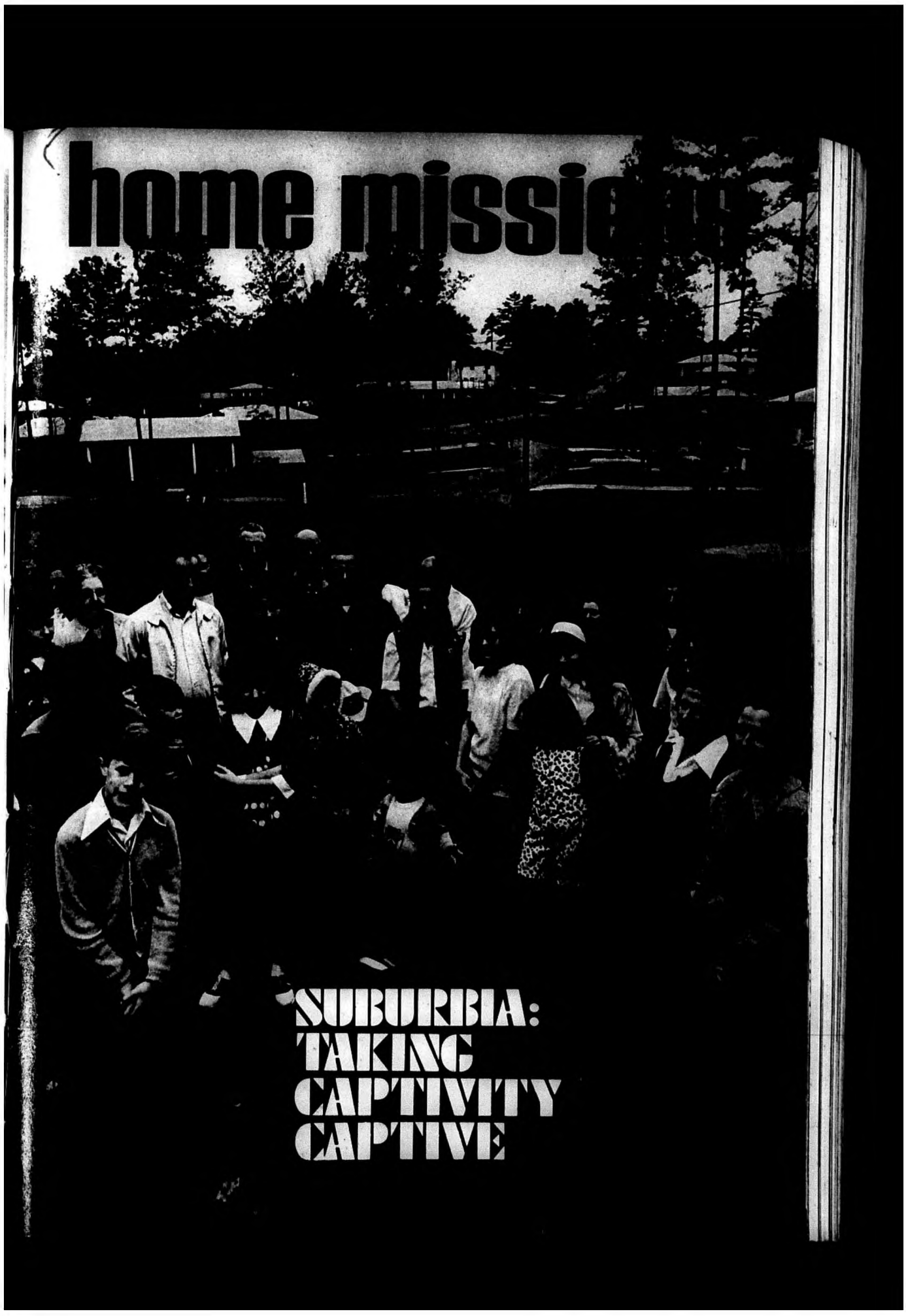

home missio
SUBURBIA:
TAKING
CAPTIVITY
CAPTIVE

Dewey Hickey and his wife, Harriet pause on the long, dry drive to visit a Bible class. Dewey carries a cup in the truck because such stops offer him the only chance to quench his thrist.

Dewey Hickey, raised in small Arkansas churches, was nearly trampled by Nebraska plainsmen going the other way, until he found fresh alternatives for traditional methods.

Stampeded by Reality

by Mary-Violet Burns • Photography by Don Rutledge

Valentine, Nebraska's climate is a study in extremes. Winter at its coldest means sub-zero temperatures; summer at its hottest means upards of 100 degrees.

When the Dewey Hickey family moved to Valentine from Little Rock, they had to adjust to more than the weather. Back in Arkansas, Dewey Hickey had been a part time insurance salesman and part time preacher. He had not entered the ministry full time because he felt insufficient."

"My wife and I stayed up talking one night and into the early morning. It occurred to me that in selling insurance I did much the same thing I would be doing in the ministry, only in a different area." So Hickey committed himself to the fulltime ministry—ignoring his seeming handicaps of no seminary training and only two years of college.

Hickey shared his commitment with the associational superintendent in his area, but at that time no nearby churches were seeking a pastor. But present at the conversation was Homer Rich, a Little Rock pastor who had begun the First Baptist Church of Valentine, a small ranching community in the sand hills of north central Nebraska.

Rich told Hickey about the church and its community. He asked if Hickey were interested. Sticking to his pledge to go anywhere for a pastorate, Hickey said yes.

"If I had known where Valentine was, I would have said no," Hickey admits. "But my wife and I came here and I've really felt it was the Lord's will for us to be here."

Hickey's church experience and religious background influenced his preaching style; he expected to carry his traditional approaches (founded in an area of strong Southern Baptist orientation) to Valentine. He was stampeded by reality the first Sunday.

"As my daughters and I were walking to church, a young boy walked up to my daughter, Marcia, and said: 'Where are you going?'

"'I'm going to the Baptist church,' Marcia replied.

"The boy looked at me and said, 'Is that true?'

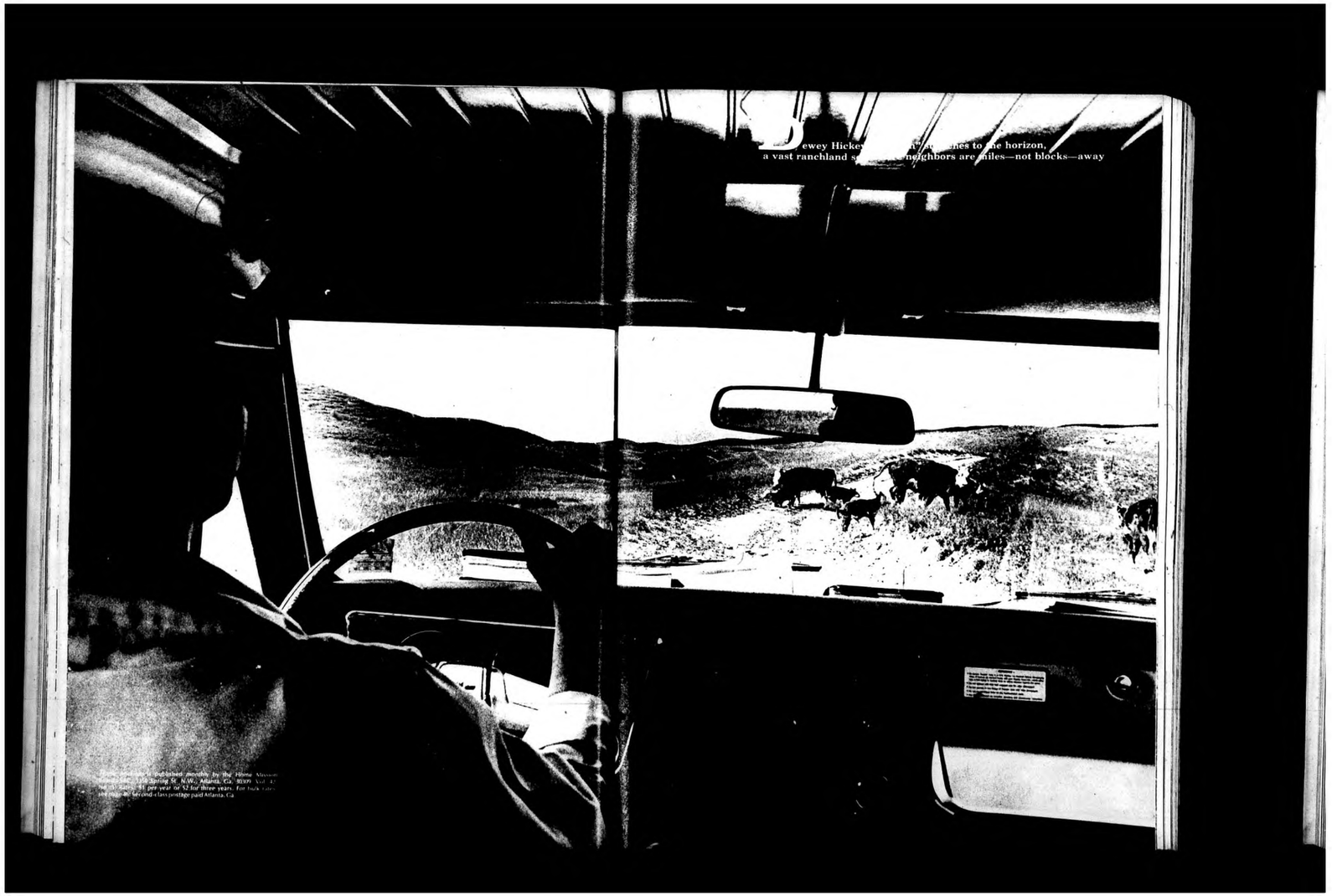
"'Yes,' I replied. He then asked, 'Mister, what's a Baptist church?'

"My daughter found it hard to believe that there were people who did not know what a Baptist church was."

When Hickey arrived at the rented church house he discovered that his congregation that morning consisted of his family and one other couple. "The people were satisfied with the churches they had and did not want another one," Hickey explains.

Hickey had a forceful, amplified preaching style. (In other words, he was a "typical preacher" who didn't mind blasting his congregation now and then.) However, he found his Nebraskan congregation offended by a bombastic presentation. "One man commented after hearing me the first time that he probably would not return because he did not like being yelled at." He also discovered that Valentinians did not respond to customary evangelistic techniques.

The Hickeys decided that in order to remain in Nebraska they would have to become Nebraskans, rather



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Hickey occasionally has casual Bible study meetings in the warm Nebraska outdoors.

A rancher and his son, members of Hickey's "church."

Hickey leads Bible studies in homes and at church (top).

than attempt to superimpose their Arkansas socio-religious culture on the new parish.

"We made many changes in our lives," Hickey says. "I toned down my preaching style, which did not cramp it, but rather improved it, I think. Now the emphasis is on content rather than delivery."

"As far as church polity and practice I became more liberal. As for the Bible I am more conservative.

"Because traditional methods of evangelism do not work up here, we adopted the Bible study fellowship. Interested people have Bible studies in their homes about twice a month. We study, have prayer, a sharing time and a testimony period.

"Hopefully from these fellowships will come commitments to Christ," Hickey says. "It's much slower here. We have had to learn to be patient and at times have gone as long as five months without a conversion—but we have learned the value of patience is increased effectiveness."

Leading Bible study groups, Hickey has found, can be a real mental drain. To suppliment his lack of formal education, Hickey reads incessantly—"Everything I can get my hands on." He's taken seminary extension courses and would like to continue his education.

When the Hickeys came to Valentine, the closest Baptist church was 132 miles away. But miles do not mean much in this area.

In his four-wheel-drive Chevrolet blazer, provided by the Home Mission Board, Hickey travels into isolated hamlets, remote ranchlands surrounding Valentine, to lead numerous Bible study fellowships. In acreage, he may have one of the largest congregations in the world.

For example, on Sunday afternoon he travels 110 miles roundtrip for one study. For two years, he has bumped and rolled 94 miles to and from another Bible fellowship meeting place. (Members of this group now belong to his church.)

About 100 miles southwest of Valentine is a ranch where Hickey leads another study; and he recently began a fellowship that will require him to cover 372 miles roundtrip. It's hard to tell who's happier about Hickey's work—the HMB or the local gas stations.

Even central Nebraska's rough winters, when and [illegible] hills continuously for three months, does not stop Hickey. "Part of the time the snow isn't bad and part of the time it's terrible," he says.

Aware that the physcial stress of his ministry will eventually hamper his effectiveness, Hickey struggles with his desire to train laymen to assume leadership of the Bible studies, and the reality that nearly all his members are new Christians without a strong church background.

"I would like to have someone to help," he says, "but it's rather impractical right now."

Hickey's congregation comes from many miles away; one family travels 130 miles to and from First Baptist. Another couple lives 67 miles from Valentine. "When I visited their ranch, they told me this was the first time a preacher had been on their ranch," Hickey explained.

