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*"A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work"*

**BUILDING COMMUNITY:  
UTILIZING HISTORICAL MODELS**

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## **BUILDING COMMUNITY: UTILIZING HISTORICAL MODELS**

There have been a number of community development models down through the ages. By understanding the models utilized in the past, churches can better determine which ways are helpful in reaching the area around them. We will examine several of the most prominent and explore ways they can be utilized by local churches and by consortiums of churches.

### **A-Community Development Programs**

A Community Development program is a program set up by an external organization that moves into an area to help a community develop its resources. While many such programs today are government think-tanks designed to seek ways to improve the community and Chamber of Commerce committees organized to lure businesses to the community, churches have developed a number of prominent programs that seek to help communities develop their own resources under experienced leadership. One of the best known pioneers is Father Ralph Beiting who developed the Christian Appalachian Project in Lancaster, Ky. Rev. Beiting was sent into the Appalachian area by the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church at the time had very few churches in the area and was in fact viewed as a foreign element in the beginning. Yet, when there was a need, Father Beiting sought to meet it. Gradually, the people began to see the Catholic Church as a positive community resource. Although Rev. Beiting did start some churches in the area that became centers for his work, the majority of his work involved developing community programs run by and supported by the communities themselves.

While Father Beiting lived in the community, he provided a bridge to those outside the community who supplied things that were needed but were not available in Appalachia. Father Beiting started out meeting emergency needs such as food and clothing which were badly needed in an area with very high unemployment. He solicited food and clothing from churches around the country and brought them to Appalachia. At first, he gave them away but eventually realized it was better to sell them for a small price. The price was almost insignificant but it provided income to cover the expense of renting the facilities and to fund other projects and the people were less likely to waste what they paid for. In addition, it helped them retain their dignity. Since they were buying the clothes, they didn't feel like they were getting charity. However, the price was low enough that many of the people could afford them. At first he operated them out of his home but eventually he was able to set up a series of stores to provide low cost used clothes for those in need.

Father Beiting provided the focus to draw the people together, help them see their needs, and develop ways to meet those needs. In the beginning, resources and trained personnel were needed that were not available in the local communities, so the church provided them from outside the area, but as the local residents learned to trust him, he began helping them find resources of their own and mobilized them to meet the needs of their community. Eventually he was able to train local people to do the work and many of

the projects were able to become self-supporting or were supported by their local communities.

Father Beiting went to Appalachia on faith that God would use him to help the people. It was difficult because there were very few Catholics there so he had no local support and the people were of Irish descent and often were very hostile toward Catholics. Yet, he believed God had led him there and that was where he was supposed to be. In addition, his faith led him to believe that the people could learn to develop their own resources and he lived out his faith that God had a purpose for these people by helping the people identify the needs in the communities where he worked and develop their resources to meet those needs. Father Beiting believed that God has entered our world and showed us the way to live and by entering the mountains, he felt that he could show the mountain people how to live and help themselves.

There is a great need for outside organizations to establish beachheads in local communities to help the local people develop their own resources, especially in mountainous regions where there is very little employment and very little education. While labor and materials will probably have to be donated at first, the goal will be to help the local communities develop and set up their own programs. Eventually, the communities can begin to manage the programs on their own, though some outside resources will continue to be needed for a long time to come.

Today, many families are moving into large apartment complexes and trailer parks because they can not afford to buy standard housing or they are still mobile and do not want to be tied down to one location by buying a home. While earlier apartment complexes were smaller and in the inner-cities and mobile home parks (trailer camps) were often small and in isolated rural areas or on the edge of industrial areas, modern apartment complexes and mobile home parks are often grouped together in large communities due to zoning restrictions and resistance by established communities to invasion by apartment dwellers and mobile home families which they view as foot-loose gypsies. With several apartment complexes near each other and often with large mobile home communities nearby, such communities may number several thousand families who have no ties to those around them and often have no relatives living nearby. While earlier apartment complexes and trailer camps often had laundry rooms which served as community gathering places, residents in modern apartment complexes and mobile homes often have individual washers and dryers or frequent Laundromats in nearby shopping areas. Many modern apartment complexes and mobile home parks have begun including community rooms which they make available to park residents, but there is often no one to organize activities and the facilities are rarely used. (see "Strangers In The Gate" section on Nomads).

