

TOWARD A CONGREGATION

WITHOUT WALLS

By

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Scope and contents:

The first part of this thesis is an examination of  
the condition of the contemporary church and a study of two  
specific congregations engaged in programs of renewal and  
outreach within a modern metropolitan area.

In the light of this, the latter part deals with our  
need for action in the world outside the walls of the  
institutional church.

## PREFACE

During the summers of 1967 and 1968, the writer taught for the Canada Manpower Adult Education Centre in Hamilton. The students come to this educational program from a variety of life situations which are often tragic. The writer also worked in a public office for ten years prior to entering university, where there was an opportunity to encounter lives of confusion and desperation. Reflecting on the sorts and conditions of life met and experienced in these situations, the writer grew more conscious of the fact that our churches are not ministering effectively in areas of intense needs. We have become walled in the traditions and structures of institutional exclusivism.

In preparing the material, the writer felt a need to study churches engaged in renewal programs; he wanted to become involved, as much as time would make possible, in the action of a concerned ministry that included committed laymen.

The original plan for this study changed as the work progressed. It was necessary to make substantial revisions and additions as the writer's thought on the mission of the church was sharpened and clarified.

What is contained in the following pages is not intended to be an answer to the problems confronting the

twentieth-century church. There will be the necessity for renewal and change within the church as long as we seek to present Christ to the world. Yet the writer feels that this project has given him a new concept of the meaning of "ministry" in which he can work and on which he can build.

R. G. L.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Christian church is caught in a dilemma. It would be redundant to elaborate on the fact that we are living in an age of mobility, industrial reformation, affluence, and social change. Modern media of mass communications are reminding us daily that the whole of civilization is experiencing a radical change with both positive and negative ramifications. We may view a modern city as a concentrated study in the unequal effects a variety of conflicting forces can have on different persons and groups, in a highly organized and rapidly changing industrialized society. The social problem creates a concern for all and, in one way or another, involves everyone in its consequences. To a study and analysis of the emerging social problems of an urbanized and technological society, the churches must give serious and thoughtful attention. Their dilemma is that they too are involved in the current urban technological revolution. But not only for this reason should they express concern and bring to the problems of the times a competence instructed by the Christian faith, but primarily because they have the awesome task of being servants of the eternal Christ. They must conduct their reconciling ministry precisely within a highly complex urbanized and industrial environment.

The sense of frustration and failure with which Churches in Metropolis have faced the complexities and the Sisyphean character of the problems with which they are compelled to deal--unless, of course, they simplify their situation by escaping into a pietistic interpretation of their role and ministry--must now be courageously and hopefully dealt with by giving themselves to a prayerful and profound consideration of the theological implications of the "new creation"--Metropolis.<sup>1</sup>

Take the matter of evangelism and social concern. A group of writers in our time equate social concern and evangelism. They insist that the old evangelistic method of emphasis on the conversion of the individual is too slow, and hence irrelevant. The real message for our day, they say, is one that concentrates on alleviating human misery and also devotes itself to the changing of power structures of the world. This to them is evangelism, this is mission. Any message that centres in the life-changing power of the gospel of Christ is considered as obsolescent nineteenth-century piety.

Granted, this is an over-simplified description of the position. But it is fairly accurate, and we are shocked by such extremism--not because there are no elements of truth in it, but because at the core it distorts the teaching of our Lord, and omits the heart of his message.

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<sup>1</sup>Jesse Jai McNeil, Mission In Metropolis (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 29.

We flee from this "unscriptural extreme," and run so far in the other direction that we are in danger of subscribing to another equally "unbiblical extreme." Many Christians reacted violently to the social gospel of the early twentieth century and instead proclaimed a message that had no social dimension at all. In order to present a Biblical message, some churches are currently overemphasizing personal salvation, assuming that social concern is automatically linked with conversion. This too is an unbiblical position.

If I had to choose between these two extremes, I would choose the latter, because however unbalanced it may be, it is nearer to New Testament teaching than the former. Fortunately, I do not have to make this choice. Neither extreme does justice to the true Christian position. Both are false extremes. In the Biblical sense it is not necessary for us to choose between evangelism and social concern. Christ honored both and showed that they could be kept in proper balance. We know him best when our message is characterized by his concern for the individual spiritual needs of men, and by his compassion for man's suffering and deprivation.

Our concern here is not to quarrel with those who have lost sight of the New Testament message. That extreme position has amply demonstrated the poverty of its own



approach. We ought to be concerned about those who think that there is an antithesis between meeting the spiritual and physical needs of men, those who profess to have convinced themselves that this concern detracts from their preaching of "the gospel of Christ."

To be sure, we have not always made this false distinction between what was designated as spiritual need and what was called physical. In the past, Christians recognized that the love of Christ needed to be demonstrated as well as preached. They acknowledged the wisdom of the apostle John's words that love must be expressed in deeds as well as words.<sup>2</sup> The greatest preachers and missionaries have been men and women who proclaimed the gospel of Christ with power and coupled their teaching with a passionate concern for the hungry, naked, and underprivileged.

Why is it then that in our own century extremists have feared the social dimension of the gospel?

There were a number of somewhat valid reasons for this unscriptural trend. Some churches have feared that if they gave too much attention to man's physical and social needs, they would be spending their time and energies on what the Scriptures taught was secondary. Moreover, they reasoned it was foolish to give time to problems with no solution this side of Christ's return. Impressed by such arguments, many

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<sup>2</sup>I John 3:17,18.

paid pious lip-service to the totality of man's needs but convinced themselves that it was sinful to spend too much time on social needs in our preaching or daily living. The result was an unbiblical message that was far less effective than it might have been.

Christians who attempt to be neutral toward the social issues of their day are in effect saying at least two things. Their action implies, first, that their spiritual message is totally irrelevant to practical problems, except, perhaps, as it might change the motivation and aspirations of individuals who respond to it. . . . Secondly, an attempt to be neutral through a policy of inaction also conveys, implicitly, an endorsement of the status quo. It puts one in the position of seeming to bless or sanctify evil leaders, institutions and practices instead of exposing and condemning the works of darkness. Christians above all others ought not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2).<sup>3</sup>

George Webber points out that frequently the church has lived in a self-constructed ghetto, cut off from life around it, with the result that "there is no tension between the church and the world because a highly secularized Christian church is cheerfully accepted by a pseudo-Christian society."<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, Christians have been re-examining their

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<sup>3</sup>David O. Moberg, Inasmuch (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>George W. Webber, The Congregation in Mission (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 42.

own position, and many have seen that to try to separate evangelism and social concern is to settle for a clearly sub-biblical alternative. They have taken a fresh look at the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. He never ignored or minimized human need of any kind. Indeed, he refused to try to make the subtle distinction between the physical and spiritual that we so often use to justify our one-sided outlook and emphasis.

A renewed study of church history makes it plain that whenever the church was functioning at its best, there was no artificial divorce between the proclamation of its saving gospel and the explanation of that gospel's social implications. Then, too, Christians have been realizing that even converted men and women do not automatically understand the implications of their new-found faith unless its implications are presented to them in a teaching-learning situation. It is possible for an individual believer to fail to see the connection between his love for God and his responsibility to his fellow men unless it is pointed out to him--not just once but many times.

The relationship between our mission and our social concern is made doubly important by current revolutionary times. We cannot hope for a sympathetic hearing of the gospel if people feel that we have no concern for their physical needs. A whole generation of young people in Latin America has been turned against religion because for four

centuries the state church has seemed indifferent to many of the basic needs of the people. If the lack of social concern brings the same judgment on our message here in Canada, we will have only ourselves to blame if we cannot get an audience.

The church is not an accidental, secondary element in the Christian faith--as if God had really willed to save individuals, who through misguided gregarious instinct and evil power-impulses mistakenly formed for themselves a community of worship. Rather. . .the church. . .is a fundamental part of the divine purpose, willed by God and established by him just as much as the Incarnation itself. . . . The church therefore, is a vital part of the gospel itself.<sup>5</sup>

The dilemma confronting the church today is that it has ceased to be relevant in its present form. The church no longer can exist in contemporary urban society as the self-centred, exclusive institution it has become. We have been guilty of withdrawing from the world into an ecclesiastical shell. The time has come when the walls behind which we have been sheltering our faith must be torn down. There is a world outside for which we must be concerned. This is an age of reformation and every aspect of life is caught up in it. A comparable reformation has begun to liberate us from our rigid and uncritical views of the form of church life.

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<sup>5</sup>Langdon Gilkey, How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 60,61.

We see not only the wording of the message but the shape of the community as flexible, unfixed, and open to constant transmutation. The underlying theological insight here is that God lives for man within history, not beyond it in some fixed and timeless realm. Although there is "no shadow of turning" within God, his changelessness is not a platonic ideal but a fidelity within history, an unswerving loyalty to his human covenant partner amidst the ceaseless movement of men and nations. Therefore, faith in this God not only allows but requires a continuing reformation of Christian existence and church life."<sup>6</sup>

If the church is to experience a modern reformation and a renewal that finds expression in mission to contemporary society, it will have first to examine its own structures with a view to putting its own house in order. It is, therefore, to an examination of the twentieth-century urban church institution and its organizational structures that we now turn.

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<sup>6</sup>Harvey Cox, in his introduction to Stephen C. Rose, The Grass Roots Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. x.

# I

## WITHIN THE WALLS

The church, as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, is the instrument that God created to speak and act for Him in each generation. Our human response to His calling us to be His people and servants produced the church as an institution, with its organizational and denominational divisions. As any perceptive person realizes, there is often conflict between the church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the church as institution. As institution, the church faces the temptation of being more concerned about itself than about God and His purposes for His people.<sup>1</sup>

Authorities and commentators on urban affairs have noted the fact that skyscrapers and taller office and apartment buildings in the modern city almost completely obliterate the church steeple. When we look at a picture of any nineteenth-century Canadian city, we observe that, if it was a seaport, behind the forest of masts at the waterfront could be seen a forest of steeples and towers marking the meeting places of various congregations. If it was an inland city, only those buildings which were built

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<sup>1</sup>Reuel L. Howe, Herein Is Love (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1961), p. 106.

on higher ground seemed to stand taller than the steeples. The twentieth-century city gives almost no hint of the location of its places of worship, even when seen from the air. And seen from the ground by people on its sidewalks and streets, the city obscures the buildings which are the base of operations for members of the church fellowship. The average passerby scarcely notices the church's buildings, and he is seldom urged by its presence alone to enter and worship or take part in the life of its people.