First Baptist now has youth Bible studies for grades three through twelve, divided into two sections.

First Baptist is youth-oriented. "Practically the entire church is in the under-25 category," says 32-year-old Hickey. The church has 38 resident members and averages 40 to 50 each Sunday.

Hickey has found that many of his thoughts about the impact of the gospel message have been changed. "I expected an immediate change in people's lives when they heard the gospel," Hickey confesses. "But I've discovered that sometimes the only thing that changes immediately is their attitude toward God.

"Their lives take years to change."

Hearing his expressions of endearment for his adopted state ("I'm going to stay in Nebraska as long as I can"), it is obvious that the transformation from Arkansan to plainsman is complete. He works on the ranches as often as he can and has braved saddle sores and pained posterior to become an ardent horseback rider.

Hickey has one goal for the future of his congregation. "What I look forward to is building a church that will minister to these people and reach them for Christ. Strong evangelical churches are what's needed here. I don't care any more about them being like the churches I've known before—except they have to care."•

Comment

by Walker L. Knight

Evangelism's Resurging Stream

There is a theme in present-day evangelism whose strong resurgence appears at almost every hand. Some call it incarnational evangelism, others refer to it as the whole Gospel for the whole man, and others the balance between evangelism and social action.

One is often tempted to call it a new stream in evangelism, but many have documented that the newness is only in the eye of the beholder. This has been a strong stream throughout history, especially since the reformation.

What is new is the strength with which the stream now flows through conservative evangelicalism and through current Southern Baptist writing and speaking.

On my desk are four recently released books on evangelism themes, and three literally ring with the notes of dynamic social action, world awareness, and concern for persons in need. The fourth book implies these themes, but its purpose appears more concerned with the initial experience of salvation.

John Havlik, author of Broadman's paperback, *People-Centered Evangelism* (1971, $1.75, 92 pp) characterizes the emphasis in his preface: "The whole mood of our time may be summed up in the word 'people.' The secular world has discovered for itself the Christian doctrine of man. Some of the goals of new organizations might well be the goals of the evangelistic church. If all the protests against war, poverty, and pollution are made because of a respect for people, they are good signs. It may be that in the discovery of the Christian doctrine of man, our generation may discover the Christian doctrine of God . . . It is imperative to help people see that Christians have always believed that people matter. . . ."

From this opening word evangelist Havlik of our Home Mission Board staff focuses the Word of God on the issues of modern man, as Kenneth Chafin says, "without stuttering." To those of us who know John's ministry and life, there are no surprises. Who would be surprised to see concern for racial equality in a man whose neighbors are black? The book does affirm our knowledge of his openness and personal growth.

Leighton Ford, author of Harper & Row's *One Way to Change the World* (1970, $3.95, 119 pp), presents the most comprehensive look at the modern world with understanding and encouragement for the Christian's role. Ford, a vice president in the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, developed this volume from his widely publicized speech to the U.S. Congress on Evangelism (published in Home Missions, Nov. '69).

Speaking to the theme of revolution, Ford calls for a revolution in our patterns of ministry and a revolution in the structures of our church life. He urges us to turn outward. And he brings evangelical Christianity directly to bear on human suffering, with as strong an emphasis as possible upon evangelism.

Perhaps these words best capture the spirit of the book: "I am not saying that we can build a perfect world by our efforts. . . . Nor am I saying that the Church should stop giving priority to evangelism and become a political lobby. What I am saying is that God wants to give through our lives as Christians a kind of preview, an advance demonstration of the love and peace and justice that will mark his eternal kingdom. Then, when from a platform of love in action we ask men to be reconciled to God, the church's message will sound with the ring of truth."

Wayne Dehoney, author of Broadman's *Set the Church Afire!* (1971, $4.50, 156 pp), comes through with the example of a church that does what both Havlik and Ford advocate. He writes, "I believe that (social action and evangelism) become functionally compatible and effective when the pulpit is strongly evangelistic and the church program is vitally social in action. . . . I believe a pastor must be a conservative in theology and a liberal in social action."

His 5,200-member pastorate in inner-city Louisville (Walnut Street Baptist Church) illustrates his words. The church operates a Help Office, a walk-in storefront staffed by volunteers; tutoring classes; weekday activities in a new million-dollar facility with bowling, skating, gyms and handcraft; a thrift shop for people in need; a multi-storied, 200-unit high-rise apartment providing low-cost housing for the elderly (under construction); and a staff minister of social work; it is also part of the Neighborhood Development Corporation, working for renewal and redevelopment of the area.

Dehoney wants to "quit this platform rhetoric and debating and get to doing evangelism and performing a ministry to the needs of the whole man."

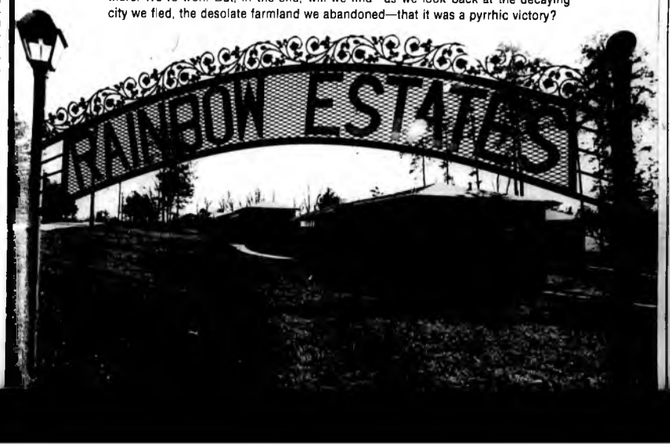
These books will speak to the conservative evangelical at the point of evangelism and social action, and their contribution is worthy. However, they will not speak to the liberal who is struggling with evangelism, for they assume evangelism and speak only encouraging words to one already convinced.

What appears to be needed is a book written by someone strongly identified with the social action position who has gained new insights in evangelism. Where is he? •

THE CHURCH IN SUBURBIA

It threatens to swallow us all, this monster of the mold, this maker of mass man. Like a slow-motion movie sequence, its movement was foreseeable, but there seemed no stopping the action: a silent population explosion producing a quiet building boom creating an unnoticed Dr. J.-Mr. H.-mobility: to become a new habitat of a new species: suburbia, home of suburbus sapiens.

• Perhaps the forces that created the suburbs were inescapable; perhaps destiny flung those little boxes across grassy meadows, an urban volcano errupting. No matter. A new society was born; a new culture spawned. As suburbia sprawled recklessly and heedlessly, it mothered new hopes, plans, ideals, concepts, dreams, attitudes, understandings. Which, in turn, nurtured fresh generations of suburbanites. Suburbanites who lost sight of the original reason for the exodus, whether to escape city chaos or preserve rural values. In two decades, the suburbs' influence changed mind-sets; suburban life-style became the electronically-reproduced, video-replay standard. Suburbia became more than a locale; it became a state of mind—probably your state of mind, wherever you live. Today it has so permeated the social milieu that few live in any area of the U.S. who do not have a mental attitude reflecting (and/or rejecting) suburban values and mores. And, in the thoughts of most, the perimeter of the cities continues to be the ultimate destination, the end of the quest. All of us, *we think suburban*. Arriving at this point of homogeneity has climaxed our struggle for the "good life." We are secure; we are there. We've won. But, in the end, will we find—as we look back at the decaying city we fled, the desolate farmland we abandoned—that it was a pyrrhic victory?




Look closely at this scene.
People. Homes. Cars. Street.
If you "read" it carefully,
you'll find that it says,
subtley, clearly, effectively,
THIS IS
SUBURBIA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON RUTLEDGE

The people are homogeneous. All are white and all of similar ages. Kids and pets abound.

Don Rutledge, the HMB's photographer, captured the scene in the front yard of his home in Rainbow Estates, a five-year-old suburban community 11 miles from downtown Atlanta, Ga. The people are Don's neighbors.

Each person pictured is a unique human being, different in hundreds of ways from the one next to him. Yet, when grouped, they become a cross section of suburbia. And as such, we're able to make a few generalizations about them, and about all suburban dwellers.

The lawns are clean and well manicured; the ubiquitious automobile (at least one) is in every drive. The homes indicate similar economic status. (Although suburbs may contain lower-middle-class income persons to upper-middle-class, they seldom have more than one economic level within one suburb.)

And the people are homogeneous. All are white. Adults are of similar ages; kids are stair-stepped.

Only one couple is beyond the "middle-aged" bracket. Greater numbers of elderly are moving into suburbs, but they are still a minority. And the neighborhoods aren't geared to their life-styles. "You can tell immediately who doesn't have children or pets," says one Rainbow Estates mother, "they're the ones offended by them."

The number of children of all ages reveals the family-child orientation of the suburb. Suburban man is home-centered. He seeks the best world for his family and feels, in the vortical urban culture, that the suburbs are best.

"Children are a prime consideration—absolutely," says Phil Buchen, a four-year resident of Rainbow Estates. "If it wasn't for the children, one could live in a downtown apartment, close to everything."

Phil and Nancy have four to consider—Annette, 12; Neil, 10; Phyllis, 8; Rob, 2—which means checking schools and community.

The "right" ones are important.

The same factors influenced Rainbow Estates newest arrivals, Loren and Bobbie Roberts.

"We move a lot," says Bobbie, "but nobody knows the future. When we came from Dallas, we wanted some place we'd feel comfortable living the rest of our lives. And we wanted to do what was best for the family."

In the Roberts' case, it meant hunting schools that Susan, 14, Shannon, 11, and Phil, 9, would attend, as well as discovering if other kids lived in the neighborhood.

It also meant discovering the sort of people in the area, "not necessarily race or creed," says Bobbie, "but to know what kind of community it was."

The distance Loren travels to work wasn't a factor. "We're more concerned with area," admits

RAINBOW ESTATES' TEENS IN FRONT OF NEARBY HIGH SCHOOL

GIRLS PLAY A GAME THEY MADE UP, CALLED "HORSES."

BASKETBALL IS A FAVORITE OF BOYS OF ALL AGES.

Before moving into the neighborhood, you check schools and community—the sort of people in the area.

Bobbie. And Loren points out that he has driven further.

For Loren, the suburbs offer other benefits. "I like the slower pace, the quiet."

Echoing him are hundreds of businessmen buffeted daily in the city, whose retreat to the sanity of the suburbs reflects an attempt to escape the confused, hectic citylife.

Rural symbols are easily seen—as Clara Sorrells' old dinner bell behind the house—and rural attitudes are heard often.

"I'd like to have even more space," admits Phil Buchen. "Maybe two or three acres someday. I would't mind driving another 15 minutes to work."

Wife Nancy agrees. "I resent the boxed-in-ness of suburban life. It doesn't give the kids free rein; children should be allowed to be children."

CLARA SORRELLS GARDENS

Says another neighbor, June Reed: "We enjoy being in a nice, congenial setting, where it's not congested. We've considered being out further. There's just too much country in me to want to live in the city."

House prices and resale potential also figure in suburbanities' decisions to buy homes, but they seem

Rural life and city life—the suburbs combine the best of two worlds.

NANCY BUCHEN HOLDS SON ROB WHILE BOBBIE ROBERTS WAITS.

JUNE REED SEWS WHILE DAUGHTER, CAROLYN, COLORS.

to rank lower on the family-man's scale of values.

The homes of Rainbow Estates, as those of other suburbs, are prizes for economic achievement; and they reflect the somewhat equal monetary accomplishments of their inhabitants.

For good or bad, zoning laws, building restrictions—costs—price lower-income groups out of the suburban market. Economic as well as ethnic homogeneity is common and, to most suburbanites, preferred.

"One likes to be with people of generally the same income level," says Buchen.

Phil grew up in a middle-class section of Chicago. "But the houses were close together and the yards small," he remembers. "I like the space here."

But, he adds, "I don't want to be isolated. I like the convenience to the city; the city offers change; it's stimulating."

Even accepting the criticism of "little boxes thoughtlessly cluttering the hillsides," suburbs provide city man with his greatest freedom while still offering him the advantages of cultural and sports events. In fact, low density suburban living is a compromise of two worlds, city and country.

Consequently, the rural influence is felt. Outdoor living—cooking and gardening—children running freely in the "safe" streets (and, in Rainbow Estates, across backyards whose owners have agreed not to build fences—to give the children more room to roam), all point to a rural flavor in the suburbs.

The religious background of many suburbanites leads them to look for a "nearby church." But few are as deeply influenced by church location as Aaron Hess. As minister of music at nearby Rainbow Baptist, Aaron moved to Rainbow Estates "to be close to my work."

It's Ivanear Hess who must drive downtown to work. In the suburbs, working wives are not uncommon, nor are their reasons for working unusual: need for additional income; self-fulfillment; escape from suburban boredom.

