

A Short History  
of the  
St. Joseph of Arimathea  
Anglican Theological  
College and Chapel



Christine Sunderland  
*The American Church Union*  
*Berkeley, CA*

Adapted from the  
*Order of Consecration of the  
Collegiate Chapel of Saint Joseph of Arimathea,  
Berkeley, California on the  
Feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle, Eastern Calendar  
and the  
Feast of Saint Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor, Western Calendar  
Sunday, May 2, 1976  
and  
Primary Source Documents in the  
Robert Sherwood Morse Archives  
Berkeley, California*



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## **Robert Sherwood Morse and the University of California, Berkeley**



On February 22, 1951, Robert Sherwood Morse was ordained Episcopal priest on the Feast of St. Joseph of Arimathea at St. Paul's Church, Burlingame. In 1952 he established the Episcopal Chaplaincy at Stanford University, and in 1957 Bp. Karl Morgan Block appointed him Episcopal Chaplain at UC Berkeley, "charged with the establishment of an Episcopal Student Center." Fr. Morse felt this work should be centered on corporate worship in a student chapel. In the meantime, Canterbury House became the new Episcopal Student Center,

located at St. Mark's Church on Bancroft.

In 1958 Bp. Block passed away, and James Pike was elected Bishop of California. Bp. Pike did not approve of the Anglo-Catholic, sacramental vision of his young UC Chaplain.

In October 1959 property became available for purchase at the corner of Durant and Bowditch. Bp. Pike led Fr. Morse to believe that the diocese would welcome the purchase and purpose of this property, but the project was stonewalled, and meetings postponed. Nevertheless, Chaplain Morse fundraised for the chapel. By the end of 1959 he had collected funds to give to the bishop who would not return his calls. His donors needed tax receipts.

In April 1960, following legal advice, Fr. Morse formed the St. Joseph of Arimathea Foundation (SJAF) to receive these donations. The Foundation was incorporated in the State of California. The primary purpose was to "promote the teaching and practice of the Christian faith at the University of California, and for

other religious purposes.” At the first board meeting, a chapel and student center were planned, and fundraising continued.

St. Joseph of Arimathea was chosen patron saint for several reasons: he gave his own tomb for Christ’s burial, he is considered the legendary founder of English Christianity, and his feast day is the same as Fr. Morse’s ordination day, February 22.



In April of the following year, 1961, Bp. Pike “relieved” Fr. Morse of his chaplaincy, sending slanderous letters to the board members, and assigning Fr. Morse to Monterey to co-found York School later that year.

Fr. Morse continued to guide the Board as Chairman, but it became clear that the local Episcopal churches and the Diocese of California were against Fr. Morse’s vision of the student center and chapel in Berkeley.

In 1963 Fr. Morse resigned his post as Chairman of the SJAF Board, but remained a member. With the addition of Russian Orthodox board members, Prince Vasili Romanov and the Very Rev. Alexander Schmemmann, he then built a coalition of clergy from both Eastern and Western sacramental traditions, later adding Roman Catholic clergy. Episcopal services would be offered on weekdays, rather than Sundays, to assuage the Diocese of California. When the bungalow at 2543 Durant (near the corner of Durant and Bowditch) became available to rent, the Board installed the Very Rev. George Benigsen, Russian Orthodox, as Chaplain, to conduct student services.

In 1964 the Foundation purchased the property along with the corner house, 2316 Bowditch, built in 1900, remodeled as a fraternity, giving the Foundation income.

Fr. Benigsen soon reported 40-60 students attending Sunday liturgies at St. Joseph's Student Center in the bungalow. He offered counselling and lectures. The Board began fundraising for a proper chapel, creating a brochure and drawings.

Early in 1966, Fr. Morse became rector of St. Peter's Oakland. Bp. Pike now had his own battles to fight, resigning at the end of the year under threat of a heresy trial. Soon Fr. Morse was re-elected Chairman of the Board. The Board then requisitioned architectural drawings for a large chapel (adding the area of the current parking lot and the neighboring house).

By 1968, Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic clergy in residence were offering Sunday liturgies at St. Joseph's Student Center, and Fr. Morse celebrated Episcopal liturgies during the week. By 1972 the Center provided a Lenten series and weekend retreats at St. Dorothy's Rest at Camp Meeker in the Russian River area of Sonoma County. A Student Advisory Committee was created. They placed a sign in front of the Center, but it was torn down within days (see photo with Fr. Morse's niece.)



*Malia Waite, 1969, Student Center*

By 1973 the Board saw that they would not be able to acquire the fourth lot on Bowditch, and the chapel drawings were scaled down to be an extension of the "Student Center."

## The Collegiate Chapel of Saint Joseph of Arimathea

The chapel was designed, and construction supervised, by Mr. William R. Dutcher, AIA, of Berkeley. Faced with stringent space limitations, Mr. Dutcher created a barrel-vaulted collegial church (that is, a church comprising only a choir and sanctuary, without the nave common in a parish church), fifty feet long, less than twenty feet wide in its main body, and thirty feet high. Its verticality



gave the chapel the feeling of a church of the Early Christian epoch; the sensation was increased by the soft light that shafts through high clerestory windows and skylights over the northeastern transept and the southwestern aisle. The altar was the main focus of the chapel.