We have today what is called public worship in most congregations. But it is not really public; it is private, and, because there is almost no free exchange of insight and conviction, it tends<sup>2</sup> also to be static and stagnant.

The church of the modern city has become self-centred, exclusive and egocentric, constantly seeking to save itself. Called to exist in the world, the church has succumbed to its influence and accommodated itself to the cultural climate. "The church is no longer changing culture, but being changed by culture."<sup>3</sup> Because of this yielding to secular influences there has resulted a lack of zeal and sense of urgency concerning mission. Since popular opinion does not

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<sup>2</sup>Stephen C. Rose, The Grass Roots Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Robert A. Raines, New Life In The Church (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 14.

support enthusiastic individual mission, Christians have relinquished their responsibility for outreach. The church, consequently, is contained within the limits of its structural and institutional walls, absorbed in conformity and afraid of its mission.

The church becomes the mouthpiece of the people instead of the voice of God. The church, which is meant to be at tension with the customs and traditions of every culture, changes her protective coloring like a chameleon to suit the environment she is in. Indeed, "The time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God" (I Peter 4:17).<sup>4</sup>

### Churches

Churchmen today ought to take heed of the severe criticisms levelled at the institutional church by those who observe from outside the Christian community. George W. Webber refers to an executive, much travelled in cities, who wrote:

In going about the country over a long period of years, I have had opportunities to observe many churches. One thing has impressed me and given me great concern. Despite all its protestations that the church stands as the servant of the people, most churches, except on Sunday, are difficult to get into.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 17.



They stand seemingly aloof and inaccessible. Their doors are closed.<sup>5</sup>

A strong indictment, but, nevertheless, true of the majority of churches which dot the neighbourhoods in every metropolitan area.

The church of the twentieth century has become big business with staggering financial investments in property and buildings. Behind the walls of the stately old shrines of the inner city, and the contemporary, stylized churches of suburban communities, exists a quiet stagnation. While the world in which the churchman lives and is influenced, ebbs and flows, and continually develops, the church clings with unyielding determination to traditions that have long ceased to meet the needs of modern man.

Central in the concerns of many congregations, is the building which houses the fellowship. Committees of men and women are dedicated to keeping the building in good repair and preserving it from being used by 'outside' groups for 'secular' activities. The building in a sense constitutes an object of worship, an icon that contributes to the alienation existing between the church and the world.

The nature of our often over-active program creates a barrier to both meaningful worship and missionary outreach.

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<sup>5</sup>George W. Webber, The Congregation In Mission (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 30.

Many of our organizations are reminiscent of local service clubs, affording little or no opportunities for either Christian nurture or sharing. The organizational structures of the church today are elaborate and complicated, a big ecclesiastical bureaucracy. Ecologically and administratively it seems good sense for churches to organize in a complex fashion. Otherwise, in a technological age of large-scale organizations and centralized agencies, the churches would be like a Model-T Ford in competition with a Thunderbird as a means of rapid and long distance motoring.

The career of all organizations, however, reveals that the fulfillment of inherent needs too often become their highest, even their only, goal. Their structures and forms become sacred and irrevocable, and the interpretation of the primitive faith and doctrines set forth by the leaders of a past generation or era is declared to be peremptory.

. . . while we recognize the necessity of large-scale ecclesiastical organizations, their centralized agencies, and the efficiency and economy they encourage, we see that they have been less successful in producing enduring personal satisfaction and in encouraging creative expression. . . .<sup>6</sup>

The church has become unusually content to grow in

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<sup>6</sup> Jesse Jai McNeil, Mission in Metropolis (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 39.

physical structure and in favor with its immediate environment. Therefore, a loss of mission appears in the local church. The whole idea of outreach is delegated to a "Committee on Missions", which concerns itself largely with the financial support the church gives to foreign and home missions. This "segregation of concern"<sup>7</sup> frees ninety-nine percent of the fellowship from a sense of personal responsibility. Corporate irresponsibility replaces individual concern.

### Groups

In what has been called the space age, church membership clearly gives the appearance of being a gregarious and stylish success. Across Canada, congregations seem to have formulated a robust church-clubhouse arrangement that flourishes on a diet of expansion, committees, fund-raising, and group meetings. All the elements found in modern secular organizations are found within the framework of church membership. The middle-aged and affluent form the small ruling group which retains power year after year. Voicing loudly the failures of those in authority are the complainers and the disenchanted, while a group of bemused, loyal or timid parishioners supports those in authority. Then there

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<sup>7</sup>Raines, op. cit., p. 15.

is the majority, those who are not inclined to form any strong opinions at all, by reason of apathy or frustration.

Every congregation contains a polarity of interpretations of faith, from those who are serene in the central purpose, the worship of God, to those whose membership in the church is a means by which they may attain social or material advancement. Groups do not find strength in a sense of community. The church fellowship in many respects has become "A closed club where one person constantly takes the other's spiritual temperature. . ."<sup>8</sup>

Critics outside the church's walls, as well as inside them, have been claiming that its principal fault is its failure to join the world. There is a perplexing detachment between churches and even immediate community needs. Some members lament the fact that their particular church is free of all debt and that there is, therefore, nothing for which to invest their money and time. We tend to keep our congregations busy by putting additions on already huge churches, fund-raising to keep men active. While these people form our property committees, and extension boards, others complain that there is too little concern expressed for the world. They become another committee to investigate the appalling conditions under which the Canadian Eskimos

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<sup>8</sup>J. C. Hoekendijk, The Church Inside Out (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 125.

live, as indicated in a television documentary program. There is general agreement that it is indeed a shameful situation, then they move on to a more immediate concern, consideration of retiling the church-hall floor.

. . . picture yourself as the rector of a thriving suburban parish, throbbing with coffee hours and scout troops. Yet whenever you suggest a prayer group or intensive Bible study, whenever you attempt to lead the congregation into an awareness of responsibility toward social problems on their doorsteps, the response is sickening. Somehow, somewhere along the line our church had ceased to communicate with the people.<sup>9</sup>

A strange unreality pervades the social structure of many churches. Instead of universal brotherhood, the keynote often is social and financial status. There seems to be an uncanny sense of satisfaction in having the community's leading lawyer or politician as head usher.

To be a successful middle-class person is to perform adequately. To be a middle-class Christian is to perform well on the committee. Thus, the organization church is the community of good works--the new style of salvation by works which has invaded the Reformation churches.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Paul Moore, Jr., The Church Reclaims The City (New York: Seabury Press, 1964), p. 29.

<sup>10</sup>Gibson Winter, The Suburban Captivity Of The Churches (New York: MacMillan Company, 1962), p. 117.

The 'in-group' takes a majestic attitude to the work it does for the church. Its members revel in decision-making and heading committees called together to perform specific tasks. They seldom, if ever, are attracted to accept responsibility for the humdrum, repetitious tasks. The result is that the constant and unappreciated duties of leading midweek activities or teaching Sunday School classes fall, by default, to people of lesser abilities. Since the bulk of the fellowship cannot attain or even aspire to the prestige positions on the scale of leadership and noted efforts, it simply has no time for what seem to be unglamorous chores. Unfortunately it is among the latter group that are to be found the humanitarians of the community, who are frequently too occupied with Christian living to give time to the smallness within the church.

The mark of the primitive church was social inclusiveness--rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, slave and free. The characteristic of the church of the metropolis is exclusiveness. The exclusive congregations of major denominations advertise themselves as "Friendly churches" and put a premium on the friendly handclasp, warm cup of coffee, and something for everyone to do. Despite this warmth of sentiment, the typical congregation is a very homogeneous social and economic grouping.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

By its exclusiveness the church is denying itself the dynamic experience of encounter and proclamation. Fellowship groups of all kinds are renewable; existing structures are renewable. These groups, however, have become vehicles of compromise through which churchmen are deluding themselves and escaping the responsibility for vital Christian living. While the Canadian church invests millions of dollars annually in building programs, and maintenance, the walls of complacency, tradition and exclusiveness grow higher and thicker. Men and women whose faith has been cloistered by these walls are suffering from spiritual malnutrition. The present program of organization in our churches requires immediate, critical examination. It is not too late to reassess the goals of the church's educational program with the view to restating those goals in terms of the felt needs of the congregation and community.

The most constructive suggestion for improving the participation of more church members is that each congregation strive to be more relevant. Committees and study groups should include men, women, and teen-agers; projects should be family ones. To rid itself of its aura of stagnancy, the individual church might endeavour to work towards inclusiveness and become active in the neighbourhood. It is no coincidence that stained-glass windows let lovely light into a church but are dark and undiscernable to those outside.

### Members

There is no single crisis confronting the twentieth-century church more devastating than that which has occurred as a consequence of the average church member's growing frustration regarding the meaning of church membership. The organized, institutional church has developed a morbid complacency, complete with all the accompanying symptoms of exclusiveness, boredom and purposelessness. It is true, of course, that there are still those churchmen who represent the faithful remnant, but they are certainly in the minority. For years church leaders have been ignoring the symptoms of sickness in the 'body of Christ'. They have been impressed by increasing budgets and numerical growth, new buildings and expensive furnishings. Church membership has become a comfortable shelter of spiritual ease for many people.

Most people who are church members are quick to assert that their church means much to them and that they wouldn't know what to do without it. These same people reluctantly are forced to admit that they do not know what to do with it. They are aware of the difficulties and perplexities confronting the church in contemporary urban society and the need for change. If the church is to speak to the outsider, or vitally to involve those who are already on the inside there will have to be changes



made in the present structures of Protestant denominational life.