For, despite the "closeness" and "easy visability of neighbors," boredom does affect suburbanites.

Nancy Buchen feels the "impersonaliness, the loneliness of the suburbs.

"Perhaps it's more true of the times than suburbia, but we're lacking real warmth, small-town warmth. Here people lead their own lives. The men are too busy and too involved and gone too much. There's really nobody you can go to and talk about problems.

"It's a lonely kind of existence. If you've young kids, you have a reason to go out and meet people. If not, you have to hunt something to go out for.

"The community club helps some; but it serves no in-depth purpose. It meets social needs, but some of us seek more."

So Nancy, like most suburban mothers, fills her time with housework, caring for kids, cooking, reading, visiting neighbors, church work, trips to nearby shopping centers. There are worlds of things to hide the frustrations of the suburbs.

Superficial relationships characteristic of new suburban communities, such as Rainbow Estates, may partly result from mobility of suburbanites. "The turnover rate is high: the Buchens have moved eight times in 10 years; the Roberts 'move every two or three years'; the Hesses 'have moved around, in my work.' The Reeds have lived four different places in the nine years they've been married.

Perhaps this kind of suburban "instability"—plus such factors as husband absenteeism (from job-necessitated travel); success-orientation; status seeking; boredom and a sense of meaninglessness—is the cause of suburbanites' frequent family disorders.

In fact, serious family disintegration is too often found, especially in a community so stressful of the family.

"Neighborliness" of suburbanites doesn't indicate deep friendships. Phil Buchen comments that he knows his neighbors, talks with them often, but really isn't sure how they feel on particular issues. "I don't have that much contact with the people around me," he says. "The suburbs are just where I sleep and eat."

A common complaint about suburban life is that it draws resources from the city while giving little in return. Suburban man is accused of failure to recognize the interrelatedness of his suburban setting and the inner-city, and an inability to identify with the successes—or failures—of the city itself. Suburban man, in leaving the city, often refuses to measure its impact on his life.

As assistant dean, School of Allied Health Sciences, Georgia State University, Phil Buchen feels that education plays a role in an individual's outlook toward the city. "But I'd like to think most of my fellow suburbanites didn't have blinders on.

"This is one ball game and we're all playing. I think many of us are concerned with the problems of the city.

"One can pretty well see the results of urban problems on our own neighborhood—drugs have left downtown and come to our schools, for instance.

Maybe we do try to escape the problems, hoping they'll go away. But they won't. We suburbanites have to come to grips with them.

Failure to come to grips with the city's needs, and to become involved in alleviating them, isn't a suburban monopoly. It's a human problem.

But perhaps the isolation and insulation of the suburbs help deafen the cries of dispair, neglect and unconcern. And their sameness makes it hard to remember the defeats of the city.

N ROBERTS PLAYS GOLF ON SATURDAYS.

PHIL BUCHEN'S PROUD OF HIS 150-FOOT-LONG HEDGE

Failure to come to grips with the city's human needs ... is a human problem.

In describing his church, Phil Buchen commented that he liked it because of the diversity of the congregation: different people with different outlooks and a wide range of theological beliefs, from conservative to liberal.

"Where everybody believes the same, holds exactly the same doctrines, there's stagnation," he says. "Who grows? How are you challenged? How are you changed?"

Could those same questions be applied to the suburbs?•

A PREVIEW

Taking Captivity Captive

Are survival goals a valid justification for suburban church existence?

Characteristics of suburban life styles may affect the nature of the suburban church. Many of the same motivations prompting families to move to the suburbs influence the establishment and development of a church. Consequently, the church generally resembles its community and is sometimes indistinguishable from it.

With membership drawn almost exclusively from the neighborhood, there is little variety among its constituency. Economic levels are similar. The affluent abound; the poor and deprived are missing.

Also absent, generally, are members of racial minority groups. Racial segregation, accepted and frequently planned in neighborhood development, is a fact of life in suburban churches. Almost without exception, church in suburbia is a middle-class white organization or institution.

Linked with homogeneity is the recognizable insulation of the church. With members' income, status, occupations and general lifestyles varying only slightly, it is difficult to conceive and identify with problems and needs existing outside that community.

Because they "see" little community deterioration, a low rate of serious crime, and relatively new and serviceable church and school buildings, suburbanites can hardly imagine that any other standards exist. As dues-paying members of the white middle class, it is difficult for them to be aware of or relate sensitively to common or critical areas of human need existing outside the insulated society.

One reason for establishment and support of a church in the suburbs is the need for community. In a relatively unorganized neighborhood with few traditional supports for relationships, the congregation suggests a possible organization that represents the residential area, while offering individuals an opportunity to develop significant relationships in a worthwhile setting.

The wish to belong which produces the suburbanite's striving for community is authentically basic in suburban church planning and ministry. In seeking to become a meaningful center of the community, the church attempts to build warmth, friendliness and a hearty welcome into its structure of worship, teaching and service.

This sometimes results in an effort to combine affability of the small town church with the organized program of a metropolitan one.

Success in weaving these two into a single whole frequently produces rapid growth in membership, but not without accompanying problems.

Maintaining a sense of uniqueness relative to mission is difficult when the church is conceived basically as a community center. Doctrinal distinctives are less important when the essential characteristic is friendliness.

Nevertheless, without other traditional institutions, providing a sense of belonging is a crucially vital ministry of a suburban church.

Yet suburban churches may be impersonal, despite the "sense of community" emphasis. "Getting along" with others, an occupational preoccupation of middle-classism, is transported to the church and disguised as fellowship. Affability becomes the goal and "secondary relationships" result.

Also affecting impersonality is the goal- or action-oriented program of the church. Reflecting the business world of its professional and/or executive constituents, the suburban church stresses goals rather than people; achievements are primary and persons secondary. Superficial relationships lacking the personal involvement required of Christian fellowship are common.

Inwardness or internalization of ministry marks the suburban church from its beginning. The congregation needs buildings, financial support, organization and personnel to survive.

This initial requirement develops into a continuing, largely imaginary need, and the congregation has difficulty in divesting itself of a survival mentality. Long past the period of actual need, the bulk of the church's activity remains directed toward its own eventual gain, with inadequate attention given to ministering to, or being involved in, community life.

Unless it tackles the sophisticated social problems of suburbia, the church's organized ministry will probably be another evidence of inwardness. Aimed carefully at all the groups within the church, and concerned especially for their emotional stability, activities are provided which seek to involve at various levels the entire congregation.

And always the children come first. The church, like suburbia itself, is child-centered; giving children a sound religious education is a primary motivation for church membership.

Articles on the suburban church are a result of the *Consultation on the Suburban Church* sponsored by the Metropolitan Missions Department, HMB. They are an abbreviated version of materials to be found in an upcoming book. (Copyright applied for 1971.) Non-credited articles were prepared by study groups. For a list of group members, see page 47.

Some doubt that this concern for quality Christian education is genuine, citing examples of parental desire only for qualified babysitting. Children and youth activities may contain, however, the suburban church's greatest potential for mission.

Comparative newness and lack of tradition serve both as stimulant and deterrent in developing congregational life in the suburbs. With less pressure to conform, innovation and experimentation are more common. Freedom breeds enthusiasm for establishing and developing the church; acceptance and assimilation of new members may be quicker and easier because the church has no "Old Guard" to enforce tradition or intimidate newcomers—at least not in early years.

But as a consequence, suburban church leadership is often based on special skills or secular success, with little regard to prior church involvement, or commitment to present goals.

Lack of experience, different approaches, and uncertainty about present directions pose a dilemma for a young church struggling to establish priorities. As a result, the basis for ministry is often found in survival goals.

But are "survival goals" a valid justification for existence?

Each church is called to a constant critical examination of the nature of its suburban community and to determine if its values and goals are authentic. If valid, the church need not worry about its assimilation into the community; if invalid, however, the church must be redirected to deal with human need as found in the suburban system.

Community standards which are superficial and misleading must be challenged and efforts made to free the church from subchristian entanglements. In attempting to do this, the church must discover itself. No church can long exist on the luxury of self-satisfaction.

Biblically, the Christian church is an active community of persons who affirm Jesus Christ as Savior and serve him as Lord. The church seeks to reconcile both the individual and society with the person and message of Christ.

To fulfill its purpose, the church proclaims, teaches, ministers and seeks to develop shared-life within itself and with others. Where these elements exist, the church is present.

The nature of the church is dictated by God's good news. Cultural context contributes to organizational structure, but all structure must be subject to change. In a suburban setting characterized by mobility, traditional and historical patterns must not be allowed to imprison the church's purpose or prohibit its fulfillment.

Change must be a vital part of a church's theology.

So the congregation needs to understand itself, but also to understand itself in the process of the urban revolution. This involves preparing for the day when the suburb where the church is located becomes the inner-city—and that time will come! Planning in building can be used so that the church remains a community rather than becoming a place.

But planning also means that building—brick, glass, wood—is not the goal, but merely a means to reach an objective. Too long the church has been identified solely with a building or with an institutional structure.

As helpful as buildings are (in their proper place), the church is the living instrument of God for the redemption of man.

The church has no end value within itself, exists not to preserve itself as an institution, but to minister to mankind, healing the broken and separated parts of the metropolis' body.

Emil Brunner has written that the "church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no church; and where there is neither church nor mission, there is no faith."

"Missions is defined as what *the church* does," insists Hugo Culpepper of Southern Theological Seminary. "This is very important. Missions is what the church herself does. Missions is the expression of the life of the church."

Specific needs in church and community provide the focus and shape for many forms of ministry. Understanding community needs stimulates ministries.

Since the church is on mission in the world, this working with God and permitting him to work on and in and through us should not be relegated to "societies" or geographical areas.

The suburban church has often been accused of being a captive of its community—of suburbia.

Dare we then suggest it can be the suburban body of Christ? Perhaps we too long have struggled over an inconsequential dilemma; is it not time to "take captivity captive" and find ways to be and do the work of God in another secular culture?•

Change must be a vital part of a church's theology.

The suburban church exists not to preserve itself but to minister to mankind.

SECOND GLANCE

Hearing the Heartbeat of Suburbia

by Colin Williams

Two broad, seemingly contradictory, pictures

of suburban life have recently emerged.

The first views suburbia as primarily escape from urban problems, a white flight into privileged sanctuary, an attempt to avoid problems of race, poverty and crime that characterize the cities.

The flight to suburbs led to a new phenomenon: separation of home and children's activities from activities of business, politics, advanced education, health services; private life divorced from public life. Children, in this view, grow up in a sheltered private world, never exposed to problems of their culture.

The suburb, then, represents flight from responsibility.

Suburbia also drains off resources desperately needed to meet city problems; it leads, therefore, to cultural amnesia—suburbanites forgetting the needs of city-man, out of sight, out of mind.

When responsibility is felt, it causes a diffused sense of guilt, an awareness of undue privilege contrasted with other's situation. Acutely suburban children understand for the first time deep problems of society from which they have been shielded; often the result is rebellion against their culture. Unable to deal with their unspoken "guilt," they reject parents' way of life.

In this view, then, the suburb is primarily a problem, particularly if the church tries to create from a fashionable, characteristically suburbia membership disciples whose aim is to penetrate the life of their community with the way of Christ. The Christian demand that the strong bear the burdens of the weak is very difficult to inculcate in the lives of those who have fled the socially weak. A gospel that requires anamnesis (remembering all that God has done to save the weak and the lost) finds itself stymied by a suburban way of life that is designed to make life comfortable by encouraging amnesia (forgetting the misery and troubles of the deprived who are locked away in the city). The suburban church is in captivity, locked inside islands of privilege, out of touch with the deepest needs of society and unrelated to the processes by which those needs must be met.

Psychological man is a child . . . of technology. Self is his last frontier.

Expansive view often coexists with a tribal attitude . . . hostile to other groups and fearful of social processes that threaten suburban security.

This interpretation, however, has not gone unchallenged. A more positive view explains suburban life as an attempt to protect essential human values endangered by urbanization, as well as an attempt to develop a new configuration of these values so that man responds creatively to the new threats and possibilities represented in the rise of technological society.

In *The Radical Suburb*, John B. Orr and F. Patrick Nichelson see suburban man as an emerging type in the evolution of Western man. Instead of a negative escape mechanism, the suburb is a radical responsive adaptation to the arrival of the technological age.

A new social character emerges. Previously Western civilization has seen three dominant types: political man, religious man, economic man. Now arises psychological man, "a child not of nature, but of technology." He is less interested in conquering nature or mastering social structures. Self is his last frontier.

Robert Jay Lifton believes that protean man is appearing. In mythology, Proteus was capable of altering his shape at will; he refused to accept commitment to a single form.

So the new protean life-style sees man not as experimenting with life, moving easily from interest to interest and from attitude to attitude. The emphasis is not on principle but on experience.