When my wife and I first moved into a trailer park, we found many in the park who wanted to get together and study the Word of God. Many had church backgrounds but when they moved to the park, they felt uncomfortable in the the surrounding churches and no longer attended church, yet they were eager to study God's Word within the familiar surroundings of the park. We searched everywhere trying to find a denomination

that had some model to pattern a trailer park ministry after or a church that would help us with the financial support and volunteer help needed to minister to the residents in the park but found no one willing to help. It was not a case of going into the park to reach the residents, we already lived in the park and were one of them. As fellow residents, we were accepted by those in the park while those coming in to develop programs were

not. Residents realized we weren't like the churches that came in to fill their Sunday School classrooms and their pews, we were genuinely concerned about them. We weren't asking them to ride in a bus to a strange church where they didn't know anyone but to simply get together in the living room of one of the trailers with a couple of their neighbors. It was far less threatening and they were eager for the fellowship as well as the instruction. The small groups also ministered to those around them. We did not have to worry about facilities for we lived there and the other members lived there and we met in various living rooms. The groups were limited in size because the trailers were small (not nearly as large as many now) but for people who did not know their neighbors, that was a benefit because larger groups would have scared them off. Unfortunately, most churches do not have any members who live in the apartment complexes and mobile home villages so it is very difficult to develop that kind of a ministry. A church that heard about our ministry later decided to begin a similar ministry in their area but did not have anyone who lived in the apartment complex near them. They decided to send one of the couples from their church who felt called to that kind of ministry into the apartment complex to live and paid them a salary to enable the wife to be free from the need to work so she could spend more time in the ministry since the majority of those in the apartments are single women, either with or without children, while the husband continued to work at his regular job and minister to the men in the apartment complex part-time.

There is an increasing movement today by some Christians to reach out to the inner-city. They are adapting the methods we found helpful in the trailer parks and apartments and adopting it to a more hostile environment. They are banding together in small groups of families, buying homes in the inner-city, and moving into inner-city areas to live out their faith and be a leaven in the community. By living in the area, their homes become showcases of home ownership, stable two parent families, and the Christian faith. Without the facilities of a church, they are dependent on their homes becoming community centers for those living around them.

The Salvation Army has always been intentional in its ministry to those around it, not only through the community centers attached to its churches, but in the programs it has developed to minister to those around them. Salvation Army women, called slum lasses, often moved into apartments in slum areas to minister to those around them. Often two women would live together and adopt the clothes and furnishings of those around them. Their apartments were little different from those around them except that they were neat and clean. The women would then spend their time ministering to those around them. If anyone was sick or elderly, they would care for them. If any women needed help caring for their children, they would teach them child care. Whatever the needs of those around them, they would do what they could. They were not there to hand out money or other material things but simply to do what they could to make life better

for those around them. They would receive only what was necessary to pay the expenses of housing themselves and maintain themselves. Other women, called the League of Mercy, visited those in the slums, going door-to-door, in search of those in need. They would do many of the things the slum lasses did but on a broader scale for they did not restrict themselves to their immediate area.

## **B-Settlement Houses**

Hull House, started by Jane Addams, is probably the greatest example of a settlement house. Jane Addams was a Chicago socialite who was concerned about conditions among the immigrants flooding into the U.S. and settling in ghettos in our major cities. She was a pioneer in studying the needs of the immigrants and developing ways to help them assimilate into the American culture. She felt that she must understand the needs of the immigrants before she could really help them and since she was both rich and raised in America and had no idea what their needs were, she felt that she would have to live among them and get to know them in order to find out what their needs were. Therefore, she and some of her friends renovated a run down mansion in the middle of the ghetto to its former glory and moved in. She felt that they could provide an example of American life which would inspire the immigrants to want to participate in it. They opened it to the immigrants and offered plays, movies, and other entertainment to draw the immigrants into the mansion and provide relief from their drab existence.

Jane Addams also realized that the immigrants did not understand the American culture. so they tailored the plays and movies to portray American culture and involved those immigrants with talent in putting on the plays. Jane Addams also found out that many of the immigrants lacked the basic skills needed to compete for decent paying jobs. Many of the immigrants did not speak English and many came from farm economies and did not have the job skills they needed to compete for decent paying jobs in the city. Therefore, she started classes to teach the immigrants English as well as job skills and child rearing to help them compete for decent paying jobs and raise their families in a foreign environment.

