Conclusion

Death is our society’s most daunting rite of passage. Even those of us who believe in an afterlife mourn the passing of our family, friends and neighbors. Sometimes we mourn more for ourselves, because death has taken away the person we love. Sometimes there is an overwhelming fear for the loved one and what they will experience in the beyond. Death causes us to consider our own mortality. The afterlife is an unknown; it can be difficult to be happy for the person who moves on to that mysterious world. I suggest that Architecture can celebrate death in a way that human beings can not.

In conclusion, this thesis project is a celebration of life’s journey; death is the culmination of that journey. Architecture with its complex association of rooms and spaces mimics life; every little jog, every change in direction is what makes each life unique. Therefore, Architecture can celebrate life’s journey through attention to the detailing of transitional, or threshold spaces, within a building. Whereas the birthing center is a celebration of the initiation of life, the Holistic Center represents a celebration of the culmination of life.

The theories of Herman Hertzberger have been integral to my own study of transitional spaces. His ideas on “the in-between”, “the habitable space between things” and “the living street” are key to my own design philosophy. I have tried to design spaces that have many different uses taking care, wherever possible, not to leave uninhabitable spaces which might “…degenerate into dark and smelly corners where only rubbish collects and cats roam.
The Great Hall, Library Hall, Meditation Hall and the Quilt Wall are all corridor spaces which I have designed as indoor “living streets”. These spaces encourage both movement and respite. Each of these spaces fulfills at least two specific programmatic requirements. Each corridor space provides built-in seating along the walls and ramps, natural light, spaces for individual study and group interaction. These spaces also act as transition spaces between the three main wings of the building. Within each wing of the building there are additional transition spaces which add further complexity and interest for the residents.

The theories of Louis Kahn have also played a significant role in my design philosophy. His ideas regarding the importance of natural light have been studied in this thesis project as well. I attempted to create a different quality of light for each wing of the Holistic Center. I placed each space according to its programmatic requirements but also according to the direction of the sun. The Chapel and other sacred spaces require natural light throughout the day from sunrise to sunset. The Research Wing requires more eastern, morning light than the Residence Wing. I used various window sizes and shading devices to add a further dimension to the quality of light. A brise soleil at the South wall of the Meditation Chapel, controls the penetration of light into the space, but also creates various patterns and textures as the day progresses. Thin, vertical ribbon windows in the sacred wing of the building allow east and west light into the building, but more importantly allow views out of the building toward the city and Rock Creek Park. The stained glass windows at the brise soleil and ribbon windows add yet another dimension of experience to the Chapel space. At night, the variety of apertures creates a wonderful lantern effect to be viewed by the public from all directions.