Orr and Nicholson see an avant-garde person emerging from the suburbs—an *expansive personality* devoted to the process of enlarging experience and of expanding ability to play with ideas and possessions.

They note the popularity of kinetic art and momentum games. They point to the ease with which the new generation moves from one institutional commitment to another—United Fund to church committee to school board. They observe eclectic interests in religious and psychological movements, but relative disinterest in doctrine and fixed beliefs.

"Doctrinal pluralism" develops as suburbanites show a willingness to explore various belief systems; inquisitiveness concerning widely different forms of art, behavior, activities; and an open character style rather than a unified one. Suburbanites do not believe life must cohere around a single unifying vision.

Orr and Nicholson describe this style as "radical" because it departs from preceding Western attitudes. Western life has been characterized by its determination to bring order out of chaos; its goal-directed mentality; and its attempt to hold personal desires under the control of a common purpose. But expansive man seeks new dimensions of the self—from fascination with the body newly freed from old taboos to a search for new mental and emotional experiences.

There is, it seems to me, empirical evidence enough to indicate that this view of the suburb closely describes an important development now occurring in our society. The life-style of the suburbanite represents an important emergent.

That is not to say, however, that the "escape" view must be abandoned for the "search-for-new-values" view. The expansive outlook often coexists with a tribal attitude that is hostile to other groups and fearful of social processes that seem to threaten suburban security.

Perhaps the better way of interpreting the phenomena is to recognize that the powerful stimuli leading to the suburb were dual in character—a desire to escape the threatening developments in the city and the desire to preserve traditional values. In the suburb—separated from public life and major social problems—the quest for moral standards then led to the development of the expansive personality. The suburb provided the room for psychological man to develop his protean characteristics.

Other developments have also affected suburban man. We now have the first sizeable group of second-generation suburbanites. They did not flee the city; they were bred in the suburb. Their ignorance of the city is no amnesia. As a result, their sense of guilt is different—still poorly focused but perhaps less mixed with fear and hostility.

That relates to a second development. The introverted attitude of the suburb is changing. We are now beginning to see the emergence of suburban centers and coalitions seeking to develop new forms of responsibility for metropolitan problems.

The third development is that the clear break between the private life of the suburb and the public life of the city to which the suburbanite commuted, is now being overcome. Gradually business and industry are moving to the suburb; gradually some suburbs are accepting public housing, caring agencies, and planned relation to their metropolis.

These developments are only beginning; but they do represent a vital trend which suggests that the expansive man is not quite so psychological and apolitical as the Orr-Nicholson description suggests, nor quite so escapist as the suburban captivity image implies.

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A PROFILE

Visiting Suburban Heights

We begin by admitting there is no typical suburban church. But in order to understand the phenomena of suburban churches, perhaps we can, for a moment, put together a composite of characteristics that have been "habitual repeaters" in most studies of suburban congregations.

This article was adapted from "Early Growth Patterns of a Suburban Church," by O. D. Morris, secretary, Dept. of Planning Services, HMB.

First, you should realize that we are dealing exclusively with new congregations, and do not include in this discussion old churches which formerly served a rural-urban fringe constituency—even though they have many of the same characteristics as a suburban church.

The "typical" (don't wince) suburban church—we'll call it "Suburban Heights Baptist"—was started a year or two after the initial ground breaking for a large subdivision. SH was constituted nearly three years after the "boom" started, but had had a strong pastor and was chartered with more than 100 members.

Because it was located in an area of metropolis to which middle-class families fled, Suburban Heights would have had a hard struggle *not to grow*.

Its structures, attitudes and goals were molded, more or less, by its early constituents, which in turn attracted other constituents of like value systems and life styles.

And strong family orientation didn't hurt either; so family conscious was SH that its family planning dominated the church program. Since adults are strongly drawn together through their children's similar ages, more than by their own chronological ages, most families were of like age composition.

They were also similar in educational attainment and occupational pursuits. Such homogeniety demanded the least adaptation in teaching skills, curriculum and facilities as more families "poured in."

Another factor assuring SH of numerical growth was the flight from the city. "Threatened" by divergent life styles, conflicting attitudes and anonymity, they sought in the suburbs the security of new associations based on traditional mores and a recaptured sense of community.

The church, among the area's first institutions, became important for social contact rather than (or in addition to) spiritual development.

During the first five years, Suburban Heights' attention was focused on "newcomers," larger nursery facilities, first units, paved parking, organs, pews, classrooms and building committee meetings.

Additional staff positions were created and leadership development encouraged, but that was soon eclipsed by the frantic pursuit of any and all persons who would make a class or group, whether they are suited to it or not.

Many crucial errors were made during this period, but the church kept growing—what could be seriously wrong when new members kept walking the aisles? In an air of heady excitement, mistakes were not viewed in realistic perspective. The success syndrome supplied both pulpit and pew with rose-colored glasses.

While most additions (60-80 percent) during

Persons with other life styles —"not our kind"— do not feel welcome at Suburban Heights.

the first five years were by letter, baptisms account for most new memberships during the second five years. This was natural; the earlier baby boom which necessitated nursery facilities was paying off. As many in the swelling elementary classes "came of age," they were baptized.

Although reaching these youth was most desirable, it also kept the church "hooked" on the success syndrome. As a result, the physical plant was expanded.

Suburban Heights also felt the competition of school activities, and programs for youth increased in number and diversity. As its youth grew to face the "teen identity crisis," tensions were felt at home, with repercussions in the church. Staff additions centered around youth and recreation ministries.

Throughout the second five years many decisive misconceptions continued, but Suburban Heights could not keep from growing, both numerically and regionally. By the end of 10 years, SH had built a reputation as a "successful church," and this is where we find a concerned congregation.

During the first half of its second decade, SH's community began to change. The earlier suburban sprawl engulfed prime tracts which were most easily developed because of topography, utilities, thoroughfares or availability for purchase and subdivision.

Now spaces that were skipped become high density developments since land values necessitate multi-family dwelling units. Into these units come single young persons, the elderly, the divorced or widowed, the childless, the transient—a heterogenous mix for whom Suburban Heights never planned and is unprepared to reach.

Suddenly SH begins to notice other problems, including high drop out rate of teenagers, and subsequent drifting away of parents. The increasing number of week-end activities attract hard-working recreation/relaxation seeking, affluent suburbanites freed from the responsibility of bringing the children "up right" (in church). These same parents had served SH in many key positions, largely (we guess) to insure that the church school would function well "for the sake of the (my) children."

Maintaining missionary uniqueness is difficult when the church is basically a community center.

After 15 years, crucial errors can no more be overlooked than old fish.

Unaware of underlying reasons for its slowed growth rate, SH's leadership typically gets the cart before the horse and launches a building program, "because that's what moved us upward the last time." The urge to look better and provide more is intensified because of surfacing competition from new suburban churches as well as more established churches in the city.

Suburban Heights changes its motto from "Attend the church that is dearest" to "Attend the church that is nearest."

After about 15 years, the crucial errors, perpetuated misconceptions and faulty judgments can no more be overlooked than old fish. The success syndrome deteriorates into schizophrenia.

In the frenzy, with membership growth grinding to a rusty halt, SH "fires" the pastor because he cannot "produce" anymore. Church members become discouraged because what is needed is cultivative ministries instead of the same, tired follow-up on Sunday visitors; the "brick-and-mortar" concept of stimulating growth stimulated more debt than growth and when new people don't come, the old members are saddled with added financial burdens; youth reaching college age drain additional monies from church stewardship; old leaders, discredited because of the unaccustomed failures, are replaced; and dissertion grows as discontent increases.

To compound the problems and frustrations, the church is so structured to accomodate "our kind of people" that persons with other life styles do not feel welcome.

No two ways about it: after 15 years, Suburban Heights is in a bind.

And Suburban Heights is not alone. Statistically, its situation is increasingly typical, allowing us to draw some general conclusions and project some remedies. First, SH (and others like it) must not become drunk with success. (Even the Bible encourages temperance.) Most suburban churches grow as a result of inherent, homogeneity but as the area matures into the polyglot of modern urban life, diversification is imperative.

Second, it must have a strong theological base, which requires application as well as theory. This also demands an accurate concept of metropolis, in which the suburban community is recognized as only part of the total community. SH is therefore morally irresponsible unless it strives for a truly integrated metropolis.

Third, the suburban congregation must strive for a wholeness to the Christian witness in every area and among all strata of society. The congregation must seek Christian solutions to the puzzle of urban living; it must enrich city life rather than frustrate it by isolationism.

Specific needs in church and community provide the focus and shape for many forms of ministry. Understanding community needs stimulates ministries.

If Suburban Heights, and its sister churches facing the same crises, can learn and grow through their own mistakes, they still have a challenging, exciting future.•

LIABILITIES & ASSETS

PARKWAY VILLAGE CHARTER MEMBERS, DELBERT AND JUNE HAYNES WITH PHIL, 19, NANCY, 12, AND LAURA, 7

In the suburban church, will God always be for everybody?

By Everett Hullum, Jr

Suburban churches are, to a great extent, products of their environment. Homogeneous in membership, they are a cross-section of the subdivision that is their life-blood. As the suburbs is, so is the church. As the subdivision attracts new families, so does the church. Parkway Village Baptist Church is no exception.

Located in an all-white, middle-class suburb of Memphis, Tenn., Parkway Village has grown by about 100 members a year during its 12-year existence. Today its educational facilities overflow and its sanctuary fills on Sunday morning. It is a successful suburban church.

From the first, Parkway Village was a family church, appealing to new suburbanites. It still does.

"We're still the same friendly church we were when we started," believes Delbert Haynes. The Haynes, charter members of Parkway Village, are strong supporters of its programs and plans. "The church is part of us," June Haynes says.

"I do a lot of visiting," adds Delbert, "and I always emphasize that we have a program for every member of the family."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY E. HULLUM

DON AND DEIDRE COTTON WITH 8-MONTH-OLD SON BRENT

The family-orientation, child-centeredness of suburban churches is a strong selling point. Don and Deidra Cotton were just establishing their family when they moved to Memphis, where Don interns at Baptist Hospital. "I had a lot of adjustments to make," Deidra confesses. "We were in a strange town, Don's hours were irregular, and we'd just had Brent (now 8 months). It was through the church, especially my Sunday School class, that I was able to make the adjustment."

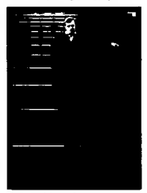
Don and Deidra chose Parkway Village because it was "near the apartment," but that wasn't the only consideration (there are at least six Baptist churches within a two-mile radius of the church). Just out of college, they were used to a young, dynamic pastor. "We sought the same thing here," Don says. "We found it at Parkway Village." Yet the Cotton's miss the diversity they had known at other churches, especially the elderly and those of other races.

"I wish we had other races," Don says. "But it's not the church so much as the community at large. We talked to the owner of a mobile home park and he told us he wouldn't do business over the phone; he didn't want a Negro family. It's the same at apartments."

Would the people at Parkway Village accept Negroes? "When we first came, we wondered," admits Deidra. "But then they had the Vacation Bible School (at a largely black housing project near the church). We've come to believe the people are genuinely trying to overcome their prejudices. That's helped us to overcome the feeling that we'd chosen the wrong church. We just feel like God's for everybody."

God may be for everybody, but at most suburban churches, he's difficult to find if you are not "a member of the family."

Parkway Village has few elderly couples, with no planned activities for those who do attend. Yet the church has had no trouble absorbing its few "old folks," like the Russells. "I just love it, the people are so friendly, the subdivision so beautiful," says Kathy Russell, 74, 18 times a grandmother and 19 times a great-grandmother. "We've got a fine pastor too," adds James, also 74. With several children attending Parkway Village, the Russells felt at home when they joined a year and a half ago. And they're not too sure they miss the company of others their age. "One thing that keeps us feeling not too old—not old as we are—is being around the children," says Kathy.



STUDENT WAYNE HAMMONS

ROOMMATES GALE KRISKE, RIGHT, AND MELANIE MARTIN

PARKWAY VILLAGE'S SENIOR CITIZENS, KATHY AND JAMES RUSSELL

But people the Russells age are still a minority, both in the suburb and in the church. "Sure the Russells and our other elderly members are well accepted," admits one staff member. "But they're so few in number. What will happen when—if—others come into the neighborhood, I don't know. We haven't had to face that yet." Nor has Parkway Village had to face the problem of ministering to singles—the unmarried young adults moving rapidly into expanding apartment complexes near the church. Wayne Hammons, 23, a student at Memphis State, grew up in Parkway Village, but now he comes "just to morning worship," largely because the church is "home." "But I don't really think it offers much to kids my age."

Gale Kriske, 25, echoes Wayne. This year, for the first time, Gale is a Sunday School dropout. "I've always taught before," she says. "Now I'm not teaching and I miss not being with people my own age. I like the girls in my class but they're married and I have nothing in common with them. They talk about kids and home mostly.