The ecclesiastical establishment is forcing young people, brought up within its walls, to leave at the very first opportunity. These individuals consistently refuse the invitation to return to worship and they reject the church for perfectly plausible reasons. Stephen C. Rose draws a portrait of one of these persons, offering the following characteristics:

1. He is concerned about social issues. He feels the Church is not.
2. He is busy and seeks to be a good steward of his time. He feels his time is better spent elsewhere than "in church."
3. He is tasteful and discriminating. He feels that the Church is trivial and banal.
4. He feels that he can practice what religion he has without joining and participating in the activities of the Church.
5. He cares about big issues--life and death, the meaning of work and vocation, the nature of personal relationships. He does not feel that the Church provides resources for meeting or even discussing these problems.<sup>12</sup>

Our cities are filled with people like this person who are not challenged by the church. Their criticisms are all too often valid yet go unheeded while the urban congregation stubbornly defends its exclusive community. Sunday follows Sunday and the ritual continues, inflexible

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<sup>12</sup>Rose, op. cit., p. 31.

and unapproachable to metropolitan man. We no longer speak the language of the people or deal with relevant issues. There is little opportunity in our present structure for personal involvement, dialogue, education or mutuality. The church's greatest hope for renewal, its only potential force, is the laity. Large numbers of lay people who are immersed in the institution feel, quite wrongly, that there is nothing they can do.

Once the laity realizes that it is within their power as trustees, officers, and voting members to work at the grass roots for constructive, ecumenical renewal, once the laity realizes that there is no other force in the Church that can truly do this job, once the laity sees the possibilities for action inherent in the cooperative-ministry approach . . . once these things occur, the tide of irrelevance may turn, and a truly exciting movement may develop.<sup>13</sup>

We have long suffered from a chronic ailment which Russell Bow describes as "numerical neurosis."<sup>14</sup> The number of names on our church rolls has increased and this is not too difficult to accomplish in our culture. The task of bringing these persons into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ has been neglected. Churches which allow members to join with a friendly handshake unaccompanied by the benefit

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>14</sup>Russell Bow, The Integrity Of Church Membership (Waco: Word Books, 1968), p. 29.

of counselling or training, frequently find members attending only on the Sunday they join. Free and easy Christianity is not the real thing; the mad scramble for statistical success sometimes borders upon complete dishonesty. Consequently fewer people respect the church; the church has lost its witness; and church members have lost sight of the central purpose of their fellowship.

Too often we become so actively involved in performing administrative and domestic tasks in the church that we fail to realize the full implication of being ambassadors for Christ. By becoming engrossed in the mechanics of operating the institution, members are able to escape the demands of honest commitment.

The basis of integrity of membership in the church is to be found in the rediscovery of what it means to be disciples of our Lord, the people of God, members of the body of Christ, and members one of another. It is herein that we have defined for us the meaning of commitment, the meaning of mission, and the meaning of our life together.<sup>15</sup>

We began this chapter by suggesting that the church has become ingrown, imprisoned by walls of self-centredness and exclusiveness. The church has relinquished its position of influence and has conformed to modern secular life. By

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

failing to become extroverted, and by being deaf to the cries of the metropolis rather than risk abandoning its protective walls, the church has ceased to be a real presence in the world. Our present structures are inadequate to meet the complex and diversified needs of modern urban society. It is important that we recognize the need for a more relevant church and that we become engaged in the process of renewal. Renewal begins as the church finds its mission beyond the sanctuary walls.

Renewal is possible and is taking place in a number of Canadian congregations. To illustrate how some churches are experimenting in outreach and education for change, and experiencing a new sense of vitality and urgency for mission, we shall consider the efforts of two Toronto churches.

## II

### OUTSIDE SOME WALLS

#### An Urban Experiment

The Church of the Holy Trinity is an Anglican parish located in the heart of Toronto's business district. Trinity Square, a little lane which runs but a few hundred feet from busy Yonge Street, leads into a very old and rundown quadrangle of tired buildings. Two alternate routes lead out of the square both of which are alleys. The Square is lined with the backs of old warehouses; large vans and piles of packing cases stand at their loading docks. In the midst of all this commercial activity stands the century-old building of Holy Trinity.

Advancing years have been cruel to what was once an impressive structure. It seems that as the venerable old church slept, a city grew up around it, crowding, suffocating and forgetting its very existence. The aesthetic quality of the building's exterior and setting is an adequate forecast of what is to be found within its bastille-like walls. The sanctuary is a large, cavernous room, as shadowy and mysterious as our recollection of the era that produced it. How could life exist in this unimpressive edifice located

in the heart of Canada's second largest metropolitan area; how could it possibly discover the secret of being born again?

Sometimes a reluctance to change can be tempered by extreme threat; the threat of annihilation. Several years ago Holy Trinity came face-to-face with the facts of twentieth-century urban flexibility. The church became frighteningly aware of its symptoms of decline not only in numbers but in its effectiveness as a witnessing community. A committee was formed to consider what the purpose and function of Holy Trinity should be. Two points emerged which have led the committee to put forward a proposal for the re-organization of the life of the congregation. The two points were:

1. A wide diversity of beliefs among the members of the committee, which reflects the diversity of beliefs in the congregation as a whole. For some members, traditional forms of worship provide an essential source of strength by which they carry on their daily work; for others they have become meaningless. Some find the concept of God almost without meaning; others can subscribe to every clause of the creed. Amid all this divergence, the committee found that they agreed on three things.

- (a) That the life of Jesus provides a focus for their lives.

(b) That they value very highly the fellowship they have with other members of the congregation.

(c) That the congregation must be outward-looking as well as inward-looking.

2. The inadequacy of the present organization, in which the responsibility lies with the rector and church wardens, while the rest of the congregation are denied their share of responsibility. This situation bears little resemblance to St. Paul's picture of the church in I Corinthians 12, where he compares it to a body in which each organ has its own particular function and each is essential to the well-being of the body.<sup>1</sup>

With these two points in mind, the committee endeavoured to draw up a plan for the life of the congregation so that there might be room within it for people of widely different beliefs, and so that as many members of the congregation as are willing to do so might share in the responsibility for its life, and come to regard themselves as ministers with their own particular ministry to perform. The congregation was beginning to see itself as a fellowship of people committed to one another who, through their life together and its focus on the life of Christ, must conscientiously

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<sup>1</sup>A condensation from a report submitted to the Church of the Holy Trinity by its Christian Education Committee in 1966.

strive to grow in love and in the discovery of the fullness of their humanity. As this growth began to take place, a quickened pulse was felt in the heart of the parish life finding expression in concern for the needs of people outside the congregation.

The Church of the Holy Trinity, aware of itself as a fellowship in a changed community, found it absolutely essential to take a realistic and critical look at its ministry to that community. Change does not come easily to a church with a tradition which spans a century and a quarter. Realizing this, the church took the initial steps in a program of education for mission. It was the beginning of a new sense of dedication and commitment for the entire fellowship that would necessitate the corporate adventure of risk and involvement. The congregation was consulted and made a responsible part of every assessment and proposed plan for changes in organization, program, and outreach. Now the fellowship meets together on Sunday morning to discuss the various activities and to break bread together. This breaking of bread is a symbolic meal expressing the family's desire for unity, common life and purpose.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The similarity between this meal and the Last Supper is obvious, but it should not be called Eucharist or Communion. These last words will continue to represent the traditional forms of service which take place at other times.



Gradually as enthusiasm developed in the parish for the task of renewal; as members became aware of the potential and untapped resources of their unique situation. This enthusiasm was carefully tempered by an increasing consciousness of the magnitude of the work ahead. A group of people made a very detailed study of the surrounding community to determine exactly what action was needed. In connection with that study, the church made a thorough examination of its own resources. The results of these investigations indicated that a number of important considerations were necessary before any actual program of involvement could begin.

Out of their new awareness of the complexity and extent of the social needs of the community, the people of Holy Trinity set about assessing their resources with an eye to meeting some of those needs. They found that it involved a careful look at the available leadership, and some serious consideration regarding the recruitment of new leaders. Because the work to be undertaken would be of a diverse and emotionally demanding nature, it was essential that the leaders be selected for specific positions and that, in some cases, recruits be rejected for the sake of their own well-being and that of the group to which they might be assigned.

An important realization, which came early to the fellowship, was that it would be impossible to launch a new

program geared to mission and outreach, capable of meeting all the needs of the whole community. A conscious awareness of limitations both in facilities and manpower was important if the work was to be effective. Closely related to the question of providing adequate and well-trained leadership was the problem of finding suitable locations for the various proposed programs.

The church building itself will be considered a little later; let it therefore be sufficient to mention here that apart from the sanctuary, there were no available meeting rooms. As a result, the church experienced one of those surprising revelations which added a new dimension to its plan. Whether they were aware of it or not, the people of Holy Trinity had been willing, indeed eager, to meet the needs of the community with the unarticulated, yet accepted fact that there was a condition. The community would have to come to the church. Seeing this as an absolute impossibility the fellowship resolved to find other strategically located places, and hence, move out in mission to meet people where they are. The results were twofold. First, because some of the groups would have to use rented or borrowed facilities, a more flexible and varied program could be offered. Second, the congregation of Holy Trinity saw a need to take a critical look at the church building and to see just how effectively it was being used.

Two buildings on Trinity Square adjacent to the church had been vacant for some time. They were three story town houses, built about the same time as the church, which bore fading allusions to the gracious upper-middleclass life of that era. A large department store chain owns these buildings and agreed to lease them to Holy Trinity. One building is now being used for administration with offices for the Rector, treasurer, secretary and program directors; the other is called Scadding House, named after the first rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity. More will be said about these as we consider specifically the ways in which they are being used.