However, as she got to know the immigrants and their situation, she realized that the political and social conditions of Chicago also prevented the immigrants from fully participating in American life. Many women and children were exploited by unscrupulous employers to work long hours under cruel conditions for very little pay. As a result, the immigrants were not able to save the money they needed to improve their life. Therefore, She felt compelled to become an advocate for the workers and seek to enact laws that would outlaw the harsh working conditions that the immigrants were forced to work under. Thus the settlement houses provided showcases of American culture, places where the immigrants could learn what they needed in order to participate in that culture, and an advocate to relieve those political and social forces that prevented the immigrants from participating in the American culture.

A similar program is often carried out by missions such as the "Red Bird Mission" in Kentucky. The Methodist Church established Red Bird Mission as a settlement house in

southern Kentucky though it differed from the settlement houses in the large cities. Red Bird mission was staffed by workers sent from outside Appalachia who came to live in the area where they could study the needs of the people and develop programs to help them. Although the staff were not rich, they were well educated. The people of Appalachia, on the other hand, were very poor and lived in a far different culture than the middle class culture many of the staff at Red Bird Mission came from. In addition, many of the adults in Appalachia had no education since there were very few schools in the mountains. The settlement compound served as a showcase of American culture and the living out of Christian values. It also provided a school and job training center. Red Bird Mission also served as an advocate for the people of Appalachia to assist them in getting help from the State and federal governments to provide services that the local impoverished communities could not provide for themselves.

Many Christian missions overseas established mission compounds that served as settlement houses as well, showcasing Western culture and values to people with far different cultural backgrounds and teaching them to live the Christian life. Missionaries often tried to instill Western culture along with the Gospel. The people they worked with were often primitive and missionaries sought to help them learn to "be civilized". The missionaries lived in mission compounds and often retained Western dress and mannerisms. Eventually missionaries began adopting native dress and learning native customs to be able to live among the people and reach them better. The result has been more effective evangelism. Many cultures today are more Westernized and the cultural differences often are not so great and do not create such a barrier as they once did. In addition, more and more native pastors are being trained and many missions are being turned over to native ministers and missionaries so that cultural differences are no longer an issue in many areas.

### **C-Community Centers**

The most widely known centers were established by the government under the Community Action Program. The centers were opened in poverty areas to provide local access to Social Services for those in need. Centers provided information on services available and assisted clients in filling out forms, as well as providing a place where food could be distributed and educational programs carried out. Later programs were added to provide day care and assist clients in obtaining employment and paying for utilities and housing. Today, many of the Community Action Program centers that I have seen have been centralized and are more community centered organizations than local neighborhood centers. Unlike the settlement houses, community centers are not live-in centers, but the staff are often well educated and often are not familiar with the culture in the area around them.

Community centers provide facilities for residents to gather for fellowship, as well as providing trained staff to assist local residents in accessing community resources such as food stamps and welfare benefits. Such centers also provide classes to teach needed skills such as reading, handling finances, cooking, and child raising. Community centers often provide a wide range of services to area residents and can be utilized in heavily

populated areas of poverty such as in the inner-city as well as in widely scattered rural areas where residents do not have many resources to develop and the population is heavily dependent on outside resources.

Community centers may be started by outside organizations or by local organizations who open a center in the community to minister to it but its staff often live outside the area. Many larger inner-city churches open their doors to provide for the needs of the surrounding community. When there are no churches available that are large enough in the affected area or there is a need to create a neutral place for those who are reluctant to enter a church, several churches may go together and purchase homes or businesses in the area and renovate them for use as community centers. The Salvation Army has been very successful with utilizing both church facilities and administrative offices for community centers.

The work at Red Bird mission was a hybrid organization and went beyond the settlement houses in the big cities. Since the people were not concentrated like they were in the cities, the mission served as the nerve center for the work in the small Methodist churches scattered throughout the region. The mission and the work at nearby Henderson settlement provided a center for the trained staff who traveled around to the local churches, as well as serving as a show-case of American culture. The local churches served as community centers to build community life and minister to those in need by serving as centers for fellowship, as well as centers where mission staff could provide job training and educational classes for children and adults alike. Thus the mission combined the settlement house approach with the community center approach.