"We're losing a lot of single kids as they get into their early 20s; they don't feel at ease around married people with kids. We've had apartment people visit, but they don't usually come back. They don't find too much.

"It'd be nice if we had a place to meet other young people our age," Gale says wistfully. "You don't want to lower your standards and go elsewhere to meet people, but if you get too lonely. . . ."

People at the church have told Gale that she should "go to another church where you can be with others your own age." But, because she loves the church, the people, the pastor, Gale stays at Parkway Village.

Her roommate does not. A graduate assistant at Memphis State, Melanie Martin, 23, has visited Parkway Village but does not attend regularly "because the church has nothing to offer me. Brother Mike (pastor Michael Champlin) is really with it; he has something for everyone," Melanie says, "but there is simply no fellowship where I can share ideas and opinions with others in my age bracket." Melanie thinks the church should plan "something special for people our age. If you want to recruit them, you have to give them more than talk about babies and each other.

"Why should I have to go to church downtown?" she asks. "Why can't I find a church in this community. The pastor is great, the people are great, Parkway Village is great, the potential is here, but . . ." Parkway Village's inability to provide for the needs of those like Gale, Wayne, Melanie and others like them may be largely from inexperience, rather than indifference. Young single adults are a new species in suburbia. Like most suburban churches, Parkway Village has not had to grapple with that ministry—yet.

THE BOOMING, GROWING PARKWAY VILLAGE YOUTH CHOIR

But the time will come. For the babies and young children of the founding fathers are the teens of today—and the young adults of tomorrow. If one can judge from present success, Parkway Village has potential to develop programs to meet their needs, once it sees the need.

Today's teens are finding appeal in a growing, exciting youth choir (club?—"You don't have to be able to sing") program. Debbie Owens, 16, and Jamie Joslin, 15, both new members, came to Parkway Village largely because of the fellowship with others their age—that means the choir, " which attracts more than 60 teenagers.

"Things run pretty good," admits Pat Justice, 16, a member of the church since he was nine. "Brother Ken (Brixey, minister of music) makes it tick."

Like clockwork, in fact. In about three years, Brixey has built a program so strong that church sometimes interferes with school (rather than the other way around.) To most of its members, choir comes first. "It's because things are so updated," says Debbie. "The music isn't the same old stuff. It's a challenge." Ann Nelson, 18, nods agreement. "Around here, kids are thought about. Everything is done with youth in mind." Youth is, in fact, characteristic of a suburban church. Begun by young families, it continues to attract young families. Church and members grow old together. And by the time they are old, the suburbs have passed them by and they are swallowed by the city.

LADIES SEXTET MEMBERS PEGGY DAY, ANNE STRICKLAND, GENEVA JUSTICE, PAT RINGOLD, ELLEN MARTIN, SUE EPPS, PIANIST NANCY CHAMPLIN

In the meantime, the church's "youth" is an asset, believes Ellen Martin, one of the members of the Ladies Sextet. "The thing I like best about Parkway Village," she says, "is that we've never had to fight tradition. We've never had conflict. We've got a relaxed atmosphere."

Adds Peggy Day, "We don't stick to the old things; we experiment. We try new ways." As mothers, both are pleased with the church's activities for children; the only change Peggy Day would make is to add more space; "we're overcrowded," she says. Both women like the "compatibility, the fellowship, the creative church programs." And the sermons that aren't "the same old six's and seven's," says Ellen Martin. "Brother Mike makes you think."

"We don't need any monuments. Our emphasis is on the individual and community, not the church and its property."

PARKWAY VILLAGE PASTOR MIKE CHAMPLIN

PHOTO BY STEVE WALL

Perhaps that's because Brother Mike" thinks himself. Across a desk littered with papers and books ranging from Huber to Fosdick, Mike Champlin talks about the problems and potentials of his church:

"We're a community church. If they're here, they're our responsibility—young, old, black, white. Primarily, for us, our community is families. White, middle-class. We've concentrated our ministry on them." Someone has said that a church must take it's shape from the shape of its community. "That's true. And there's not an area of this community we're not trying to touch. The apartments. To get after those apartments is like commandos trying to find a beachhead. But we're trying. Older people. We'd love to have them. You know, suburban churches are like teen-age kids; they lack the wisdom and experience that age can bring.

"Whoever they are, if they're in our community we've got to find a way to minister to them."

You're overcrowded. What are your plans?

We're going to use our money wisely. We plan two new buildings—one sanctuary (the old one will be a gym) and one educational building. Then we'll know that's it. We've reached our place in life.

"Our emphasis is on the individual and then the community, not on the church and its property. What's the use of multi-million dollar buildings, in helping people to raise their kids better, helping teenagers to grow into Christians, we may be phasing ourselves out. "We don't need any monuments. Drawing people into the church doesn't seem so important anymore—unless it helps people where they live.

"Look, the suburban church can't be all things. But it can struggle to develop conscientious Christians in life, Christians who respond to needs in the community rather than react to them.

"Our greatest potential? Creative, affluent, sophisticated people. Our greatest problem? The same as in every other suburban church: getting modern Christians to apply what the church really stands for—that Christ is Lord and should really make a difference.

Generalities tend to oversimplify, nevertheless we close with one. At its best, the suburban church offers a homogeneous group of people a chance to have worship/fellowship/serving experience with others like themselves—"my kind." At its worst, the suburban church offers exactly the same thing. In one case, the servanthood is turned outward; in the other, it's inward. Homogeneity is an asset; homogeneity is an liability.

Mike Champlin would add a footnote: "... unless leadership converts the liability to a total asset; leadership has to create tension by looking for areas where the church can serve. Otherwise that's right." ▪

MAN & GOD

Evangelizing the Suburbs

by Martin Marty

In the United States, suburban man is "majority man." More people inhabit suburbs than live in cities, and the trend is greater population migration toward the cities perimeters.

In addition, majority man is "established." He is the finest product of the culture's art. In the eyes of others, his position in the middle class and his location in the relative affluence of the suburbs positions him among the world's "haves."

"Suburban establishment" is so widespread and so obvious that the suburban dweller seldom reflects consciously upon it. the people who fill his field of vision are like him; he tends to forget the people he left behind in his flight.

Today suburban man is "multi-class minus one." Lower-middle, middle, upper-middle and upper class exist in various suburbs (but rarely in a single suburb). Significantly, only the world's poor are not represented.

Suburban man has been characterized in sociological stereotype as "family man." But with continuing deterioration of the city itself, this situation is changing. People fearful of crime and lawlessness, desiring to avoid urban pluralism, or wary of economic investment in a setting of decay, are finding multi-unit suburban living attractive.

Single, childless, and retired people have joined the "flight" from the city. But the predominant suburban population is still familial; and the family determines the ethos.

It would be foolish to reduce all the desires, hopes and necessities implied in the suburban move to a simple set of generalizations. Yet a few explanations seem plausible. Richard Sennett, in *The Uses of Disorder*, summarizes:

"The historical circumstances of depression, war, land value, and racial fear all have played a role, but they are all offshoots of a more central change in the last decades that has led to the strength of suburban life. This deeper, more hidden element is a new attitude about the conduct of family life within and without the city."

Sennett believes this "new attitude" seeks to simplify the social environment. I prefer to say that the suburban dweller seeks an alternative ordering of the arrangements of his life toward coherence, homogeneity, purity, and simplicity.

In his flight, suburban man rejects disorder, anarchy, heterogeneity, chaos, and undependability of urban life. The fact that he moves is not necessarily good or bad; it *is* "perfectly natural"; the glittering promise of the suburbs lures many people.

Suburban dwellers seek an alternative ordering of the arrangements of their lives.

From the viewpoint of evangelism it is important only to realize that the suburbanite is searching for an alternative ordering of the arrangements of his life. In the voluntary retreat from urban incoherence into suburban ordering, special pressures are put on the family. Gallup polls find suburbanites more concerned over campus disruption than over war or racial tension. The generation gap is the most alarming social reality; questions of sexual morality draw more interest than do those dealing with world hunger—why? Because these evidence the failure of the intensified family experience to be rewarding.

In the face of these attitudes, what has the church been doing during the quarter century of the suburban move?

It has been energetic and productive; many of its activities have looked evangelistic. If evangelism is defined merely as expansive or enlarging. As a consequence, the suburbs are dotted with churches of every denomination; almost everyone is in walking distance of a church, though almost no one ever walks.

Churches are accepted features of suburban life; they are part of the plot plan, fully integrated into suburbia.

In fact, most evangelism has meant bringing people to church membership, largely through retrieval or retention of urban (or rural) church members who relocate. Except for "family" baptisms, actual addition of newcomers to church life has been rare.

Recent downward trends in membership, building, attendance and support have called into question many activites of years of membership expansion, including the intense emphasis of family life.

Familial strengthening has been enhanced by activities of the suburban church, whose every feature seems designed to reinforce the "alternative arrangement" promised by the suburbs. Exceptions are infrequent: liturgical experiment disrupts the order; sermons dealing with problems other than those found in the suburbs, problems which involve "outside" persons (black/white relations, labor/management conflicts, war/peace situations, questions of media or government) are treated as part of "another's" world. Conflict is carefully controlled, largely trivial (hours of services, skirt-length of minister's wife), leaving "uncontrolled" hostilities to be expressed subvertly or away from the gathered congregation.

I have deliberately concentrated on "parish" and "family" because, barring unpredictable cultural upheavals, they will remain part of the suburban problem; they will also affect the substance of evangelism. For when congregation or family simply absorbs conditions of suburban life, they are characterized by drift, aversion, inauthenticity, anomie, irrelevance. Such people are not "evangelized," if this term applies saving health, wholeness and the quality of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Evidence that meaningful evangelization has not occurred is abundant. Has the suburbanite altered *all the norms* through which he perceives his environment? Does his political behavior and social attitudes reflect a "new world" outlook with Christ as center? Or is the suburban Christian more "suburban" than "Christian."

Evangelization means to proclaim faith in Christ, to give witness by word or action in one's own choices of life; it implies a communication of this vision to others who begin to understand and let it become a part of their lives.

The result would be a conscious alteration of existence, a participation in an order which transcends both urban and suburban, which tolerates a measure of complexity or disorder, finding the hidden reality that "all things cohere in Christ." (Colossians 1:17)

If evangelism which moves beyond the suburban condition is to occur, certain barriers must be overcome.

The first hindrance is a widespread belief that evangelization is somehow immoral. This charge has a legitimate base, in that evangelism often involves coercion, exploitation, manipulation, misuse of persons, "butting in," condescension, false advertising and/or proselytizing.

However, evangelization occurs all the time it may be overt or subvert or covert, implicit or explicit, brutal, or subtle, ineffective or effective, good or bad, but it goes on "formally" (if without Christian substance) in virtually all sustained relationships.

All conscious life "pro-jects"; man, in a sense, is his own pro-ject. He reveals his nature, including his eternal hopes, in the decisions and arrangements he makes. He is, in effect, commending his way of life by presenting his person to others.

All conscious life "pro-jects"; man, in a sense, is his own pro-ject.

Christian discipleship is, by its very existence, symbolization that evangelizes. It is a commendation of self in sustained human relations, so that others are recipients of the gift of grace in Christ. The issue is not, then, whether to evangelize, but how?

A second hurdle is the prevalence of the myth that people no longer convert.

The myth says nothing significant occurs in evangelism. But the secular setting makes clear that this is not the case. Whenever a young person adopts, more than superficially, the "hippie" or "yippie" life-styles, he experiences conversion, and his every perception of the straight and square world is changed; communication with people in that world is different than formerly.

Other people, unsure of themselves, frustrated by the denial of the suburb's promise, its churches, its stilted definition of family life, are evangelized and are converted to other "religious" options. It happens every day.

A third, more consequential problem gropes for a definition of evangelism. To most suburbanites, evangelization means—never forget it!—"bringing to church membership." Hiding behind the euphemisms is the myopic concept that when one "joins a church", he merely affiliates with a congregation, similar to membership in a social club.

Denominational statistics do not measure the depth of the evangelization process, or count as evangelized those who make arrangements apart from conventional church life. Therefore, becoming a church member—even an intense and active one—tells us almost nothing about any alteration in a person's view of reality.

A fourth problem is the argument that evangelization can occur only when congregations, denominations or ecumenical movements undergo sufficient reform to house converts or those newly intensified. This is precisely the wrong reading of how to get people to participate in a movement; the finished product does not need them.

Evangelization is a new possibility when it is characterized by "intervention" or "intentionality." By intervention I mean that now, while people seem to be shopping for values, and perhaps taking on whole new world-views, the Christian does not wait until everything has changed—and then announce his relevance. He intervenes in midpassage, while everything is being appraised and bargained for.