The chapel was built by Mr. Adolph G. Sollom, general contractor, of Oakland, California. Ground was broken and consecrated on Friday, June 28, 1974, at the Office of Vespers for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Construction began immediately and was largely completed by March 1975. The first Eucharist in the chapel was celebrated by Fr. Morse on Saturday, February 22, 1975, the Feast of St. Joseph of Arimathea and the twenty-fourth anniversary of Fr. Morse's ordination to the priesthood.

The chapel was consecrated on May 2, 1976, in a liturgy of praise, thanksgiving, petition, and sanctification, joining the Eastern and Western traditions of Apostolic Christianity. The service followed the Order of Consecration of a monastic church in Hertfordshire, England, in 1634, testifying to our deep commitment to the wellsprings of the Anglican tradition in America. The Latin *Te Deum Laudamus* was sung by the Choir of the Collegiate Chapel,

paying homage to the Roman tradition that undergirded the Western Apostolic Church for a millennium.



The Foundation, through its collegial structure, provided a ministry to Episcopalian students, educational as well as liturgical, and Eastern Orthodox services continued. The Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer were said daily in the chapel, and Episcopalian Sung Eucharists were celebrated Sunday evenings. Lecture series and educational programs increased lay awareness of the Apostolic tradition.

The collegial structure – a Collegiate Chapel staffed and directed by a Provost and Fellows – was patterned on the late medieval college (such as Oxford and Cambridge.) The Foundation's work was committed to the Provost and Fellows, responsible for the educational program and the maintenance of the chapel.

The chapel housed a newly built organ tuned to early music, owned by the University. Music students practiced and held concerts as they do today.

The principal task of the Collegiate Chapel was to respond, with learning and with liturgy, to the growing interest in religion among university students and faculty, witnessing to Christ's saving grace. The St. Joseph of Arimathea Foundation and its Collegiate Chapel served the students of one of the world's great universities and theological capitals, by offering counseling, retreats, instruction, and worship.

## Apostasy in the Episcopal Church

In September of 1976, the same year the chapel was consecrated, the Episcopal General Convention in Minneapolis enacted sweeping changes, abandoning the liturgy, spirituality, and Apostolic faith of the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*, allowing clergy to break their vows and renounce the doctrines and disciplines of the Apostolic Church.

In September of 1977 Episcopal conservatives gathered in St. Louis, Missouri and issued the “Affirmation of St. Louis,” a document confirming orthodox Christianity. Fr. Morse gave his seminal sermon, “The Long March into the Desert.” The Anglican Church in North America was born.

In 1978 Fr. Morse was consecrated bishop in Denver, assuring the Apostolic Succession and the subsequent founding of the Diocese of Christ the King (DCK). Our St. Joseph’s Foundation now supported not only the Chapel and Student Center, but this new diocese as well, no longer a part of the Episcopal Church (ECUSA). Bp. Morse could now hold Anglican services on Sunday mornings.

With these changes, the American Church Union (ACU), the Anglo-Catholic publishing group, was brought under the jurisdiction of the DCK, for Fr. Morse was President of the ACU Council. Books and pamphlets could now be stored on the Berkeley property and new orthodox materials created to serve the diocese and parishes. Fr. Morse hoped to one day open a bookstore on the property, showcasing American Church Union publications, but this did not come to fruition.





## The St. Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological College (SJATC)

The growing diocese needed clergy, trained in catholic orthodoxy. In 1979 the St. Joseph of Arimathea Theological College was founded to educate men to become priests with full Apostolic Orders in an unbroken line of Apostolic Succession, to serve in congregations of the Diocese of Christ the King.



The DCK offices took over the top floor of the Student Center, now called the New Oxford House (after the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement.) In 1984 the offices moved to a remodeled main floor of Bowditch House, now headquarters for

the SJATC, the DCK, and the ACU, a growing library, and a classroom. In time the Cal Crew (the rowing team) became residents in Bowditch House, taking the rooms above the main floor and serving Mass in the chapel, creating community and fellowship.

The work of the seminary continues today, serving the Anglican Province of Christ the King, with online classes and summer residential programs. The library, housing theology, liturgy, Scripture, and ecclesiastical history, continues to grow.

The coat of arms of the college is thus described in heraldic language: "*Gules, a chevron argent; in fess the Grail or; in dexter chief a cross patonce or; in sinister chief three nails in pile or.*"

These arms symbolize the patron saint of the Collegiate Chapel, St. Joseph of Arimathea, and the pious intentions of the College. The field represents the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, shed for our sins for our salvation. The white chevron represents the shroud in which St. Joseph wrapped our Lord's body. The golden chalice represents the Holy Grail, the cup of the Last Supper, found

by St. Joseph at the foot of the cross, containing drops of Our Lord's blood. Thus, the grail symbolizes our Eucharistic commitment. The gold cross-patonce is the chief charge on the arms of the great Abbey of Glastonbury in Somerset, England, legendarily founded by St. Joseph. The three gold nails remind us of the agony of Our Lord, but also his descent from the cross and burial by St. Joseph. But most of all, the arms testify to the empty cross and the empty tomb of the risen Christ.