The former Methodist Church (now the United Methodist Church) has been very successful in its work in Appalachia utilizing the settlement house approach based at Red Bird mission and utilizing the local Methodist churches which are heavily scattered throughout the Appalachian region as community centers. There are local churches in many of the little communities or rural areas which have facilities where local residents could gather. Since travel is difficult and residents can not get to larger the population areas easily, the churches provide facilities for the residents in the communities which serve as community centers for the community around them. The United Methodist Church provides trained personnel through Red Bird mission enabling the small local churches to provide training and services they could not otherwise provide.

Community centers do not provide the opportunity for those around them to see the Christian faith lived out in the lives of the workers to the degree that they do with Christian missions like Red Bird mission because the workers do not live among those they seek to minister to since workers generally come in during the day to work. Workers living among the people are able to demonstrate their faith through their everyday lives and not just through their work, however they are limited in areas like Appalachia by the fact that residents are so widely scattered. By coupling the mission with the community centers, Red Bird mission enables them to reach the widely scattered settlements they could not reach otherwise. The churches serve much the same function as churches elsewhere except that the extreme need around the churches make

them twice as important in helping to rebuild the Appalachian community. With our society in general and families in particular deteriorating today, churches are becoming increasingly important centers to reach those around them in all areas.

Many churches are abandoning the inner-city and fleeing to the suburbs. As the community deteriorates, those in the church who are middle and upper-class often move out into the suburbs. They made no attempt to reach anyone in the area while they were there and once they move out, they no longer have any contact with the people. They only return to the area to worship. The church may be the only one in the area, yet in many such churches, very few of the members live in the area. Consequently, the church continues to die while people perish all around it. Eventually, as most of the members move to the suburbs, the church moves out of the community as well, creating a situation which is hard to reverse. It may seem normal for a church to follow its members, however up until 35-40 years ago, the church usually stayed where it was and ministered to the people still in the neighborhood and gave birth to a sister church in the area where its members were moving. If the church grew too large for its facilities, it expanded where it was or if that wasn't possible, it split and birthed a new church, it did not seek elbow room out in the country. Churches today think they have to follow their members, but they forget that in moving, they leave some of their members behind.

Many churches today look to the suburbs as their passport to expansion. Such churches build way out in the countryside or in the suburbs and are inaccessible to those in the inner-city who often have no transportation and can not afford to travel far. Some of the churches provide buses for a while, but rarely for long. On the other hand, those around the churches new location are often used to driving 15-20 miles to work every day. If a congregation has moved recently, a bus ministry may help reestablish contact with members left behind, but that is not how bus ministries are usually used. (See "Bus Ministry" in "The Body of Christ). While the distance from the old location not only prohibits many former members from attending, it also puts the facility outside the area where it is needed most. Spacious suburban living rooms and family rooms may be utilized for small group fellowships but inner-city homes and apartments often lack such facilities. Conflict will also arise between those from the different cultures since the new middle class members do not share the values of the older and poorer members who had built the original churches. In circumstances where a pastor inherits a building and congregation built up by someone else, he has little choice of location, but when congregations are considering whether to expand their present facilities or locate elsewhere, such considerations rarely come up.

One year, when I lived in a rural area, I was contacted by a denomination about reaching the lost. They were preparing a great drive to reach out to those in the inner-city. I was glad to see that they were interested in reaching those in the inner-city but as I looked around, I saw that all their churches in nearby cities had begun in the inner-city. As those churches had ministered to those around them, they grew. As they outgrew their facilities, they looked to the suburbs where there was more room to grow and where they could reach people with money, rather than trying to expand where they were or birthing a new congregation. They moved out of the inner-city to the suburbs where they could

attract middle class people and left behind those members that had built the church, since many of the older members did not have transportation to the new facility. When the churches moved, they sold their facilities in the inner-city which could have been used to continue ministering to the people there. Now when they think of going back to minister to those in the inner-city, they have no facilities there and will have to purchase or rent high priced facilities to work out of. Before, they could have used their own facilities which were paid for, but now it will be expensive to secure new facilities. Even then, they will be viewed with suspicion by those who remember when the church deserted them.