"Intentionality" simply refers to the quality or fact of being intentional—"done on purpose." Phenomenologists elevate intentionality into technical realms by relating it to the decisions which are consequent upon our being "conscious of" a "pro-ject." Rather than become twisted and tangled, let's just say that evangelism should be characterized by intentionality.

How is that applied? Evangelism begins with conscious and intentional acts; they may be obvious and immediate or implicit and indirect, reliant upon tradition or cultural lore. Ordinarily, however, evangelism cannot rely on "outside" factors and must be symbolized or verbalized to relate God's action in Jesus Christ. Because Christianity alters the arrangements or order of man's life, it will be revealed

Evangelism is fulfilled only when the evangelized is brought into "intentional community."

through an individual's intentional references to events, signs, symbols and constructs associated with Jesus.

But evangelism is fulfilled only when the evangelized is brought into "intentional community," a condition which offers him an alternate ordering of existence. This is the heart of our thesis, the idea which separates it from the traditional concept of evangelism which demands men know the proper formulae about Christ, express the proper piety, and be accounted for by becoming church members.

In practical terms, this means that the church, as it is now, cannot "house" the product of evangelism, the person who has made the new creation in Christ his pro-ject.

Nor can the family house him. Both institutions in the suburbs have tried and failed, despite marvelous adaptations and signs of devotion, courage or energy. Today's congregation is too diffuse to become "intentional," and today's family is too intense to bear the weight of the evangelized's new hopes. Both have to be broken open and changed.

W. Paul Jones, in *The Christian Advocate*, urges the liberated layman to join "the intentional family." Only thus can he express his responses to world need. The church is dependent upon the economically solvent and politically cautious. "Inevitably the Gospel is compromised by expedience. . . . Creative ministries are starved out." Yet "the gospel is a demand to which men are subject. It is not something determined by majority vote. It is God's gospel, not ours."

Yet even a small parish (a few families in size) necessarily falls into such compromise and lives "by majority vote" instead of by the Gospel. But suppose there were an alternative, a plan for every "family"—no matter what composition the family took—nuclear family, single person, or that portion of a family which has experienced conversion to intentional community.

Intentional clusters—the new "ecclesiastical communes"—would reappraise the order of the city.

Suppose in the act of "joining the church" every evangelized "family" had to take on a specific covenant expressing a specific intention. This intention could constantly be altered, added to or changed. But the person, his family, his part of a congregation would all have to express "consciousness of" some very specific role or vision which would alter their order of existence (even as it teaches people to be tolerant of disorder).

Such counsel goes against the harmonistic, homogeneous and anti-pluralistic views of the parish advocated for the past quarter century. It threatens congregations as we now know them. For to achieve fulfilment, the "intentional family" would have to seek out and bond with a number of others.

This approach might breed cliques which would disrupt the serenity of the congregation. But the stakes are higher: the intentional family would have regular counsels, not full of chatter but about real business concerning the fulfilment of intentions as Christians.

Clusters of families would meet, almost as in a commune, to measure their goals and purposes and performances. Whereas the evangelized now frequent church premises two hours a week, they would then gather as "church" much more frequently—how else could they caucus about assignments and work? How else could they find time to interpret their activity in the light of the Word?

Intentionality would follow the lines of people's interests. Some families would concentrate on worship or the level of the arts in the local Christian community; some would express expertise in the life of the "expand a family," devoting themselves to foster care, hosting foreign students, making hotels out of their homes, adopting; still others might concentrate on youth culture.

Some intentional clusters would reappraise the disorder of the city and carry its meaning to fleeing suburbanites. Others might concentrate on relations with migratory workers in areas near suburbs. Christianity and business ethics, Christian mission in downtown areas, devotion to causes of peace or draft counseling, Bible study—any of these could provide focus for the alteration of people's circumstances and perceptions.

Advocacy of such an approach may sound very radical; it is less so that the "underground church," which intends to kill organized congregations; it is less so than the non-familial commune. Instead, it "intends" the transformation of congregation and family, the suburban normative Christian arrangements, to help people extricate themselves from the suburban malaise—for the sake of Christ and others.

As a mass plan, it may not work. But wherever it is put into effect, even by two or three families, some sort of transformation will occur. The "disorder" built into churches lives by the interchange and constant fluidity of intentional groups will produce a higher level of conflict, but one with creative potential.

The result of these intentionalities should be that the suburbanite who is evangelized will gain again what he now lacks, the sense of being part of a movement. The people of God will take on new reality. People in the church will organize as other movements do: they will recognize their plight, hear their promise, and be invited through the projection of future symbols and commitment to intentional actions, to participate in the formation of a new and liberating history.

I said "will." Perhaps the word is "could." Nothing utopian is to be fancied here; only something salvific, which in Christian terms means an ability to face the disorder and broken-ness and partial solutions available to Christians in this world.

Will suburban churches choose this mode of evangelism-into-intentional-community? Who can say?

But short of some equivalent for it, suburbanites who are evangelized will have no deeper experiences than joining congregations; they'll leave the world approximately where it is, while creating the illusions of order; they'll taste death in the midst of life.

Meanwhile, almost inevitable statistical decline will continue in suburban, as well as city religious institutions.

There must be superior ways of trying to alter men's visions and actions than those which no longer serve us in the particularized and cozy suburban world we have inherited. ▪

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NEW WORD VIEW

Communicating in the Velvet Ghetto

by William Self

Suburbia, in the modern mind, is often equated with Utopia. But it would be wise for us to remember that the suburbs are no paradise, and suburban man has just exchanged one set of problems and needs for other, more sophisticated, ones.

The hopelessness, the despair, the physical degradation that crushes the life of the slum-dweller may not plague suburbanites' lives, at least to the same extent it does their uptown neighbors. But as he rides (in his station wagon) through the cocktail party circuit, as he weaves the streets of status, as he winds the PTA-country club-Rotary-lined neighborhoods, suburban man faces his own mentally padded cells in his own Velvet Ghetto.

The quiet desperation of the Velvet Ghetto can be as damaging to personhood as any urban malady.

If we understand the pressing problems of suburban man—if we see him as a man needing the healing ministry of Jesus Christ—we must ask ourselves, "How do we communicate to anyone in such a place in such an age?" Somehow, the old cliches do not seem to hold any meaning. Words like grace, repentence, salvation seem empty in the light of alienation, loneliness, hopelessness.

Like most ministers trained in traditional methods, I arrived—quite suddenly—at a time and point of experience which found me unprepared to communicate with a highly educated congregation that would not be stampeded by promotional gimmicks, or manipulated by an ecclesiastical con man. I discovered to my surprise that the old methods of ministry no longer worked, that in the Velvet Ghetto, old styles were stifling and worthless. Trying to use them only compounded the frustration for me and the congregation.

In my personal struggle to communicate the gospel, I have been greatly influenced by communications philosopher Marshal McLuhan. In *The Medium Is the Message*, McLuhan contends that "societies have been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication."

Our anxieties result, he says, from "trying to do today's job with yesterday's tools and yesterday's concepts." We are now involved in an electric drama.

According to McLuhan, we are living in an age of impulsion. During the mechanical age man extended his body into space and time by means of mechanical technology; the rifle is the extension of the fist, the car an extension of the foot.

In our new electronic era, the maze of mass circuitry is an extension of our central nervous system, with the world converging on the brain, the seat of the nervous system. The computer is an extension of the central nervous system, the radio an extension of the ear, the TV an extension of the eye. Electronic extensions incorporate us with the whole of mankind.

Because of this we participate in depth in the consequences of the actions of us all; we are compelled to commitment, regardless of our own points of view. Key words for this neon-lighted age are wholeness, empathy, depth of awareness, involvement, participation.

As the mechanical age was slow, the electronic age is fast. As the mechanical age was fragmented, this age is integrated.

Space and time are relegated to a lesser role of importance, and the capitals of the world are as close to us as our own hometown. Distances have been erased. Earth has become the global village. Tribalism has returned.

No longer can we afford the old nationalism, individualism, or fragmented specialization of the mechanical age. The cog-and-wheel age has been replaced by copper-wire-and-transistors, just as the iron age replaced the stone.

The revolution in thinking—from linear thought to simultaneous thought—has forced us to reexamine our methods of learning. Mere

Quiet desperation in the Velvet Ghetto can be as damaging to personhood as any urban malady.

collection, classification and repetition of factual data are no longer necessary; machines do that work; we have no time for such useless activity.

The technique of suspended judgment is a discovery of the twentieth century. Each moment new information replaces new information—*Now* becomes old at the speed of light. To think in this modern age, man must live mythically, replacing his fragmented ways of mechanical age thought with TVized communications patterns that form instantly on the brain's picture tube.

As the first generation to grow up bottle-fed on television, the young understand the electronic age. And they cry for immediacy. The Now Generation drives most establishment types up the wall with its instantaneous thinking processes. This is the basis of their discontent with traditional learning processes. They are no longer satisfied with propositional truth; existential truth meets their needs. In the electronic age, communication is as much felt as it is understood. Reasoned discourse is relegated to the attic, along with starched collars and high-button shoes.

The theological community is aware of changes occurring from the communication revolution. The language problem has been recognized as a central issue in theology. Martin Heidegger, who has grasped a new and profound understanding of the function of hermeneutics, asserts that language itself is interpretation. It is profoundly existential in nature. Whenever a person speaks, he is already engaged in hermeneutics, for he is interpreting his world.

Here a radical shift takes place, for hermeneutics is no longer fundamentally the stating of principles whereby ancient texts are to be understood, but a profound investigation of the form and content functions of verbal communication. Traditional hermeneutics functions occur only in certain cases.

Reality reflects itself through the word in the event, but does not reflect itself through all words. For modern man no relation exists between words and meaning. Meaning is in the mind, not in the symbols of communication. Language is rapidly becoming meaningless and cannot move beyond translation and self-understanding.

To communicate in the suburban church with yesterday's language is difficult. Words are impotent; formulas of the past are no longer self-interpreting, nor are truths self-evident. Our situation seems to be different from the "Word" in its original setting. Therefore, our preaching of a past event is vacuous.

If preaching is on this level, we may expect an empty church. For electronic man in the computer age, harassed and despairing, will not respond to dead language which does not create event. Nor can the speaker demand a hearing simply because of his ordination or tradition.

The religious language crisis is primarily due to a misconceived understanding of authority. Confirmation of authority lies in the hearer. In what a speaker says is uttered in the hope that the hearer can identify with the words spoken. The hearer's response must be what the speaker can never say: "This is it!"

The speaker can at best say, "This is it for me; here is the primordial word that I have heard. It has helped me in this hour. I recommend it to you."

This word-event need not be either religious or verbal. It may be any touch or communication if it enlightens and aids my existence. It then does for me exactly what the word of Jesus does and is, therefore, Christian.

Comedian Buddy Hackett tells of the one and only time he appeared on stage without clothes. He did it during his act one night just to see what it was like. The upshot was that it did not give him any unusual sensation; he was disappointed until he discovered why: all his professional life he had been appearing on the stage emotionally naked. Hackett said; to do it physically was no radical change. Isn't this a clue for successful communication?

In the existential situation of an electronic age, how does one transmit his message? We no longer have the authority of tradition behind us; people do not do right just because they know what is right; so the stark transmission of facts will not do the job.

Most of us have been trained to believe that the logic of our thought will persuade men. But all our gimmicks have failed over the long haul; substitutes for the gospel have been stones instead of bread.

Some are tempted to believe that the computer and transistor have rendered the gospel impotent, never realizing that it is our failure to understand both the communicating process and the nature of the message that has performed the task for us.

In John's gospel, Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well. When the conversation is over, she tells of having met a stranger who knew all about her and *still accepted her*. The key to Jesus' communication was affirmation.

Jesus affirmed this Samaritan woman in her person and it changed her. Jesus did not waste time discussing the religious question of which mountain to worship on, nor did he waste the opportunity by condemning her background and life style. She was already aware of how disappointing this was. He let her know he loved her as she was, where she was . . . warts and all. The note of affirmation is strong throughout the ministry of Jesus.

In the electric era, mass circuitry is an extension of our central nervous system.

Remember also that Jesus' authority was not the ancient reference piled upon another, but rather authority authenticated by his own being. It was existential and not propositional. Could it be that the common people heard him gladly because he affirmed them in their personhood, and he spoke open and naked?

At this point I suggest a new model for communicating the gospel to suburban man: affirmation. Haim Ginott, in his *Between Parent and Child* and *Between Parent and Teenager*, mentions the need for affirmation in different circumstances. He points out that as parents we too often attack the personhood of the child rather than the acts he has committed. Parents have a perfect right to talk about their children's actions, as long as their personhood is not threatened.

One of my children brought home a report card far below the level of his ability; it reflected poor learning and study habits. When I saw it, I flew into a rage. In this desperate manner I used every emotional and logical appeal I knew to motivate him to do better and to express my disapproval.