The most difficult phase of the church's renewal concerned the use of the sanctuary for activities other than worship services. As might be expected, many members, some representing fourth and fifth generations of families in the church, resented the possibility that secular groups might exploit their house of worship. The fellowship met regularly to discuss how the facilities could be adapted most effectively to accommodate a greater variety of activities. Some members, at first strongly opposed to non-traditional forms of worship and the secular use of the sanctuary, gradually recognized that change was necessary if the church was to fulfill its mission. Many of them caught the excitement that was increasing among those who were anxious to become involved in the new life of the fellowship. Others, absolutely against

any form of change, found the proposals so intolerable that they elected to leave the congregation and join other fellowships which continued to practice more traditional liturgies. Any change that threatens to interfere with the regimen of life, seems to force the members of that particular society or social group to choose either to accept the change or seek out another group. Holy Trinity had to make a choice which would affect its very survival; change or cease to exist. In electing to inaugurate its program of change, the church had to risk losing some of its membership.<sup>3</sup>

A number of people, interested in new forms of worship incorporating contemporary language and music, requested that there be services designed to attract young people. These services were begun, not with the intention of replacing traditional 'Book Masses' but to meet an expressed desire for free expression. A new platform was built below the main altar with a roughly-cut communion table as a focal point. Groups from other churches came regularly to perform Folk Masses and with some very positive results. These services are well attended; the participants requesting more opportunities to be involved in worship. The congregation stands along the periphery of the platform throughout the mass,

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<sup>3</sup>It must be noted here that the program of renewal began not months, but years ago and progress came slowly and not without some painful errors.

facing one another, singing together, and having the freedom to respond to the experience of communal worship by either standing or kneeling. Groups of young adults meet regularly to plan their own services utilizing available talent both musical and literary.

Last year a number of young men came to Toronto from the United States. Their reason for coming to this country aroused considerable negative feeling among their own people as well as their would-be hosts. These men had the somewhat unglamorous distinction of being 'draft-dodgers'. Holy Trinity recognized their difficulty in finding accommodations and prepared to offer them temporary shelter. The congregation had decreased in number over the years and many rows of pews at the back of the sanctuary were dusty and unused. Ten or twelve rows of these pews were removed and in their place, the church set up army cots for the men. Whether the actions of the men were justified was not the primary concern of the fellowship--it was to fill a physical need.

When the crisis with the draft evaders was ended, the space at the back of the sanctuary was empty. Rather than replace the unused pews, the church decided to turn the area into a lounge and reading room to be open to anyone who cared to make use of it. It acquired some comfortable chairs, end tables, and floor lamps; and provided magazines, pamphlets, and information regarding coming events in the Square. This has proven to be a real help to some people who seek a place

of escape from the rush of the city, where they may relax, and experience the healing of quiet reverie.

The naves, to the north and south of the chancel had fallen into disuse and were cavernous wastes of space. As other programs at Holy Trinity began to attract people to the Square, uses were found for the naves. A book room now occupies the south nave with attractive displays of current religious periodicals, denominational publications, and Christian literature to satisfy a variety of tastes ranging from leadership and program manuals to biblical fiction. The books are offered for sale. The north nave houses an art gallery where artists who congregate at Scadding House can show their work. The church hired a part-time curator to handle publicity and set up the displays. The young artists are not charged for this service and not infrequently are able to sell their painting and sculpture. Not only does this venture encourage new talent it also draws people to the Square.

One further aspect of the new life of the sanctuary merits our attention before we move on to consider those programs which led the church out from behind its stone walls into the community. Within the fellowship there developed an increasing interest in drama. To facilitate the efforts in this field of endeavour, the church installed professional quality production equipment. The building itself with its lofty ceiling is, like so many churches built in the last

century, ideal acoustically, for theatrical productions. Earlier mention was made of the platform used during the Folk Mass. This same platform is quite flexible and can easily be moved in sections to be used for variety in stage levels. To date there have been two major productions, one at Easter and the other at Christmas. A group from Theatre Toronto has used the church for a practice room. Plans for the future include the beginning of a drama study group and when it is formed, greater use will be made of the theatrical equipment.

If the Church of the Holy Trinity was to exercise a relevant ministry in a modern community like Toronto--urban, affluent, socially stratified, bearing the scars of deep social depression--it had to learn how the Christian faith must drive men and women into the swirling struggles of the modern world even as it provides there a firm footing on which to stand and do battle for the Lord. Surrounded by need, the fellowship chose to make concerted efforts in specific areas. To draw businessmen into the Square, a group of women from the church opened a restaurant in Scadding House. Not far from Holy Trinity is an area called Yorkville; a haven for what we call the 'hippie' generation. Scadding House was the most adaptable building for youth activities. A large section of downtown Toronto, formerly a slum area, had been razed and replaced by 'geared-to-income' housing. This area is still bordered by cheap apartments and flop houses. There was a desperate need for work among the younger children in

that ghetto. In another district, also within walking distance of the Square, there are derelicts, vagrants, alcoholics, prostitutes, homosexuals and addicts. The people of Holy Trinity who undertook to work in these situations understood that they were accepting a monumental task. In many cases they would come close to despair and in no way was success guaranteed. Most important of all, they realized that there could be no backing away from the responsibilities once the programs were in operation. You just cannot play around with lives.

#### The Restaurant

No. 6 Trinity Square, Scadding House, has a new lease on life. It has become a hive of activity and the weary old structure once again has a family. There is a small kitchen on the main floor furnished with a second-hand stove and refrigerator. The women of Holy Trinity have gathered together a rummage sale assortment of dishes and utensils. They have furnished the other two rooms on the first floor with folding chairs and bridge tables. The restaurant is open daily from noon until 2 p.m. when light lunches are served to the businessmen and women in the downtown area. A self-supporting operation, what is served on any given day is governed by the receipts of the previous day. To my knowledge, it has never been necessary for the restaurant to be closed because of a lack of funds.



## Scadding House

The style of the Scadding House Drop-In is unique in many ways. At the outset, it was a self-starting operation and developed initially as a result of the Holy Trinity Restaurant ministry. The Scadding style has attempted to be both traditional and contemporary. It has called itself a 'coffee house' in the European sense; a place where people can meet for conversation in a casual atmosphere, over a cup of coffee. At the same time it embodies the contemporary 'drop-in' concept. The record player is of paramount importance attracting groups desiring to satisfy their appetite for modern music. It is interesting to note that Scadding House developed its own leadership, philosophy and mode of operation.

'Openness' is characteristic of the centre. There seems to be an unwritten law that unnecessary inquisitiveness is taboo. No demands are made on those who frequent Scadding House. Young people are perfectly free to be themselves and participate as they desire. The people who drop in come from all over Toronto; high schools, business, the University of Toronto, and Yorkville. "The kind of community we intend is a caring community. A group of people who attempt to take each other seriously, who attempt to provide for each other's needs on all levels, who attempt to be open to other groups,

and who attempt to understand them."<sup>4</sup>

Open meetings allow everyone at Scadding House to have a voice in its government. There are no rules of membership; you are a member by virtue of your presence at the bi-weekly meetings whether you have been an active participant in the program or are attending for the first time. A chairman, elected at the beginning of the meeting, presides over the group's deliberations.

Program is not developed for its own sake at the drop-in centre. It develops, rather, as a result of the interaction that occurs. The basis of program development is the recognition of common needs and interests. Some programs have succeeded while others have failed. In either case, the group meets for a period of evaluation and the result has been that good, bad, or indifferent, each new venture has become a learning experience.

While there are many motives for participating in the activities at Scadding House, according to the young people themselves, the most common is loneliness. The centre offers a homelike atmosphere in which the group can be whatever it feels at a given moment. To some, it is a home away from home and in many cases fulfills the role of the extended family. To others it is simply a place to gather,

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<sup>4</sup>From a report prepared by a group of young people that meets at Scadding House. The report was presented in 1968.

exchange ideas, share experiences, and make new acquaintances.

The informal activities have included dialogue, chess, card games, dancing, listening to music and poetry, drawing, folk singing, and taking hostile feelings out on the building. In addition to meeting their own immediate social needs, the people at Scadding House share a concern for one another. They help newcomers to the city find employment and accommodations (often sharing their own homes), make referrals, lend money, and assist in the maintenance of the building. Scadding House is an exciting concept, unstructured, flexible, and accepted by those whom it was intended to attract.

#### The Distress Centre

As more and more people became aware of the new life of Holy Trinity, greater demands developed for personal counselling. The church saw this as an opportunity to extend its ministry and virtually make that ministry available to everyone seeking help. There was room available in the administration building for an office that could be used as a centre of operation for distress calls. The response was staggering and calls soon were coming in around the clock. Unable to continue handling the constantly increasing volume, the parish had to seek outside assistance. Still operating from the same office, the Distress Centre is now an agency supported and staffed by a council of concerned churches.

One of the outstanding things about Holy Trinity is

the fact that it does not selfishly insist on controlling a project if it has grown too large. In the case of the Distress Centre, more financial support was needed than the church was in a position to offer. Without giving up its own interest in this ministry, the church felt that it could save the centre and broaden the outreach of the program by asking other churches to participate.

Under the new scheme, it was necessary to hire a full-time director and a secretary. The greatest part of the actual counselling work is done by volunteers who are selected by, and responsible to the director. Volunteers from all over Toronto have offered their time and energies to this work. It is important to note that not all offers to assist can be accepted. Everyone who expresses a willingness to serve the centre, is required to attend six training sessions over as many weeks. During these preparatory group encounters, the trainees learn about the purposes of the Distress Centre, what their role consists of as volunteers and suggested ways to handle calls and visits. The director observes each candidate as he or she is involved in role-playing, interpersonal relations with the rest of the group, and in personal interviews. At the end of the training program, it may be necessary to refuse the services of a volunteer for the good of both the trainee and the work of the centre. The reasons for refusal are varied but usually involve the candidate's difficulty to cope with strong

negative feelings aroused by some of the people who are driven to call the centre. Before a person begins training, the fact that it may be necessary to reject his service at the end of the training period, is clearly outlined. If, after rejection, a person still wishes to serve, that individual may repeat the training program at a later date.

