

# Creative community sought by UMHE coordinator

By Sarah Boslaugh

A search for a "more creative type of community" has led to the beginning of a "covenant community" at UMHE-Commonplace, 333 N. 14 st., according to the Rev. Larry Doerr, coordinator.

Six UNL students will live at Commonplace, and at least six more will be nonresident members, he said.

The six residents, chosen by a committee of Doerr, resource consultant Sue Tidball, one student, two representatives of the Commonplace Program Committee and one from the Personnel Committee, were notified of their selection about a week and a half ago, Doerr said.

For about five years, students have lived in the house and paid rent, Tidball said.

### Community with a purpose

The residents now will be starting "a community with a purpose" rather than just providing housing, she said.

Community members will spend time in various disciplines, according to Doerr. They will lead study groups on various aspects of the Judeo-Christian heritage, maintain the building and grounds, meet together to learn to relate as a group and counsel peers, perhaps "crashers"—travelers who need a place to stay and come to Commonplace.

Doerr said, "We don't want them to get so involved in the community they can't do anything else," and added that members will be more involved with life outside the community than with life within.

Commonplace is supported by five churches: the Disciples of Christ, Church of the Brethren, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church and the United Presbyterian Church. They are part of UMHE (United Ministries in Higher Education), national organization which includes other churches.

Doerr said he has been at Commonplace since fall 1970. He is a Presbyterian minister and was in campus ministry for 10 years at the University of Minnesota before coming to UNL.

### Kind of experiment

Tidball has been at Commonplace for 10 years. Formerly involved in Christian education at First Presbyterian Church in Lincoln, she said her job at Commonplace began as "a kind of experiment—they wanted to try having a woman on campus."

Tidball says she has seen cycles of change at Commonplace, beginning with a formal church setting, moving in informal and less structured activities, and back to more structured activities, as exemplified by the "covenant community."

"Ten years ago, we operated like a church on the campus," she said. "We had formal Sunday services and the students dressed up for them."

About five years ago Commonplace began to look for a more informal way to worship because "many students were turned off by the formality of our Sunday services," she said.

### Sit on carpet

The Commonplace chapel, built in the

1950s, loaned most of its pews to an Omaha church and students sit on the carpet, she said.

Doerr said Commonplace has held services in the living room and basement to try to achieve a more informal atmosphere.

These changes, Tidball said, were moves to make Commonplace less like a traditional church so they "could reach people who don't find what they want in traditional ministry."

Commonplace offers space to groups needing a place to meet, according to Doerr. Groups have included the Gay Action Group, Nebraska Civil Liberties Union and the Lincoln Draft Information Office.

The University Child Care Project also operates in space owned by Commonplace, Tidball said.

### Resource center

A resource center which contains tapes, books and articles about such things as meditation, Eastern religions and ESP is in Commonplace, according to Tidball, who said it was begun in response to student interest.

It has sponsored films through the Nebraska Union Programs Committee, including last year's "Human Potentials" series.

The six students who will live in Commonplace this year are Glenn Pflum, Mary Stumpf, Beth Ulrich, Invece Lococo, Stanley Johnson and Rebecca Brite.

Pflum, a graduate student in educational psychological counseling from Longmont, Colo., said he has been involved with UMHE since he came to UNL three years ago to begin work on his master's degree.

### Group counseling

Pflum is working on his Ph.D. and would counsel groups of college students in life planning workshops and consciousness raising.

The concept of "sharing combined with personal growth" at Commonplace interested him, he said, and that he hoped to develop peer counseling through contact with the other community students.

Lococo, a junior English major from Roca, said he has been associated with UMHE for four years and was the building's janitor in 1972-73.

He said he first came to the building when the Gay Action Group met there and said Commonplace "has helped me work through the problems of being gay so I could go on to a more important

problem—human liberation."

### Became involved

Lococo said he became involved in other activities at Commonplace and attended several weekend retreats and Sunday community services.

He intends to study psychology in graduate school and hopes to learn counseling skills through the covenant community program, he said.

Commonplace will be moving in two main directions, Doerr said. Leaders "want to be a campus ministry rather than just a student ministry" by involving faculty members and other campus people in their programs, he said.

Secondly, they want to "see the university and community together rather than isolated from each other."

### Unique position

Commonplace occupies what Doerr called a "unique position" because it is adjacent to campus but not university owned or operated. Because of this, "we can help students identify with the adult world rather than as a special group, and we can help get community members to the campus and involved with the university," he said.

To this end, Doerr said, Commonplace will begin a Sunday evening program which "will aim to bring people together to discuss issues of concern to both the campus and the community."

The program will begin Oct. 5 and last two months, and will be run again in February and March.

## daily nebraskan

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