As I reflect on it now, I remember that during my tirade my son was emotionally turning me off. He stopped listening until I threw in the clincher. I told him that if he continued making grades like that, he could not go to college and would end up being a bum. In my anger I implied that anyone who made grades like that was already a bum.

Hours later, after we had all retired, I heard a quiet sobbing coming from his room. I went in and asked what the trouble was. He replied that he was crying because he had been called a bum; he did not want to be a bum.

It suddenly hit me that, in my rage, I had attacked his self-image—his personhood, not his actions. This was where his struggle was! I had "blown it." I begged him to forgive me.

Let's take this model of affirmation to the church. The New Testament refers to the church as a person. It is an organism, not an organization. It is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ.

To communicate with suburban man, let's begin by affirming the church in her personhood. If love is as powerful as we say, let's begin to love her. Let's restore to her fellowship the New Testament concept of intimacy.

Affirmation will deliver the church from the need to control in order to gain action, and it will destroy the manipulative nature of most of our rank-and-file church members. When the church by word, deed, and atmosphere says to people, "You are loved and affirmed as you are," wholeness will come. This is where communication begins, and where community is created. No organism will function correctly until it is affirmed.

The electronic age has produced an empty, cold, isolated, alienated society. The church seems sterile. We now have proximity but no intimacy, immediate transmission of information is not communication in its deepest levels.

To fill the wordlessness, we listen to filtered words in music, read *Peanuts* cartoons, see movies. But the void remains, and we shout silent jabberwocky at each other across the word-chasms.

Churchmen too have been guilty of meaningless chatter when more was needed. We have spoken to the mask rather than the man. The integrity of confessed pain, and the warmth resulting from our common nakedness creates intimacy and communion. This is where communication begins.

Webster's first definition of communication is "to impart, to pass along, transmit, or to-make known." But an alternate definition is "*to receive Holy Communion*." Communication begins when two are inside of each other intimately and affinitively—that's HOLY COMMUNION—that's Holy Communication!

At the affirmative communication model I stand. For me, "this is it." My struggle to make faith relevant for suburban man has driven me to this place; for, as I implied in the beginning, suburban man is still man, and, at his core, little different from any other man, except that he has found some beautiful ways of masking his pain.

In an atmosphere of affirmation, acceptance, and wholeness, suburban man's life can truly, honestly flourish.

For too long we have created church programs and shamed our people into taking part. "If you are a Christian," we have implied, "you ought to be doing this." This has been relatively ineffective. However, when a congregation feels a spirit of affirmation, a natural sense of mission to all disadvantaged peoples—both "up and out" as well as "down and out"—naturally flows.

Before this spring is opened, you cannot get people to minister; after it gushes, you cannot stop them.

The language of communication permeates the Christian faith: "proclaim," "go ye," "word," "preach," "tell," "publish" are part of our New Testament vocabulary. If understanding that our word is that of a pilgrim spoken from this heart to another's heart, from his life experience to another's then old words such as grace, redemption and salvation will have renewed meaning. They will again be the vessels for the liberating word . . . Holy communication will take place, even in the velvet ghetto.•

Self is pastor, Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.

Language is rapidly becoming meaningless; words are impotent.

"You are loved and affirmed as you are." No organism will function correctly until it is affirmed.

SELF AFFIRMATION

Does Bill Self speak "for"—as well as "to"—suburban man?

Bill Self is suburban man. He lives in a brick home in an exclusive neighborhood in northeast Atlanta, Ga. He has two cars, two sons, Lee, 12, and Bryan, 11, and one wife, Carolyn.

Distinguished-looking in his well-tailored suits, with an easy smile and open disposition, Bill Self exemplifies the best of his breed.

Out of his role as suburban man, Bill Self has learned to speak to suburban men. Intuitively perhaps as much as intellectually, Bill Self communicates with suburbanites. And they respond.

The result is a dynamic growing suburban church with an expanding, maturing concept of ministry.

Wieuca Road Baptist Church, which William L. Self pastors, is an atypical church. Its growth has been amazing, from a mission to a membership of 3,300 in 16 years. In a recently completed $2 million sanctuary, 2,000 attend Sunday morning worship; 1,500 come back at night.

YOUTH PACK WIEUCA ROAD.

PHOTO BY KNOWLAN BENFIELD

SELF APPEARS WEEKLY ON A LOCAL TV TALK SHOW.

WIEUCA MEMBERS TEACH SUNDAY SCHOOL AT A MISSION.

Self builds family among the diversity of a church.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON RUTLEDGE

CHILDREN ARE FASCINATED DURING DAY-CARE'S "STORY-TIME"

WIEUCANS HAVE AN ACTIVE TUTORING MINISTRY.

white youth—was held i the gym of the recreatic building.

Approximately one fourth of Wieuca's budg goes for missions—wha Self calls "pre-evangelis activities."

The key to Wieuca's success is slippery to grab. Part of it may be the emphasis on missions. "We do more tha sing hymns," says Self "Outreach is important

But more important may be Self's desire to create community, to build a concept of famil among the diversity of a church.

Says Self, "I've had people say to me, 'I don t know why I stay at Wieuca, except the people here love me.'

"In his cold, impersonal world, we try to say, 'This is your family; this is your community; we love you' We emphasize the intangibles."

Self also emphasizes affirmation, a sense of loving personhood.

Self feels strongly about a vigorous pulpit ministry, free of congregational pressures and prejudices. His sermons have hit hard on such controversial topics as Vietnam, race, ecology, sex.

But when Self speaks it is not to condemn, but to affirm; not to blast but to ballast.

"Everybody wants the key to Wieuca's success," he admits, "but we've no easy answer. Others have good staffs and better programs. On a strictly horizonal plane—and we're not discounting the power of the Holy Spirit—maybe our answer is a combination of things—openness, loving, and a attitude of affirmation."

And the uncanny abil y of a suburban man, Bill Self, to speak to—to "affirm"—suburban mar

And those who come are of many, often differing attitudes and all ages. Young people flock to Wieuca—contrary to "drop-out" trends.

But Wieuca isn't just traditional programs. Its members staff such activities as adult literacy classes; language classes for Orientals and Cubans; a program working with unwed mothers at a local home; a citizenship class; a tutoring project for poverty kids. "Our women pick them up and bring them to the church," says Self. "You can see them drive up in their Cadillacs with those little black children."

Every Sunday two carloads of Wieuca members man a local mission, and women of the church hold sewing classes and serve food at another mission.

Last summer a basketball clinic—for black and

THE FUTURE

Renewing the Suburban Church

the twentieth century the church once again experiencing the paradoxical pain of dying d the joy of being reborn in Christ. urches are rediscovering the presence of rist in vital and refreshing ways.

Yet many churches are not experiencing the ynamism in the life of their people that leads ward mission and ministry in the world. Such urches need renewal.

To call a church to renewal, however, one must identify specific ways in which the existng life of the church falls short of meeting the riteria and fulfilling the image essential to a people living responsibly under God. Churches n need of renewal mirror several common mages, despite their diversity in location, size, age, socio-economic composition.

First, these churches are not being consciously affected by the presence of Christ. They talk about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but the "proper language" is not accompanied by an experience of divine presence. Traditional symbols have lost their power to motivate and unify the congregation.

The openness to be one's self and share one's self with another is a basic indication of the presence of Christ. The church of the open and sharing fellowship, however, is an exception in the contemporary world.

Second, unrenewed churches lack an understanding of mission. When its mission is vague, the church loses its reason for being. Without a knowledge of significant purpose hurch life becomes meaningless routine.

Third, repentance and faith are continuing principles for the Christian pilgrimage, not simply the initial toll. When churches lose the apacity for self-criticism, they have dramatized a disbelief in salvation by grace and have denied the enduring nature of man as sinner. Persons in the church find themselves called upon to support the institution as it is rather than engage in the redemptive struggle of bringing the church under the judgment of God's purposes for it.

Fourth, churches in need of renewal are characteristically in despair concerning the future. They look nostalgically, with certain sadness, to the past. Having lost the excitment of mission or the confidence that there is a knowledgeable way to "press on toward the goal," they surrender Christian themes of hope, creativity and joy.

Fifth, churches reveal a need for renewal when they are self-centered in their priorities. Time, energies and material resources are directed toward "survival goals."

Church renewal is a pilgrimage. It's an ongoing exodus of the people of God from bondage to the promised land. It is the journey of people who long to be more conscious of the presence of Christ, more aware of their mission in the world, more courageous in their examination of themselves, more honest in the confession of their sin, more open to the future as the creation of God.

Renewal is a "journey inward" to new depths of spiritual reality. It is a "journey outward" on which authentic spirituality becomes incarnate in acts of service that communicate the love of Christ.

What moves a person or a church to begin the journeys of renewal? Obviously, such pilgrimage involving radical life change must be motivated by powerful forces.

A basic theme of the biblical revelation is the necessity of continual renewal in personal life through the Spirit of God. When a congregation understands the word of God, conflict is created because of the gulf between church as it is and church as it should be. Such conflict becomes the travail through which new life is born.

A second basic motivation to renewal is divine love. Through becoming aware of the quality of Christ's love for man and the shape it took in the world, the church continually makes the Word flesh-and-blood working in among men.

How can you begin? While there are exceptions, most renewal movements within churches begin small and then grow to affect larger parts of the community. Individuals must recognize that the church is composed of persons at varied stages of Christian growth. Renewal demands method and variety in approach. The journey toward deeper spiritual reality may be accelerated by experiences of personal crisis. These points in human experience can become hinges upon which the remainder of life swings. Effective leaders are sensitive to these moments in the lives of individuals.

Use of provocative reading material may be a practical starting point. The writings of Elton Trueblood, Robert Raines, Findley Edge, Walker Knight, Elizabeth O'Conner, as well as Christian devotional classics stimulate a person to ask himself vital questions concerning his personal pilgrimage and that of his church.

A church that takes seriously its need for renewal can provide opportunities for its people to grapple openly and honestly with their

Pilgrimage involving radical life change must be motivated by powerful forces.

real feelings concerning their faith and mission. Groups in which persons can empathize with another's emptiness and support each other's struggles to understanding meaningful mission are essential to building renewal. Real issues must be faced and honest feelings shared.

Renewal demands new methods and a variety of approaches.

From the clear basic desire for renewal a church must move to discover the form through which its people can express their new life. Authentic spiritual experiences thrust one into the world; there his confrontation with human need inevitably tests the reality of his spiritual resources and drives him back to the committed community for renewal of spiritual strength.

A church preparing its outward journey should survey its community, seeking answers to basic questions: What are the needs of the community; what are their priorities? What attempts are presently being made to meet these needs? What basic resources does the church have? What unique gift for ministry has God given the church?

Having considered basic community needs in light of church resources, people develop a need-oriented program. The task will determine structures and approaches. From this point is begun the process of sensitizing the church to the needs. Through varied channels the church must be informed; it must worship and learn in light of individuals' acceptance of a specific ministry and their stewardship of a unique gift.

What is the potential of traditional methods toward fulfilling the function of the church?

The basic functions of the church—worship, proclamation, application ministry, education—are the ultimate criteria for judging any method used in its life. If a method or activity, whether traditional or contemporary, actually enables the church to fulfill its enduring functions, it is valid. Budget priorities and "always-done-it-that-way" attitudes are not legitimate criteria for judging potential.

Churches have tended to be so rigid organizationally that the only options open seemed to be regimentation or rejection. But the freedom of a church renewal pilgrimage is freedom to conserve as well as innovate. Openness to create new forms is not a mandate to kill old ones. The authentic renewing church does not reject the old or embrace the new uncritically, for it is a congregation coming to know life in the spirit, not the form.

Emerging flexibility in denominational programming and literature enhance possible church renewal. Recognizing the pluralism of the people of God, it offers tools from which local congregations may choose in light of their peculiar needs.

The test of any approach to ministry in church life must be whether it aids in equipping men for both the inward and outward journey of life. Does it orient people exclusively to another world or thrust them face to face with needs of this one? Does it isolate a person or involve him with others? Does it magnify survival or service? Does it accentuate the gulf between pastor and laymen or build bridges over the gulf? Does it stimulate a person or group to new venture and allow them the freedom to fail?

New life confronting unmet needs inevitably produces new forms. The forms are shaped by content of mission. Form follows function.

The small group is a form used extensively in the church struggling toward renewal. Groups develop on the basis of varied intentions. Some groups form on the basis of personal needs—for example, people facing common problems of personal relationships might come together for honest sharing and growth together.

While there is always the danger such groups can become introverted and divisive on the total fellowship, they nevertheless hold great potential as a disciplined approach to new vitality in faith. Opportunity involves risk.

Other small groups form on the basis of common interests and abilities. People who discover common gifts—music, drama, vocational interests—meet to explore ways their gifts may be developed and used in service.