The Distress Centre operates twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. Volunteers work on a rotation basis although no strict adherence is kept in this system. Calls come to the centre for as many reasons as there are distressed people. It is not uncommon that a call will herald the beginning of an extended period of depth counselling, referrals and many visits. Other calls may simply involve the volunteer in sympathetic listening. In spite of the demands made on those engaged in this ministry, there is a waiting list of people interested in serving. At the present, an estimated number of four-thousand calls come to the Distress Centre every week.

#### The Day Care Centre

Metropolitan Toronto is not without its share of underprivileged people who live in substandard housing. In recent years, the City has replaced large areas of tenements and condemned buildings with low-rental housing. One such area is within walking distance of the Square. The rows of stark, unattractive semi-detached houses have replaced the

desperate conditions that existed, only as far as providing adequate housing is concerned. New buildings alone will not alter the conditions of people's lives. Unfortunately, the ones who suffer the most and ultimately perpetuate desperation, are the children growing up in these "projects". Aware of the situation, Holy Trinity added to its expanding concern for a community ministry a desire to help some of the children in the urban renewal ghetto.

The church engaged a woman well-trained in work with young children. After carefully investigating and assessing the needs of the children in the area mentioned, a committee decided that it would do a more effective work if it focused attention on problem cases. The committee approached the Children's Aid Society<sup>5</sup> for advice and referrals. A plan was devised whereby a number of children would be served lunch and then be given free time for play. With an almost impossibly small budget the program began.

There is a unique school in the area, teaching only the lower elementary grades and attended by children with below average ability. The C. A. S. working with the director of the Day Care program, selected twenty-six children who were in particular need of individual attention. In each case, the parents gave assent to the program.

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<sup>5</sup>Hereafter Children's Aid Society is C. A. S.

Every school day the director and her two assistants (volunteer help) meet the children at noon and together they walk to the John Innes Community Centre for lunch. The meal usually consists of hot soup, sandwiches, hot chocolate or milk, and fresh fruit. After lunch, the boys and girls have a few minutes to play in a large room above the lunchroom. These children come from a variety of backgrounds, chiefly homes where little or no love is offered and in which the youngsters are unwanted. Their social interaction is unpredictable but seldom amicable. It takes a very little to provoke them to acts of violence and fits of temper. The aim of the Day Care Centre is to express a loving concern for these children which more often than not demands superhuman patience and understanding, to say nothing of plain physical endurance.

After lunch, the children return to the school. At 3:30 p.m. the Day Care staff meets them at their school for two hours of recreation in the school gymnasium. This is an important part of the program because the children can be observed at play. Two additional volunteers assist in this phase of the work, bringing the number of leaders to four plus the director. The gym is equipped with large unbreakable toys and with some things that can be destroyed. The leaders play with the boys and girls as long as they do not feel that their involvement is an intrusion or inhibits the freedom of the play therapy. Open hostility is a major

problem during this period. When conflicts arise, as they invariably do, the parties concerned are encouraged and assisted in working out the difficulty either by verbalizing or supervised aggression. It is sometimes necessary to punish a child for recurring misbehaviour but this is done in the spirit of love and the child is led to see the nature of the misconduct and the reason for the punishment. The most excessive corrective measure is expulsion for three days. If the child does not return after that period, the director visits his or her home.

At the end of each day, the staff meets to discuss what took place during the lunch and play sessions. In this way the director knows what is happening in situations in which she is not present. The assistants have an opportunity during these meetings to discuss their reactions to various play encounters, and assess together effective ways to use these to advantage in nurturing the children. They constantly review the program and keep before them the backgrounds and circumstances from which their charges come, in an effort to maintain a constant level of understanding. The love expressed at the Day Care Centre may be the only affection these children have ever known and with little or no previous knowledge of a stable, positive relationship for reference, it is not immediately understood, accepted or trusted.

As in the story of the Distress Centre, the Day Care



Centre has grown to become too much for Holy Trinity to support. With the recommendation of C. A. S. and in light of the effective work being done by the director and her assistants, the city is now supporting this cause. The volunteers come from the church and Scadding House and these young people are now receiving small honoraria for their service. Each child is responsible for a portion of his own support and is assessed five cents a day for lunch. The reason behind this is that the children must not think of the program as charity, but as a kind of club to which they make important and needed contributions.

#### Friendship Centre

Our final consideration of Holy Trinity's community ministry concerns one of the most desperate situations in the urban community. Again, within walking distance of the church, is a district infected with the malignancy of every conceivable vice. Prostitution, homosexuality, drug addiction, alcoholism, vagrancy, and trafficking are aspects of its life. This is the most demanding and threatening mission that the parish has undertaken.

In the heart of this blighted area stands an aged, ugly building that was once a small hotel. It has obviously never been a gracious hostel and has clearly deteriorated with the ravages of time and reputation. The second story

of the building is a flop house entered via a scarred door of solid planking, set back beyond an arch of crumbling cement. What was at one time a taproom, is now the Friendship Centre.

This room measures perhaps twenty by sixty feet and was originally intended to accommodate seventy people. The church took over the room a few years ago and opened it as a haven for the people of the area so desperately in need of a place to be welcome. The Friendship Centre is open for four hours each week-day, two hours in the afternoon and two hours in the evening. As many as three-hundred men and women have crowded into the place at one time for coffee and cards or conversation. There is a piano in one corner that is seldom still. Holy Trinity hired a director-host for the centre and women from the church take turns serving coffee.

The centre is located close to a men's hostel operated by the Salvation Army. Many of the patrons come to the centre from the hostel or are referred to the hostel by the centre. There is a strange unwritten code of ethics which exists among these ravaged lives and it includes a wariness of anyone from the 'outside', or who is 'clean'. One woman, a retired university secretary, offered one year's service to the centre. That was five years ago and she continues to serve coffee at least three days a week to her afternoon boys. She has become something of an institution there and is lovingly called the 'white angel'.

Definite rules of conduct are necessary in the centre. Anyone found drinking in the centre is barred from admission for a month. Procurring or trafficking results in the offender's expulsion permanently. The hours of opening and closing are strictly enforced. No one who is staggering and offensive as a result of an overindulgence of liquor is allowed to remain in the room. These rules, though understood, are frequently violated.

This centre aims at being more than just a place to meet and find shelter from the elements. Some of the men<sup>6</sup> come to the centre to seek help. They are not necessarily drinkers, and may find themselves in desperate circumstances as a result of prolonged unemployment coupled with lack of courage to step out again lest they slip and fall even deeper into the abyss. To these men the centre offers encouragement and sometimes, with its increasing list of referral agencies, can help an individual find work and restored integrity.

Alcoholism and drug addiction present the most frequent and devastating problems. Wallowing in self-disgust and pity, these slaves to the bottle, weed or needle are the hardest to reach. It is often necessary to send these men to Wellesley or St. Joseph's Hospitals for treatment for their illness, or of injuries received in fights and accidents.

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<sup>6</sup>Reference to men does not mean to imply that women are not present. There is a group of five to ten women that frequents the centre.

The uncanny thing about these men is that they are clever. They know the language of the social service agencies, the Alcohol and Addiction Research Foundation, Alcoholics Anonymous, and welfare agencies. They know how to con these services for their own ends.

Regardless of how futile may seem many of the attempts in helping some of these people along the road to rehabilitation, and regardless of the desperation of many situations, the centre does perform a vital ministry. Just as in the Day Care ministry, the results of this particular mission may never be realized, yet they do exist. The Friendship Centre offers care and concern for society's unlovely and unloved derelicts. Some of the centre's clientele have been able to respond to that love in positive action on their own behalf, while others, if we are to be realistic, have exploited it.

The Friendship Centre needs more adequate facilities for this particular mission. Plans for the future may have to include sharing the program with other concerned organizations. A proposal is now before a study committee that would see the centre in its own building, offering friendship, meals, medical help and temporary housing. It is encouraging that the program survives despite the desperation in which it exists, and looks to the future, anticipating expanded service.

### Some Impressions

With the foregoing illustrations of the new life evidenced by the congregation of Holy Trinity, we turn our attention now to the impact that this transformation has had on the church and its mission to the community. After years of self-criticism, and the examination of traditional program structures, the church began to see itself in need of a reformation with an eye to breaking the bonds of tradition in order to grasp a clearer vision of its role in the inner city. The idea of moving out into the community involved much more than merely becoming involved in new programs. The congregation had to risk leaving the comfortable safety of structural institutionalism if it was to engage in its new mission with integrity. Once outside the walls of its traditional, decaying building, the people of Holy Trinity were able to see the inadequacy of the edifice to meet the requirements demanded by their proposals. Moving out took on an added meaning; there would have to be a variety of locations for mission. The old sanctuary itself experienced a rebirth and became a vital part of the total life of Trinity Square, free of traditional restrictions. The result has been that physical changes have taken place, the church has literally exploded into the metropolitan area. This fact is exciting in itself; nevertheless of major importance is the effect that change in physical life-style has had on the total life

of the church.

Change which necessitates altering accepted customs and instituting new patterns of life comes as a distinct threat to the established, often lethargic church family. The old reluctantly gives place to the new and Holy Trinity's congregation was no exception to the struggle that accompanies renewal. Consequently, the life of the fellowship initially suffered from the disruption of its slumber. Some members refused to tolerate even the very consideration of renewal, and left the fellowship, while others remained to hinder progress and cling doggedly to what they regarded as their heritage and tradition. Fortunately, the majority favored the proposals for a more vital ministry and were eager to accept the demands and adventure of outreach.