Many churches in the inner-city that don't leave are dying because they do not minister to those around them. The churches often have elaborate buildings with a great deal of space such as classrooms, social halls, and even gyms which are rarely used. The building may be used on Sunday but sit empty during the rest of the week. Meanwhile, the residents around them often have nowhere to meet and could use the classrooms during the week for Bible Studies, support groups, and other group activities. Unused space could be used for counseling centers, day care centers, and other community ministries. Some inner-city churches are beginning to develop neighborhood centers but they are rare. Often the attitude of church members towards their neighbors is one of apathy. They often struggle with little funding (most their members are poor) and with small remaining congregations. They often have plenty of space but very few human or financial resources to carry on programs and need financial help and experienced volunteers from suburban churches. Other churches rent facilities to government agencies like the Community Action Commission for programs to help the poor. The Salvation Army churches in the inner-city double as community centers for the surrounding area. In addition, Salvation Army administrative offices often have extensive recreation and meeting facilities to provide a community center for the surrounding neighborhood. The Salvation Army also builds large community centers in run-down neighborhoods to serve the surrounding community. Many of the officers (pastors) come from similar areas and the soldiers (church members) come from the neighborhood so they are familiar with the needs and minister to those around them.

If a church is really concerned about the community around it, it will develop a neighborhood ministry regardless of whether it is in the inner-city or in the suburbs, however the need for close facilities is greatest in the inner-city and the rural countryside where other facilities are not available. In rural areas, the church is often made up of people who live in the area and has the facilities to minister to those around them but rarely do. Often they are more independent and fail to see the needs around them. Life in rural areas used to center around the community barber shop and grocery store and everyone knew everyone else, however today many rural people, especially those growing up in larger cities, are used to driving long distances and often shop outside the area. Even long term residents who know all those who have lived there their whole life have difficulty getting to know those who are now moving into their towns because they rarely see them and often never meet them.

Most older country churches were once the center of their rural communities and

along with the country schools, they provided the facilities where almost all community activities took place. Churches often had church socials that included the whole community. As schools were established in most small communities large enough to support one, local schools took over because they were neutral and available to all regardless of faith. With the consolidation of rural school districts, schools in many small rural communities have been closed, leaving only the churches. Now there is a great need for churches to reestablish community centers for their communities. It is all the more crucial as the elderly farm residents move into the small towns because they can no longer care for the farm. While cars provide mobility for many, large numbers of these elderly who live in rural areas can no longer drive and the parents of many children work and can not run them over to the consolidated school for activities on a regular basis. Since many small towns no longer have bus service, the elderly are being cut off from essential services as many of the local stores are closing because they can not compete with shopping centers in nearby cities. Many larger denominations are now working to consolidate the small country churches for efficiency rather than seek ways to help them minister to their communities. They do not realize the opportunities the churches have to minister to those who have nowhere to meet besides the local bars and taverns. That is why sports events have become such a big part of rural life, yet sports events lack the closeness needed for true community. Yet even in affluent neighborhoods, families often have no decent gathering place and no real activities to draw them together and provide a time of sharing with friends and neighbors. Wives in the suburbs are often isolated at home with small children and many Senior Citizens are homebound because they lack transportation. Both need a place nearby where they can meet others and socialize with each other. The churches often have the facilities and people to carry out such programs but don't use them.

Large city churches with elaborate facilities often forget that churches in the surrounding countryside do not have such facilities or the membership to effectively carry on many of the programs needed. In addition, many small churches make great sacrifices and incur heavy debts to provide facilities that are already available in nearby churches. Both churches can benefit from mutual cooperation. Many small churches can not afford the well-trained staff necessary to build effective programs but could easily share the cost with neighboring churches, however such planning and cooperation are rare these days. When I first started out, I was called to a church that was dying. I was inexperienced in developing a Sunday School and the church could not afford to hire a Christian Ed Director. However, there was another small church nearby and a larger church downtown. Neither of them could afford a Christian Ed. Director on their own either. The city church offered to pay 3/4th of the cost in exchange for 3/4th of the director's time and the two smaller churches each offered to contribute 1/8th of the cost and so benefited from the services of the Director which they could not have afforded to pay on their own. Some community ministerial societies are beginning to look at the needs of the community and consider possible cooperative ministries, but they have been slow in developing them. (see "Organizing For Ministry" in "Known For Their Love")

## **D-Points of Light**

As individual Christians live out their lives, wherever they live, they become points of light in a world filled with darkness. Unlike other programs, the people are not intentionally seeking to reach out to those around them. They merely live out their faith every day and do what they can to meet the needs they see around them. As others see their love in action, they begin to seek that love. In that way, the Christians become a leaven in their community. They don't carry out extensive programs to attract people or reach out to search out needs and minister to those around them. They simply go about everyday life and minister to those needs they run across. However, they must be grounded in the faith and know what they believe so that they are not corrupted by the lifestyle of those around them and they must be supported by a body of believers to encourage them so that they are not enticed to deviate in their devotion to Christ due to pressure from those around them. As a result, those around them see the life they live and begin to desire it. As such, they mirror the early Christians who were known for their love and attracted large numbers to the church.