## The Anglican Province of Christ the King (APCK)



The APCK was formed in 1991, with several dioceses nationwide as well as the Episcopal Heritage Center (Christ the King) in Georgetown, Washington DC. The Foundation continued to support the work of the Province, establishing St. Thomas Anglican Church in San Francisco and St. Ann Chapel at Stanford. College missions expanded to Colorado and Massachusetts. Summer camps for youth, and retreats for seminarians and the faithful, became annual events. In 2012 the seminary went online, adding a summer residential program.

There were plans for a new library building to be constructed in the present parking area. The library would house a Center for Western Civilization, with rooms for visiting lecturers and faculty. Drawings reveal the vision, but the project was not completed.

With the passing of Archbishop Morse in 2015, the seminary and chapel continued under the direction of Bp. Donald Ashman, Provost, and Fr. David Napier, Dean and Vicar. Bowditch House

was renamed Robert Sherwood Morse House in memory of our beloved Archbishop and his securing the continuance of Anglican Apostolic Christianity.

During the pandemic lockdowns, 2020-2022, liturgies continued, both online and in person, with appropriate protocols for safety. Fr. Matthew Weber became Residential Chaplain while still serving as Vicar of St. Ann Chapel, Stanford. As Chaplain, he offers counselling to the student residents in Morse House and supervises the property.

## **The Chapel Furnishings**

### *Our Lady of Vladimir*

We enter the chapel today through heavy wooden doors, recalling early basilicas. In this luminous space we see a glimmering Russian icon depicting Our Lady of Vladimir, painted by the Russo-French artist, Madame Struve, of Paris. Consecrated on May 2, 1976, the icon was donated by Prince Vasili Romanov of Russia (1907-1989). Flaming candles reflect our prayers offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary.



To the left in the entryway is Archbishop Morse's Dedication Plaque, installed with thanksgiving for his life among us.

### *The Organ*

Turning into the choir-nave, we see a pipe organ against the back wall. The property of the University, the organ was originally intended for the Old Powerhouse (today the Old Art Gallery) on campus, but remained in storage for some years because the building did not meet earthquake standards. In 1977 Professor Lawrence Moe, the University Organist, arranged with the Foundation to have

the organ placed here on indefinite loan, to be used by university faculty and students when not used for religious services.

The organ, a twelve-stop, two manual and pedal, mechanical-action instrument, was built by Jurgen Ahrend of Loga-Leer, Germany, one of the most renowned organ builders in the world by virtue of his work both in Europe and America. He reconstructed some of the greatest old European organs, using traditional principles and fine craftsmanship.



The organ is tuned to the "just temperament" dictated by the late seventeenth-century German master, Andreas Werckmeister, rendering the liturgical music of the medieval and early modern periods as it was heard then. The stucco walls, tile flooring, and high barrel-vaulting ensure outstanding acoustics.

The organ is used for recitals and concerts by faculty and students as well as for the chapel's liturgies, interweaving the needs and interests of the University and the Collegiate Chapel.

### *The Choir and Sanctuary*

Standing in the back of the chapel we look to the altar and tabernacle housing the Real Presence of Christ, signified by the lit Sanctus Lamp. A fifteenth-century crucifix hangs above. The rustic and humble corpus, carved for a crossroads in the French countryside, was found and donated by Dale Crichton, circa 1980.



The chapel interior is simple, with off-white walls, terra-cotta tile flooring, and russet barrel-vaulting. A dove, the Holy Spirit, is suspended in the northeastern transept. The high vaults focus attention on the images of God the Son in the

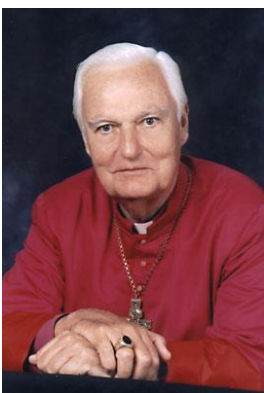
crucifix and tabernacle, and God the Holy Spirit in the dove. In this holy space, in silence or song, we are invited to meet God.



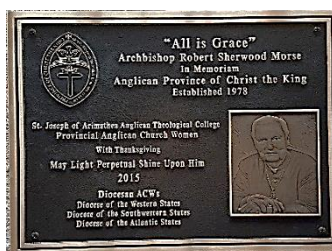
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*For more information regarding current seminary classes, admissions, and faculty, or to donate to the college or chapel, please visit our provincial website, [www.Anglicanpck.org](http://www.Anglicanpck.org).*



*The Most Reverend Robert Sherwood Morse  
(1924-2015)*



*Plaque Dedication to Archbishop Robert Sherwood Morse  
October 2015*