There has resulted a remarkable change in the total life of the Church of the Holy Trinity. It is not difficult to catch the excitement and enthusiasm as members of the fellowship share their personal experiences in vital Christian living. I recall a number of conversations with members who have been caught up in the adventure and excitement of renewal. What at one time were rather empty meaningless phrases and words expressing a kind of religiosity, now have new meaning, for these people are truly committed Christian laymen, seeking to find their own particular ministries through which to serve Christ. They are discovering that in

losing themselves in a mission which reaches out and spends itself in an effort to meet the growing needs of the inner city, their faith is becoming more mature and vital. One woman tearfully related how her life had moved from a futile, empty existence, to one filled with purpose and meaning. Each story is different in detail, but within each there is positive evidence of rebirth. The people of Holy Trinity have a new understanding of what it means to be members of the body of Christ. They speak of a real appreciation for the uniqueness of individuals and the united fellowship that has resulted from mutual acceptance and joint action.

What is the role of the Rector in the church and community? This is a difficult question to answer. The Church of the Holy Trinity has become a complex of operating committees. Each organization and centre of mission is autonomous with its own supervisory board or program committee. Ideally, this would allow the minister to be free from administrative duties for real leadership of leaders. Unfortunately, the impact of the new vitality within the fellowship has had a negative effect on the Rector's place in the church. His anxiety and uncertainty regarding his role in the total life of the community has resulted in a loss of concern for the spiritual nurture and growth of the people whom he was called to serve. It seems that he sees himself as a shepherd with a scattered flock, helpless to

draw it together. My interview with him was the most distressing aspect of my research in Trinity Square. He spoke as if his sole function was that of a figure-head, executive president, or honorary chairman of the board. The honesty and candor with which he shared his understanding of his ministry was at once refreshing and utterly devastating. It became apparent that whereas his efforts and those of his predecessor, had been successful in educating the congregation for mission, that same mission excluded the Rector whose needs seem now to be totally neglected. Consequently, there exists a lack of cohesion in the total program of the church; an absence of vision and structure that could unify the life of the fellowship and bring the several members of the body together.

One of the dangers involved in moving away from tradition and venturing forth on a community mission, is the very real possibility of a dissipation of spiritual resources. It is essential, therefore, that there be a thorough understanding of what is at the basis of all work done by the church: a vigorous relationship with the Lord.

If we think of God's Grace as coming into the world with a great downward sweeping movement, described in the theological terms of creation, incarnation, and redemption, the local Christian community would be one of the channels



through which this flow of  
God's power could occur.<sup>7</sup>

The Church of the Holy Trinity has provided the channels and been at the same time guilty of obstructing the activity of that grace. Social service and salvation work together, and are in fact inseparable if the church is to minister with any effectiveness to the urban community.

Holy Trinity has become involved in social action; free to move out of its structural confinement, able to see the needs of the inner city, and to take purposeful action to meet them; and unfortunately, to be so caught up in social service that it misses the mark of its mission. The church is called to proclaim Christ and his redemption for all sorts and conditions of mankind. Clothing bodies, filling empty stomachs with food, and empty lives with a little kindness, giving counsel to the distressed and offering medical assistance to the physically ill--these are not sufficient to help develop or restore an individual to fullness of life. If the mission of the Church of the Holy Trinity is to be fruitful in terms of reaching men and women, boys and girls for Christ, it will have to be engaged in a more inclusive ministry. Much is said these days about the rigidity of the institutional church and its apparent

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Moore, Jr., The Church Reclaims the City (New York: The Seabury Press, 1964), pp. 58-59.

over-organization. So long as the churches remain institutions, organization will be a necessity. How else can the church work as a unit? At the present time the structures and goals of the Holy Trinity program appear to be loosely defined. Groups and social centres are not engaged in any form of communication one with another or mutual evaluation. Consequently, there exists a degree of misunderstanding and occasional conflict. A suggestion here is that the church form a review council which would include representatives from every fellowship and service group, and the clergy. The council could meet regularly to share and discuss program, difficulties, experiences and progress. It might even produce a news bulletin for the congregation, to keep the whole church family informed.

The renewal of the Church of the Holy Trinity is, in the final analysis, a thrilling adventure in faith for an entire congregation. There are weaknesses and shortcomings, but there is also creative, self-giving action. Men and women are finding a new relevance in commitment to Christ, which demands that they seek to discover their individual ministries, and in discovering, step out in faith to minister to the community.

#### Another Urban Experiment

Walmer Road Baptist Church is also located in

metropolitan Toronto and in the heart of an area that has known considerable change in the past decade. The church was established in the year 1889 in what was then a growing upper-middle class residential district. It has a membership of seven-hundred. Some fourteen years ago it was my happy privilege to be a member of the Walmer Road fellowship. At that time, the area was much the same in outward appearance as it had been in the days of its glory. The impressive, giant building stands majestically on the edge of a small traffic circle. Advancing years and the elements have been kind to the church's massive structure. Unlike the Church of the Holy Trinity, this church has aged gracefully and managed to maintain a physical dignity. This is due largely to the fact that its neighbourhood has remained essentially residential, although it has experienced some dynamic changes. The elegant old manor that once stood in a park-like setting next to the church was demolished a few years ago and is now the site of a high-rise apartment building. A number of these new apartment complexes have replaced the stately homes of the area. What remains of the single dwellings have become rooming houses or multiple housing units. Urban renewal has in effect changed the personal to the impersonal and caused the church to take a careful look at its mission with a view to meeting the needs of the changing community.

The residential sections of Toronto have been slower in changing than the commercial sections, and the changes came gradually, almost imperceptibly. Walmer Road Baptist Church is aware of its need to acknowledge and accept these changes and its responsibility to rise to the challenges offered by the new urban culture.

A program of home missions and community work began about five years ago through the concerned and energetic activity of a few members of Walmer Road. With the assistance of a capable corps of volunteer leaders, and the advice and counsel of the church's two associate ministers, this extension of the fellowship's concern for the people of the neighbourhood has become a major occupation of the church. The work has grown to such proportions that it became necessary last year to enlist the services of a third member to the ministerial team. It is interesting to note that the congregation elected to call a woman with Christian Education training and experience to fill the new position. Only under experienced supervision can the work be properly consolidated and expanded. The idea of "team ministries" is quite a new concept for Canadian Baptists. Walmer Road is providing an excellent example of how effective this type of ministry can be. It was a thrilling experience for me to have an opportunity to see these people in action together. Their roles are not so strictly defined as to prevent an overlapping of duties and responsibilities. The result is that they

are constantly mutually informed regarding the various activities related to the total life of the church.

I was able to see only a very small part of Walmer Road' s experiment in renewal. The program is younger than that of our previous study and still in the experimental stages of development. Its major focus at the present time is on the young people of the community. A week-end program is held in the church's spacious education wing offering a variety of activities geared to meet the interests and needs of both elementary and secondary school students. Beginning on Friday evening, the program continues until Sunday evening, almost without interruption.

Friday nights a group of teen-agers meets for an informal time of dancing and conversation. Many of these young people return early the next morning to take part in the more formal program which affords an opportunity for creative activity. Some groups meet for art and crafts, while others are engaged in discussion groups dealing with homemaking and personal hygiene. The senior minister's wife has organized a choral group which recently won an award in a local music festival. In addition to her outstanding ability as a music director, she is also a capable leader of craft classes. When I visited the church, this Saturday program was in progress. My tour included visits to a number of activities then in session. One small band of younger

children was actively engaged in selecting material for doll's clothes. Another room revealed a number of boys and girls busily putting finishing touches on the hand-puppets they had made out of reclaimed cloth and asbestos. In the kindergarten room, the children were doing a number of things, some playing alone at tables, and others expressing their enthusiasm and vitality in a game of tag. Upstairs in what appeared to be a seminar room, a few teen-aged girls were discussing hair styles and good grooming. Some boys had gathered in the gymnasium to play basketball. The church was a veritable hive of activity, each group led by a capable, well-trained volunteer worker.

Of particular interest to the observer, was the freedom afforded by the program. The young people participating in this new venture are able to express felt needs and respond to them naturally and without inhibitions. This must surely be a new and exciting experience for many of these people who come from such varied backgrounds. One 17 year old boy expressed a real interest in basketball. He asked to be allowed to form a team for inter-church competition. The team has become his pride and responsibility. Out of his own limited financial resources, he has bought each member of the team a tee-shirt and suitably inscribed the name of the team on each shirt with the aid of a felt pen. This in itself is a valedictory to the effectiveness already evidenced by the program.

The Sunday activities begin with the Church School, which gathers before the regular Sunday Worship Service. Many of the young people stay for worship. The afternoon is spent in discussion and study groups which are usually followed by a supper in the church hall. Following the evening worship the senior young people gather for their regular meeting and fellowship.

It was impossible in the time available to get a detailed description of every facet of the week-end program. We were able, however, to see enough to catch something of the enthusiasm and excitement of the leaders and participants. This, as mentioned earlier, is a new adventure in outreach and renewal and the beginning of a reformation in the total life of Walmer Road.

The ministers of the church are optimistic about the future of their mission to their community. Every effort is being made to involve the congregation in each new movement and in the words of one of the ministerial team, "let them carry the ball". Integration is the key word. Volunteer leaders receive instruction without their respective groups as well as in-service training. Leaders meet periodically to evaluate the work that is being done, discuss new proposals and difficulties with the existing program, and share their own reactions to their involvement. More encounters of this nature will take place in the future at more regular intervals,

as the program expands.

So that the whole fellowship of the church might be aware of what is happening between Sundays, the people involved in the week-day and week-end activities, under the leadership of the Director of Community Work, held an Open House. The response was beyond all expectations and bore witness to the growing interest of the whole church family in the new program. As the members toured the various displays they heard the young people and leaders interpret the work that was being done. In this way, the church at large had an opportunity for both encounter and interpretation. After the tour, many people accepted a further invitation to meet with the leaders over coffee to discuss the program and the activities they had observed. The church has expressed a desire to repeat this kind of sharing experience.

The church building for a number of years, has been a cavernous waste. Today that same building is being exploited in every positive sense of the word. As part of the "care program", a day nursery is open five days a week. The church prepared a room for the nursery and furnished it with special equipment to meet the particular needs of its special clientele. It even has a very real rabbit who 'lives in'.