The work at Red Bird mission is an extension of the work that the Methodist Episcopal Church (later known as simply The Methodist Church and now as the United Methodist Church) carried out as it tamed the American wilderness. Circuit riders traveled throughout the wilderness of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee preaching. As they found a couple converts in one location, they established them as a mission station and would return to them once or twice a year. Those mission stations were under the charge of a local person appointed as lay leader who would direct the group. The lay leader would be a layman who had studied the Bible course provided by the conference and would teach in the absence of the circuit rider. These mission stations would meet in homes and became centers where the people of the surrounding area would gather for instruction and fellowship. As new mission stations were added, the Annual conference would realign the districts that became too large for a single circuit rider and reassign the Circuit riders to the various districts. The circuit riders visited the mission stations a couple times a year and presided over the annual business meeting. The church would attract those in the surrounding area and people came from miles around to attend the church. As the neighbors saw the Bible groups meeting, they would join the church. As people were attracted to the church and became involved in the church, their lives were changed and as more and more were attracted to the church, whole communities were changed from raw wilderness towns to towns filled with God-fearing people.

As the Ohio Valley became more populated and the congregations grew, they would become an organized church and build a building. As a number of congregations in an area grew to where together they could support a local circuit rider, they were assigned a local circuit rider who lived in a parsonage near the largest church in the circuit and served about 6-8 churches in a circuit. Members often came long distances to the church over roads sometimes impassable in winter and the rainy season so they could not always attend. Each outlying member would gather those around them and teach them until their group became large enough to become a mission station and was added to the circuit

riders circuit and the next Annual Conference would realign the circuits and reassign the circuit riders. Thus, one church might spawn a number of outlying churches extending the influence of the Gospel. One church I pastored complained that the church was dying because it was in a rural area and people were going to churches in larger towns nearby. The church had existed for over 150 years and yet had very little recorded of its history so I began contacting churches nearby who might have been on the circuit with my church and might have records from our church. As I contacted neighboring churches, I found over a dozen churches that had been started by the church I pastored and at least 5-6 more my church started that no longer existed. It made me wonder why that church could have that much influence when it was younger and the surrounding area little more than a wilderness, but it wasn't having any influence now. (see "History of the Plymouth United Method-ist Church-1816 to 1983" which I compiled in 1983 shortly after I left the pastorate at the church.

### **E-Summary**

By working with a wide variety of churches, I have found many things that have been helpful to various churches, but many churches do not adopt them because the ideas seem outdated. Many churches today are adopting programs which are based on modern psychological and economic theories which are often costly, wasteful, and cause conflict within the church. We need to take a second look at programs which have been developed and proven over the years because many of them are inexpensive, effective, and draw people together, but have been abandoned simply because they are not in line with what the world is promoting today. We can not fight God's war with the world's methods for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (worldly) (2 Cor. 10:3) The programs that I have described may have been developed in another age, but the fact remains that the churches that are still using them are growing while those that are not using them are floundering. Many of the most successful churches today are still based on principles which Jesus laid down over 1900 years ago.

Many churches conduct expensive ad campaigns to attract those who have just moved into the area or for some reason are without a church home but they often lack the patience to get to know the people and minister to their needs. Churches often seek to collect people from the four corners of their parish but neglect those on their own doorstep. Such recruiting is expensive but rarely productive. Those who visit the church rarely stay very long. People may travel a long distance to attend a church on Sunday morning but the distance will make it hard for them to participate during the week and equally hard for the church to minister to their needs. A church that is large or widely spread out needs local support groups to minister to members when they live more than 6-8 miles from the church, especially if they live outside the local phone calling area of the church. Years ago, many people attended church because of social pressure even though they did not get much out of it. However, today there is very little social pressure to attend. In fact, the majority of Americans today do not attend any church regularly. Many people feel it is old fashioned and often tease or ridicule those who attend. The church must meet people's needs or they will not continue coming. The same is true of denominations. In the past, people often

