vision*. It is also a time to look to the future with great hope and trust in God's unfolding plan.

Dr. Virgil Stauffer
September 2003

SIGNIFICANT DATES

1976	July	First meeting of the fledgling Board of Directors
	October	Land purchased for possession January 2
	October	Prayer and Praise meetings held on site
	December	First meeting with architect Roger Woods
1977	March	King's Fold incorporated under Alberta Societies Act
	June	Sod Turning Ceremony
	June	The Balls sell their home and move into garage on site
	July	Construction of the lodge begins 200 people volunteer over the next six months
1978	January	First guest welcomed
	June	Official Dedication of Facilities
1979	January	First weekend retreat held
1980		Solar greenhouse built
1981		Extension to lodge built
1982	February	The <i>Prophet's Chamber</i> opened
1983		Initiation of <i>King's Fold Associates</i> program Hillside pathway and bridge constructed Easter <i>Prayer Walk</i> opened
1984		Tim's home going
1985		Root cellar started
1986	November	Highway signs erected by Alberta Transportation <i>Eagle's Nest</i> completed
1987		<i>Hermitage</i> completed, Gazebo built Log archway entrance with sign completed

1988	May	Construction of community housing complex begins
	July	10,000 th guest is welcomed
	August	Festival of Joy and lodge mortgage burning
	December	Community housing completed
1990	June	Original bridge washed out
1991	September	New bridge built
1992	June	River goes around new bridge
	August	Bob and Janet Ball retire
1994	Fall	Extension to bridge built with steel posts
1995	June	Extension bridge washed away
1996	July	Lodge repainted
1997	July	Pathway to river rebuilt
	August	Lodge and garage roof re-shingled
	October	Bridge built from logs on the property
1998	January	Front entrance renovated
		Bathroom renovations begin
	June	Bridge washed onto gravel bar
		River moves under original (2 nd) bridge
	September	Celebrate 20-year anniversary
1999	July	New decks built
		Log patio replaced with stones
2000	January	Dining room repainted and carpeted
	May	Residence basement suite renovated
2001	March	Offices Renovated
	October	Greenhouse rebuilt and dedicated
2001	January	Sun Room built
	October	Hideaway rebuilt and dedicated
		Chapel sod turning
2003	August	Gracenotes Room built and furnished