There are a few programs that are now in the early stages of development. A work has begun with older adults. This ministry is at present finding expression in providing



transportation for senior citizens to and from the church. Lunch is provided at the church for these people before they return to their homes. Walmer Road is vitally concerned about the thousands of people who reside in the high-rise apartments within walking distance of the church. This is a difficult ministry to inaugurate but it is developing. Circular letters have been distributed throughout these buildings with an invitation to share in specific worship services prepared for apartment dwellers. The church continues to wrestle with this problem.

Walmer Road Baptist Church has made a start in its search for new life. The first steps are difficult and there may be some painful faltering along the way. What is important is that the work has begun, through Christian education programs, social service, leadership training, and an effective team ministry. The congregation is included and invited to be involved in this process of renewal. Because the concept of a ministry determined and disciplined to work outside the walls of traditional structures is still relatively new, there are many avenues of service as yet unexplored. The ministers are the first to admit that they are not ready to outline specifically any particular goals. They go out convinced that there is work to be done, that their faith is totally relevant in contemporary society, and with the prayer that they will have eyes to see and ears to

hear the needs of the community. Thus it is at this time, that Walmer Road Baptist Church ventures forth in a new act of obedience and faith in an effort to extend its total ministry.

### III

#### BEYOND THE WALLS

##### What About Us?

The statements made by some average church members offer a disturbing commentary on the church as it relates to modern city life. One member may suggest that religion is a private matter between himself and God. By this very expression he has shut his eyes to the fact that God is at work in the fellowship of the church and in the broader life of the city. Another, somewhat more sophisticated churchman reminds us that the church is supposed to be in, but not of, the world. The manner in which he puts the proposition emphasizes the separation of the church from the life of the world around it. He forgets that Christ sent his disciples "into the world" (cf. John 17:15-18). Yet another member, typical of many, expresses a wish for a church in which he can feel at home. The urban church has become virtually indistinguishable from its surroundings as a result of attempting to satisfy the desires of its members by providing separate "homes" for every segment of the city's diverse population.

For almost a century Protestants have been intensely

concerned about the life of urban populations. In response to the growth of large metropolitan areas, the church has engaged in city mission work to bring the gospel to unchurched masses. The Social Gospel movement intended to express the implications of the gospel for twentieth-century society.

The net result of years of dedicated effort has been the creation of a few isolated islands of urban churchmanship in the midst of a widening sea of popular indifference and institutional flight. Having built its house on the sand of private preference, social aloofness, and cultural conformity, Protestantism in metropolitan areas has seen its influence steadily decline.<sup>1</sup>

More serious than this loss of relevance has been the fact that contrary to its claim to be the place where God is known most truly, churches actually have been as far from Christ as the rest of the city's population--perhaps farther. The church, looking for God's presence within its own walls, has neglected the clear evidence of his work in the fields that stretch on every side. We have sought like-mindedness and an easy cultural oneness within the fellowship of the local congregation.

Life's real altars are outside church buildings. They are the places in the world where Christians get maltreated and misunderstood and sometimes mocked because they

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<sup>1</sup>George D. Younger, The Church and Urban Power Structure (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 70.

are Christians. When this happens to men and women anywhere, they are having a tiny glimpse and share of the passion of the Lord. Mission leads to passion.<sup>2</sup>

The church is called upon to assume a proper understanding of its relation to God and to the world. God calls the church into being as a fellowship that, living in faith, hope, and love, is to bear witness to him and to his saving acts. He does not promise that he will accomplish all his purposes through the church, but he clearly expects his people to recognize him and acknowledge his work. The church, however, is not always faithful to its calling.

The notorious fact is that the churches at present do not know the city. And yet the rudiment of the mission to the city is the immersion of the churches in the common life and the dispersion of Christians within the turmoil and travail of the city's existence. The rudiment of mission is knowledge of the city because the truth and grace of the Incarnation encompasses in God's care all that is the city. Mission in the city for the Church, and hence for Christians, means a radical intimacy with every corner and every echelon of the city's actual life in order to represent and honor God's concern for each fragment of the city.<sup>3</sup>

We, like the churches considered in the previous chapter, have need to examine critically, our present

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<sup>2</sup>Douglas Webster, Yes to Mission (London: S. C. M. Press, 1966), p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>William Stringfellow, Free in Obedience (New York: Seabury Press, 1964), pp. 21-22.

organizational goals and structures. What about these massive edifices that we have struggled to acquire? It is quite possible, indeed probable, that they are grossly under-used. The suggestion here is not that we jetison all institutional forms. At the present we must place renewal and restructuring ahead of total rejection. Stephen C. Rose suggests that:

. . .if the great institutional machinery of Protestantism were deployed with a certain flair for strategy and service, we should accomplish many aims that we often conceive to be beyond the institutional capacity of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

#### New Understanding

The church is primarily a fellowship of God's people bearing witness to his work and carrying on Christ's ministry in the world; it is also an institution in the society of which it is a part. The ecclesiastical power structure in the urban community is composed of all the religious groups, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish. Interaction with other institutions cannot be avoided by the church because the church exists within the framework set by the policies of business and government leaders. Our

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<sup>4</sup>Rose, op. cit., p. 26.

administrators and officials, concerned for the preservation and development of the institution, often contribute to the carving out of a "religious" sphere of life within the wider life of the city. By doing this, they are denying that God is Lord of the entire metropolitan area not only of its religious institutions. Wherever a local congregation, concerned for its self-preservation retreats and takes shelter inside its own walls and in its particular, exclusive round of activities in the name of "religion" and being "spiritual", the same denial is in evidence.

That the institutional life of the church is a necessary part of its existence is true. No social organism can come into being without taking some form as an institution in society. The task of the Christian church is not to deny its institutional nature but to see that this, like the life of the Christian, is used to bear witness to God's rule and judgment and loving grace. The institution, like its members, must live its life in the world as a service to its Lord.

Christians in the Churches were not chosen by God and commissioned by Christ to engage in a program of self-service and self-enjoyment, but rather to find their lives--to find themselves--in an exacting and costly ministry to the world as servants of the eternal Christ.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>McNeil, op. cit., p. 121.

In a suburban settlement the community drive asks that representatives of the churches sit on its board; the church as an institution needs to be represented. In a depressed neighbourhood the improvement council asks that a local congregation become a member; the church as an institution needs to participate. In the city the mayor calls for a council of churches to name people for his committee on youth culture; the church as an institution needs to show that this is part of its concern. Our city leaders are often ignorant of the church's concern for the life of the city because they do not see the church as willing to move out of its own walls and to get involved in the issues that most deeply trouble the citizens. Every way that we find to bring congregational life into the arena of civic life may open the way for criticism and opposition to our viewpoint, but it will also multiply our opportunities to be involved in the work that God is doing in the city.

Individual local congregations within urban centres are tempted to think of their life and work as being limited to the geographical area in which their buildings are placed. We hear churches commended because they serve their community. Not content to remain confined within the limits of their fellowship, they become involved in the life of the world. These churches are being faithful to their mission. Service to a particular limited locality, however, is not



enough in present-day metropolitan areas. Indeed, it can lead to neglect and denial of the larger community of which the members of the church are a part.

The entire region surrounding a large city today contains hundreds of separate communities, each sustained by the illusion that its problems are substantially different from those of the other inhabitants of the area. Dozens of neighbourhoods within the city itself are feeding on the same illusion. Each locality, of course, has its own particular situation and its own peculiar history. However, no place is so isolated that it can afford the luxury of denying the great issues that face them all. If service to our immediate community means nourishing the fallacy of localism, it can also be a way of negating the church's ministry.

The Christian church is called to be a fellowship without walls. One local congregation, such as the Church of the Holy Trinity, may be partially composed of people who live in a decayed low-income area. Another, comparable to Walmer Road Baptist Church, may have in its membership, those who live in expensive homes or apartments. This does not mean that the Christian church is low-income or high-income. One congregation may be all white and another all Negro. This does not mean that the Christian church is restricted to members of a single race. One congregation may worship in a large downtown edifice at the city's main

intersection, and another may be housed in a century-old building still located in the middle of farmland miles from an urban settlement. This does not mean that the Christian church lives only at the centre, or on the rim, of large cities.

The Christian church in large metropolitan areas cannot and should not be restricted to the congregation. This fact has been overshadowed in recent years by our concern for the ministry of the local church. If the full witness of the church is to be made, there is an absolute necessity for denominational assemblies and for councils of churches.

No local congregations can include in its membership all the areas of the city's life. Like the separate localities in the metropolis, individual congregations can lose sight of the larger picture of Christian fellowship without boundaries by giving too exclusive attention to local problems. In addition, the institutional impact of bodies that speak for groups of churches within the city is far greater than<sup>6</sup> that made by any single congregation.

If we are going to understand the mission of the church, we shall find direction in the teachings of Jesus, who clearly indicates that the church is to penetrate society. "You are the salt of the earth. . ." "You are the light of the world. . ." (Matthew 5:13,14). ". . . The Kingdom of

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<sup>6</sup>Younger, op. cit., p. 82.

heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened" (Matthew 13:33). "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . ." (Matthew 28:19). ". . . You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The command to the church is "Go." The church must get out from within its own walls and rediscover its mission.

### What Can We Do?

At the outset the church of the twentieth century has to come to terms with the fact that it exists as an institution in a world of institutions and dare not forget its destiny as a missionary instrument in God's hands.

God is at work in the church and in the world. The church is simply called to join God in his work. The world is the locus of its mission. A congregation is truly the church only insofar as it discerns this continuing mission of God to the world and shares in it.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that most congregations are confused and baffled as to how to respond and act makes all the more urgent the search for structures that will enable them to engage in their mission.

The church's ministry and mission are the responsibilities of the whole people of God. Every member of a

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<sup>7</sup>Weber, op. cit., p. 170.