attended the same denomination all their life and often it was the same one their parents and grandparents attended. They would continue to attend whether the church ministered to their needs or not, though the churches often did minister to their needs, because the church cared about those who attended. Today, people look for churches that meet their needs and do not necessarily pay much attention to the denominational affiliation. The days when churches could sit back and wait for people to come are past. We no longer have that option. Many churches must return to the old time gospel of salvation and social concern or they will perish. There are too many organizations today that compete for people's time. Social organizations like the Moose and the Elk also provide fellowship and support. Before, many prominent community people belonged to both but today, many such organizations are scheduling Sunday morning activities forcing members to choose between them and church. Unfortunately, many church members are choosing the social organizations over the church because the church does not provide the fellowship. The church needs to return to what makes it unique which is the Savior that transforms mankind, but it must also realize that people need fellowship and to be ministered to as well. People have not rejected the message we preach but have rejected the container which no longer meets their needs. People are hungry for the message of salvation but they do not see us living out the care and concern which we proclaim.

Those who were born since World War II have grown up in a world vastly different from the one which existed up until that time. Before that time, when you needed something like a washing machine, you went to the nearest appliance store and purchased one. If they sold Maytags, that is what you bought. Henry Ford is reputed to say he could provide a customer with a car in any color they wanted as long as it was black. Manufacturers made one model and you took it if you wanted a car or major appliance. Now they come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, as well as being equipped with all kinds of special features to meet special needs and desires. In addition, there are now many stores and they each offer a wide variety of makes and models. Often, the stores carry the same makes and models and compete by offering them on sale or at competitive prices. If none of them offer what you want, you may drive to a nearby town to check prices and models at other stores. People today are used to seeking just the kind they want rather than taking the first one they come across. The same is true of churches. People are no longer committed to the denomination their parents attended. Just because a church is the only church of a denomination in its area, doesn't mean that a family of that denomination moving into town will attend that church. If a local church doesn't meet their needs, they will drive 10-15 miles to another church of that denomination or go to a local church of a different denomination. People look for a church that meets their needs and the church needs to be aware of it. Where quality and name brands used to be the prime consideration in purchases, price is often the determining factor today. People are more budget conscious. People who once gave freely to the church without questioning how money was spent, are now demanding a greater voice in the church budget. Where quality was sought by those who could afford it for its prestige value, it is more sought out today for dependability. People today expect their appliances to be trouble free and look for the same thing in churches. Before, many people attended churches for their prestige value, but today they will not stay in a church torn by strife and backbiting. It is not a fanatical

desire for perfection but a desire that people be real and honest. Before, church was where everyone acted their best, but today people are looking for a place where they can relax and act normal, a place where people are tolerant of each other's imperfections. Just as people now desire service after the sale on major purchases, they will often seek a church that ministers to their needs as well as providing good preaching. People also expect the preaching to be relevant to their needs. In spite of the many labor saving devices, the pressure of our heavy schedules makes people more conscious of how they use their time. They do not waste their time with those things which they do not feel are relevant and will not continue attending a church that isn't relevant.

Rev. Barr has a wide background in ministry, counseling, finances, and business. He has served as Dir. of Family Services in the Dort-Oak Park inner-city neighborhood center in Flint, Mich., Casework Supervisor for ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) in Gallon, Oh, Outreach Worker for the Council on Aging in Crawford Co., Oh, and Assessor/Case Manager for the Oh. Dist 5, Area Agency on Aging. He has a B.A. in Sociology from Adrian College and is a licensed Social Worker (LSW) in State of Ohio. He is a member of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work

He has served as pastor, associate pastor, visitation pastor, and Christian Ed. Director for a variety of denominations. He is an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Christian Alliance, a non-denominational alliance of pastors and missionaries, and has served churches in the United Presbyterian Church, USA, the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Church of North America, and the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn) He has an M.Div. in Pastoral Theology from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (METHESCO).

Rev. Barr and his wife have been active in ministering to the residents of various trailer parks and apartment complexes, as well as developing neighborhood children's Bible Clubs and training Sunday School teachers. They have been active in counseling, and in organizing crisis counseling services. They have been active in ministering through both church and community organizations, through teaching and counseling.

Rev. Barr has also been active training counselors, preaching, and writing. He has written over 25 booklets of instruction for both church leaders and laity and served on the Adjunct Faculty of North Central State College. He is currently serving as a Social Worker in the Salvation Army and serves on the Adjunct Faculty of Owens Community College..