

# Bursting at the seams

A 1970s retrospective

**C**arleton students: I hope you will treasure your precious times of fellowship at the Cottage and take some pictures. Forty years from now, you will still savor your memories. Like Jacob, who slept with his head on a rock at Bethel, you will say, “Surely, God was there.”

Carol Cover



203 Washington Street, 1971.

Another sacred place for the students who cried, rejoiced and worshipped in the early 1970s was 203 Washington Street. God was there. The home had a rich spiritual heritage; we like to say that when our real estate agent took us there, my husband Dick and I felt the palpable presence of God. It was as if angels sang.

On October 15, 1971, I cut a pan of brownies into 30 for students from Carleton and St. Olaf and a few young people from Northfield. During the previous summer, Mark Rydberg, a student at Wheaton whose roots were in Northfield; Steve Nicholson '74; an-

other Carleton student who stayed here that summer; and a high school student had come to our home to pray on Tuesday nights. They met elsewhere on the other nights of the week to pray that God would pour out His Spirit on their campuses when school began. That's exactly what happened.

In addition to gathering spontaneously on campus, students began coming to our home every Friday night. By the second week we were moving all the furniture against the walls, and by the third week we were sitting on the floor shoulder to shoulder. Dick would pray for the floor joists in the

basement while we sang “leaping and dancing and praising God.” Until January, there were 90 to 120 of us every week, peering into the large living/dining area from the kitchen, the stairway and the room behind the dining room that we called the prayer room.

That's when the two student leaders, Steve Nicholson, a Carl, and Harold Otterlie, an Ole, went to see Gordy Forbes, the pastor of the United Church of Christ. He surprised them by saying, “I'm guessing you're from the group that meets around the corner on Friday nights. You are here because you want to ask me for the use of my



church.” After they had chatted, he said, “I'll have to ask my board, but if they give me any guff I'll tell them, ‘Of course, we have to let them come. That's the price of being liberal.’”

Dick and I are blessed to have had the privilege of being part of what God chose to do in Northfield. We remember the prayer we prayed the day we first looked at 203 Washington. We were sitting in the parking lot at St. Olaf. The trees were bare, and we could see the city below. We prayed, “God, by faith we trust that you are leading us to move here. Whatever happens, we pray that it may be for the sake of your kingdom and for the unity of the body of Christ in Northfield.” In his mercy, God heard our prayer.

The students in our home loved to sing, “It only takes a spark to get a fire going ... .” Perhaps the flame that the Spirit of God ignited then will touch the whole world. Let it be so. ♦

Carol Cover, along with her husband and elderly parents, moved into a newly built townhouse on the west side of Northfield



in 1979, leaving behind nine years of memories as a eastsider. She has been married to Dick for 55 years. They have two grown children and four grandchildren.



Students gathered in the Arb for a Cannon River baptism, 1973.

“ It only takes a **spark** to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing; that's how it is with **God's love**, once you've experienced it. You spread His love to everyone, you want to **pass it on**. Kurt Kaiser