Christian church is a minister to whom has been committed the difficult work of bearing witness to his Lord.

The witness of the Christian man is not hidden, private, secret. Like a town set high on a hill where it can command the valleys all around it, like a lamp that must be put where it can throw its light into every corner, the fellowship of the Christian church cannot hide or obscure its witness.<sup>8</sup>

We have seen how two churches in metropolitan Toronto are attempting to meet the challenge of reaching modern urban society. The Church of the Holy Trinity has literally destroyed the walls of tradition and complacency and leaped out of its armchair existence into an exciting involvement in renewal and mission. Walmer Road Baptist Church is involved in a different but equally thrilling rebirth as its congregation seeks to exploit the physical structure of its church and to use the building for community activities. These examples serve to affirm that the church is renewable. Each individual fellowship will have to assess its own situation and begin a program of renewal tailored to meet its particular needs and those of the community in which it is located.

Local units of the Christian church frequently discover how like exclusive country clubs of chosen people

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<sup>8</sup>Younger, op. cit., p. 74.

they have become. Substantial changes in organizational structure are often required when a congregation becomes aware of how unprepared it is for frontline battle between the redeeming Christ and the world.

The time may not be far distant when the laos, the chosen people of God, will have to eliminate from its membership all "club members," whether ordained or unordained, in order that it may be free to get on with the task given to it by its Lord. People who think of the Church as their possession are the enemies of the Church and its mission in the world. The relation is not one of proprietorship, but one in which the members regard themselves as expendable, possessed by the Spirit, and, therefore, members of his Body who would do what he would do in this generation.<sup>9</sup>

The church in contemporary society must push itself into every aspect of life. "What is not taken on cannot be redeemed."<sup>10</sup> No longer is it possible for the church to play the role of Bach in a rock n'roll culture. If the church of Christ is to be his body incarnate, it must identify as far as possible with the culture of the city and the people of the city. This means an aggressive outreach,

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<sup>9</sup>Renel L. Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 132.

<sup>10</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 142.

a courageous social action, and a willingness to suffer. It also means taking risks and enduring misunderstanding and criticism.

A few years ago some members of a church in one of Ontario's small northern cities began to realize that many married couples had ceased to be involved actively in the life of the fellowship. This fact became the concern of two young couples who met one evening to discuss ways in which these people could be reactivated. They decided that since the church was not attracting them to its services, the church would have to go to them. Six couples whose names appeared on the church's roll but who had become inactive members, were invited to an informal coffee hour. The invitation did not contain any mention of the church or any proposal for their re-enlistment. It is interesting to note that all those invited were present at the host's home at the appointed hour. After considerable conversation about day-to-day issues, the group arrived at the topic of church attendance. Each couple was encouraged to express their views. This developed into an exciting period of sharing and discovery. They found that they were of like mind regarding their attitudes toward the institutional church. Their lack of enthusiasm for active participation was born of a lack of understanding and the resulting discontent. The church spoke a language that seemed foreign to them;

their questions remained unanswered because there was no opportunity afforded in which they could be asked; the church, therefore, ceased to be relevant in their daily lives. Yet, unanimously they recognized that something was lacking in their lives and that they missed the fellowship of the church.

This small band of people wanted to meet again in the casual atmosphere of a home. They selected Sunday evening as a suitable time. There would not be a lecturer at these gatherings, but rather, an opportunity for adventure in discovery. The group agreed to meet on a trial basis and each person committed himself to attend for an eight-week period.

By the second meeting the group had chosen a book to be used as a study guide. They met in two small cell groups at the beginning of each session and after an hour's discussion, came together for refreshments and a pooling of their discoveries. The earliest studies had to do with the vocabulary of the church. As a result, words such as "Atonement," "Incarnation," and "Redemption," came to have significant meaning for each member.

It was not long before others heard about this new venture and the numbers began to swell. Within five months (the group elected to continue meeting after the eight-week period), twenty-two couples ranging in age from early twenties to mid-fifties, met each week.

The subject of prayer was the theme one evening. As one cell group dealt with the meaning of prayer, the members came to the conclusion that their lack of knowledge in this area was due largely to inexperience. They became acquainted with Rosalind Rinker's book, Prayer Conversing With God<sup>11</sup>, and were moved by its implications for them. It was not enough just to read about prayer, they had to experiment with it to see it work in their lives. Rather than abandon the Sunday evening group and miss the adventure of this educational ministry, this one cell group decided to set aside an evening during the week when they could meet, apart from the larger fellowship. A sense of security, openness and mutual confidence had been developing within each small discussion group.

At the end of the trial period, the number of cell groups had risen from two to four, each with a membership of five or six couples.

Exciting things started to happen in the total life of the congregation. Not only were the couples attending worship services again, some of them had begun to take an interest in the church's educational program. Several couples expressed a concern for the young people in the church and community and started a Teen Centre in the Sunday School hall. Others became choir members and teachers in the Sunday School.

This is an example of what can take place when a few laymen risk decisive action within or without the local

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<sup>11</sup>Rosalind Rinker, Prayer Conversing With God  
Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959).



congregation. From a very small but aggressive beginning this northern church experienced an exciting rebirth. Much of what developed as a result of this experiment came as a complete surprise to the minister of the congregation. In a personal way this group of laymen found a way to be both God-centred and God-entered. In a matter of a few months these people entered into koinonia (fellowship in Christ) of a life-changing character.

Another area of outreach which offers a particular challenge and opportunity involves ministry to the university community. The churches located on the fringes of the vast modern university complexes have a definite responsibility to become involved in the life of those institutions. Such a ministry calls for creative imagination and incisive observation on the part of both clergy and laity. The task necessitates radical program changes and innovations because of the unique nature of those educational institutions.

University campuses include students who represent every facet of the broad spectrum of modern society. Coming from such a variety of backgrounds, students face for the first time a confrontation with communal living among people with conflicting values, goals and convictions. Religion has not been forgotten on the campus. It may be examined, criticized, ridiculed and rejected by some; it may be examined, criticized and rediscovered by others. Traditionally

a time of quest and search for new ideas, the university years give each student the opportunity to discover truth for himself, and to form, or reform, his philosophy of life.

How can the local church engage in a relevant ministry to students in the academic community, not exercised apart from, but within the structured life of the university?

The following is a list of possibilities:

1. The minister of the church near the university ought to become part of a cooperative ministry with campus chaplains.

2. An advisory council might be established which would include representatives from both religious and secular student groups.

3. Ministry to the university community need not be centred in the church building; it ought to move out into the arena of campus life.

4. Residence students have particular and peculiar needs as they struggle to integrate Christian convictions and moral values into their unfamiliar, free environment. The church could work with these students in discussion groups meeting in the residences, to deal with these issues.

5. Invite students to interdenominational study groups whose purpose is to tackle major contemporary questions, particularly social problems.

6. During the years that a student is in university he is called upon to make important decisions regarding his vocation. Special seminars could be arranged at which students listen to, and hold discussion with representatives from various vocational fields.

7. Provide information and opportunities for counsel regarding the questions of drugs, alcohol and sexual freedom on college campuses.

8. The church ought to be acquainted with the professional services offered by the university for counselling, and medical assistance.

9. Out-of-town students, and especially students from other countries, are often lonely in their rooming houses or residences. Church members might show their concern by offering hospitality to these students in their homes.

10. With the massive expansion programs disrupting the smooth operation of campus life and limiting study space, church buildings could be made available for study and recreation. Here is an opportunity for church members to serve as hosts.

11. Provide work areas where students may experiment in creative expression through art, poetry, music and drama.

12. Accept the students as they are without making concerted efforts to reform their dressing habits, mode of expression, or style of life.

13. The church must bear in mind that its special mission to the university community is for evangelism, reconciliation and witness. This will be accomplished only as we afford students opportunities for encountering Christ through study, prayer and venture.

The campus ministry becomes involved in the academic community in order to assist students in obtaining a Christian education. This means that Christian students and faculty can be helped to see all truth and values in relationship to the biblical truth of Jesus Christ and thereby be freed to live as whole persons and to participate responsibly in the academic world. For the undergraduate student it means an active involvement in witnessing to the truths of his faith in the affairs of the residence, campus politics and all other extracurricular activities. The church's ministry is expressed here as members individually and collectively live their lives in Christian response because they believe that God is at work on university campuses as he has always been at work in every phase of human history.

## CONCLUSION

The question today is not whether or not the churches should be involved in the life and ways of an urban world whose paradoxes and problems, complexities and imbalances are brought to focus in the modern city. The question is how they should be involved. In times of revolutionary change, walls of indifference and neutrality, indecision and inaction on the part of the institutional church are intolerable. But what stand to take and what plan of action to follow becomes the critical question for the responsible Christian as well as the responsible churches.

There is a tendency in churches during times of social upheaval or revolutionary change to avoid the real issue by calling the people "back to God", which almost always means calling them back to the way they used to practice their religion in the churches. This includes its time-honored forms and practices, its theological formulations, paraphernalia, and all. This innocent tendency, often misdirected, tends to lead to a re-establishment of an undesirable, restrictive, and rigid institutionalism and to the absolutizing of specific church structures, forms and practices which tempt the adherent to bigotry and idolatry. The consequence is an unresponsiveness to the Holy Ghost, who is ever renewing responsive churches and supplying them

with new dynamic and vision.

Until churches today face squarely, honestly, and courageously the real issue of what their relationship should--and must--be to a society which is highly organized, secular, and technological in character, and what specific and concrete forms their contact and communication with society should take, they cannot command the attention of men nor effectively perform their reconciling ministry among them.

Not many of these experiments or programmes are reproducible in exact form in other settings. Nor would any of those who have written the accounts of renewal want to sit back and assume even for a moment that they had arrived at the answer for our world. What is clear is that God will honour the dedication of His disciples if they are desperately earnest about confronting the world with His Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>From a mimeographed manuscript by Dr. M. J. S. Ford, slated for publication in May, 1969.

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