Task forces form another expression of the use of small groups in church renewal. A specific mission action binds people together. In recent years groups have formed to establish coffeehouse ministries, day-care centers, tutoring programs.

Life is brought to birth through pain. The renewing church involves conflict on many levels. Renewal begins in conflict within an individual. It expresses itself within the fellowship of the total church because persons are at varied stages on their pilgrimage. The tension between the church surging forward and those holding back presents important tests for renewal.

Renewal can also create conflict between churches. The innovative church may be suspect to the church wedded to traditional forms of life. Community between pastoral leadership is essential to the creative solution of inter-church conflict.

The basic level of conflict for a renewing people, however, is at the point where they confront the world. The inevitability of conflict within a church in the struggle for renewal places the church in a continuing dilemma.

Churches need to be able to view conflict as opportunity for creativity rather than as crises that inevitably destroy. To bring creativity out of conflict requires patience, skill, and unusual sensitivity.

An effective leader affirms the bases on which people may unify. He holds before the people the symbols of the faith to which the total congregation ascribes. He leads in giving form to church opportunities for verbalizing and acting out their intentional oneness in Christ.

John Gardner says that no society can overcome its petty internal divisions except through the lifting power of shared purposes. Conflict may become creative if structures are provided for honest confrontation and dialogue, before differences over issues degenerate into purely personal conflicts.

The decision-making groups within a congregation must be composed of a cross section of the membership. Persons with differing points of view must be included and honest sharing of ideas encouraged.

A creative leader constantly works to place conflict in true perspective. Issues tending to divide must be judged in light of Scripture. Bases for tension must never erode the foundations for unity. The conflict within a church must be balanced with a persistently presented picture of the mission in the world to which the church is called.

Where conflict cannot be overcome, separation often occurs. In such cases the church—not without sorrow—must pray that the Spirit of God may use even the sins of men to accomplish his redemptive mission in the world.

For the church on the journeys inward and outward there is no point of arrival. To look back in gratitude for the distance traveled is a source of inner strength. Yet to lose the vision of the road ahead, with its opportunities for growth and mission, is to surrender to the sin of pride.

Kierkegard said that it is very difficult to get people to become Christians who are satisfied that they already are. The church must always know itself as the people of God who are always in the process of becoming the people of God.*

THE GOALS

Ministering in Suburbia

Like a persistent fly, a basic question hums around every church: How can our congregation fulfil its missionary calling in our community?

The question is never completely answered, but in the search, specific forms of ministry are spun off. Involved are consideration of three vital areas: "our congregation;" "our missionary calling;" and "our community." As the meaning of these phases is clarified and deepened, forms of mission and ministry are born or renewed.

Pursuit of "missionary calling" is the quest for clear identity: "What is the meaning of our missionary calling? Who are we as the people of God? What is our redemptive mission in the world?

Before a congregation devises valid forms of mission, it should understand its "mission." Structures follow concepts.

In a weekend retreat, deacons of one suburban church wrestled with this question of identity. They examined Bible, commentaries, and other resources on the nature of the church. After reading and research, each deacon tentatively answered the question. In resulting discussion, they hammered out a statement of purpose each person could affirm.

Their statement was then used as a catalyst to stimulate the congregation's quest for self understanding.

Donald Metz demonstrates in *New Congregations*, however, that there is danger in simply stating the formal goal. Through his study of six suburban churches, Metz documents the tendency of a church to forsake "ideals of ministry" for unstated goals of institutional survival and security. Articulation is insufficient; the congregation must work to turn theological concepts into concrete actions.

A church must know itself . . . examine its own thoughts and capacities.

A second phrase is "our community." What does it mean to be church in a given community?

As an integral part of its milieu the congregation seeks both to serve the community and minister to itself. Does it encompass the immediate suburban area, or the metropolitan area, or, in some sense, the whole world? What are the styles of living? What priorities and values are expressed? How would the constituency of church and community be described? What problems exist in the area? In answering these questions, the congregation listens, converses, and learns to love its world.

Understanding the community demands studied attention. The concept of church ministry is a lens through which the community is viewed and studied. For instance, if a congregation sees itself as an agent of God's reconciling love, it will consciously seek to form bridging ministries where the community erects barriers of race, unbelief, age, culture, or class. Or if a congregation sees its call to be the bodily, visible expression of Christ's continuous ministry, it will survey the congregation and community to determine who is the

New structures arise from understanding of community need.

contemporary leper, Samaritan woman, Simon Peter, or Zacchaeus.

Robert Raines suggests that a congregation take a "Matthew 25" survey of its church, immediate neighborhood and metropolitan community. Where are the "least of these"—strangers, imprisoned, hungry, naked?

The third phrase equally demands attention: "our church." In addition to the church's concept of mission and perception of community needs, resources of a congregation affect its forms of ministry.

A church must know itself. It must examine its own thoughts and capacities. A congregation should constantly work to discover and release its "gifts of ministry." Do members and staff help others discern their unique expressions of Christian love? Are limitations acknowledged? Are personal and financial resources directed to serve others? Are adequate and flexible outlets provided for individuals to express their skills?

Too little attention is given to encouraging skills of fellow members. This means giving attention to persons and shaping structures around personal gifts, rather than forcing persons to fit prescribed forms. A large task for the gathered church is to encourage members to recognize, enjoy, and offer their unique contributions to the ongoing ministry of Christ.

Often resources of a congregation suggest certain forms of ministry. But in every instance resources of gifts determine which forms of mission are possible. During past summers, a small suburban congregation had difficulty offering a Sunday morning experience of Christian education and worship. Weekend patterns of travel competed too successfully with traditional programs.

The church faced this situation head on. With a sense of mission to the larger community, it offered weeknight opportunity for study and worship, for both its own members and members of other churches. In doing so, the church claimed the asset of its members' mobility and tapped the existing motivation to provide such an ecumenical ministry.

During this process the concerns of "our missionary calling" "our community" and "our church" converged and interacted. A new structure arose from understanding of community need—and the realistic assessment and commitment of one congregation's own gifts and resources.

Membership must be deeply involved in the struggle to develop forms of ministry. The vital ingredient of commitment cannot be superimposed. It can come only from personal involvement in discovery of, and planning to meet need. How is a congregation forced to wrestle with its mission?

The pastor should deal frequently with the doctrine of the church, but he should stop short of detailing the church's mission. He should ask questions which will stimulate thought in the congregation and which encourage open, flexible concepts of mission.

Struggling with mission concepts are desirable because concentrating a large block of time to mission study enhances opportunity for significant accomplishment: a statement of the *congregation's* concept of its mission (not the pastor's).

The congregation should actively study its community. Persons from all walks of life, all ages and both sexes should be interviewed. Government maps, plans and projections of community development should be examined. If needs are discovered, they should be made known and members of the congregation should be given opportunity to volunteer for service in a task force to meet the needs. Periodic reports of progress in each ministry should be made.

Discovery of human resources should be a conscious and continuing effort. Talent surveys may help; personal-ability surveys have value. It is important that persons understand how to use their gifts; they must be open, but aware of the risks involved in new ministries.

After materials and human resources are weighed, a decision should be made: Is the projected ministry advisable?

If the form is unfeasible an alternate may be examined. If no form is feasible, the ministry should not be undertaken until adequate resources are available. An involved congregation, aroused to serious community needs, will seldom rest until those needs are alleviated.

All forms should be flexible. A sense of experimentation, movement, and adventure should accompany the adoption of forms of mission and ministry. Regular re-evaluations and reporting can result in phase outs. None should have any vested interest which would keep it from being discontinued if it no longer accomplishes its purpose.•

SHOW & TELL

Evaluating the Suburban Church

An incessant bombardment of options forces suburban man to constantly make decisions ranging from what toothpaste gives the whitest smile to which school district offers acceptable

social, cultural and educational opportunities.

Battle fatigue results from the struggle to choose. Naturally he seeks to avoid unnecessary decision-making. "Isn't the church (being going to God, after all!) one area free from judgment?" But he fails to understand that the church, as an instrument of God's redemptive activity, must constantly reevaluate its participation in the work of grace.

The church fulfills its purpose by receiving and communicating God's act of mercy and love in Jesus Christ. Attempts at evaluation are, therefore, efforts to determine the presence or absence of the body of Christ.

John the Baptist asked Christ if he was the Messiah. With his life at stake, John wanted assurance it hadn't been spent in vain. Jesus sternly told him that he could be judged by his actions.

To some extent, the lives of suburban congregations are at stake today; their questions should be: "Have we acted in vain; can we answer as Christ did?"

What criteria are valid for judging the presence of Christ in the work of the suburban church? Evaluation falls into four areas: (1) proclamation-witness; (2) community, (3) nurture, and (4) service.

Let's examine each area for a moment.

Proclamation-Witness. Limiting this to gaining converts and/or church members is shortsighted. The New Testament thrust is to make disciples, which involves commitment of life to Christ, expressed in fellowship, growth and service to others.

The suburban church's task is to faithfully proclaim the Gospel; it is challenged to experiment. A weekend campout may provide a setting for communication with persons who never enter the church; a folk musical might put the Gospel in a youth's language for the first time.

Because of the lack of genuine communication in the urban setting, small groups are proving effective. Educated, capable and dedicated members can actively participate in every phase of church proclamation, from preaching to pastoral care.

Community. Quality of relations between persons in the church can be characterized by unity in diversity, and by love. Since unity is not static, but dynamic, conflict is a part of oneness. Creative use of tension tests a community's strength.

Love is the quality of community. The community of love should also give love; love should have an impact on all the church's relationships, both internally and externally.

Nurture. Jesus spoke to large crowds, but spent most of his time preparing a small group to carry on his work. He indicated this "nurturing" would continue through the Holy Spirit.

The suburban church must continue Christian nurture if its members are to grow into Christ. The church's educational program has not, in the past, produced spiritual maturity in attitudes or noticeably changed actions. Many so-called Christians lie, cheat, hate, are racial bigots, show little human concern. Frequently they act more like the world in which they live than the one toward which they claim allegiance.

Christian nurture should result in changed lives, informed and committed persons working toward becoming effective instruments of God's grace.

A *Psychology Today* survey examined value systems of over 1,000 representative adult Americans. The results showed that Christians see themselves to be loving, helpful people, but they are actually no more loving or helpful than other groups. Author Milton Roheach concludes: "Considered all together the data suggest a portrait of the religious-minded as a churchgoer who has a self-centered preoccupation with saving his own soul, and an alienated, other-worldly orientation coupled with indifference toward—a tacit endorsement of—a social system that would perpetuate social inequality and injustice . . . the findings presented here suggest that the church has done a much better job of teaching us what not to do than what we ought to do. . . . If Christian values do indeed serve as standards of conduct, they seem to be standards more often employed to guide man's conduct away from rather than toward his fellowman."

Given the densely populated, heterogeneous urban scene, the teaching task in suburbia becomes critically important. For effective communication can bring changed attitudes.

Service. The suburban church needs criteria that calls it beyond its own institutional life to serve those whose lives are being crushed by the impersonal demands of the city.

Authentic forms of ministry arise from within the struggle of a congregation to be church; they cannot come from beyond the congregation without passing through the bloodstream of the church's own quest for Christian obedience.

Before developing programs, the church should consider some introspective questions: "What is the nature of the church? What is its mission? Was it formed to provide fellowship for people of like thoughts and ideals? Is it a spiritual country club for members only? Does it want to share God's message with everyone, in all areas of modern life, in all locations?"

If the church faithfully approaches its commitment, it offers a "life in Christ" that can be celebrated seven days a week instead of one. It will have a total response to God's call for mission, as it functions each day in the world for which Christ gave himself.•

Is the suburban church a spiritual country club for members only, or . . . ?

FINAL WORDS

Still, questions abound. Can the gospel of Jesus Christ be made acceptable to comfortable suburban man without distorting it? Can the good news be popularized without being watered down? Why are churches succeeding in the suburbs while they are failing in the city? Could we be succeeding in the suburbs (institutionally speaking) because we are offering our people something less than the gospel, and failing in the city because what men see in the church and hear from it is something less than Christianity? Is our formula for success our reason for failure? Can complacent suburbanites live with the demanding gospel of the incarnation and the cross? Dutch theologian J.C. Hoekendijk has written, "The temptation to mask the mystery, to avoid the scandal of the gospel, becomes almost inevitable, once we are confronted with men who are perplexed by the absurdity of our message." Perhaps we can say that another way: It seems that one day a young businessman, owner of a three bedroom home, two cars and a three-year subscription to *Life* and *Fortune*, came to church. A visiting evangel preached that Sunday; to give the visitor the pleasure of his company, the young businessman went to shake hands. As the church pastor introduced the young businessman, his wife and two beautiful children, he said, "He's one of our most faithful members; he's here every time the doors open." The visiting evangel nodded. And to fill the awkward silence, the young businessman asked, "Preacher, I've sorta been wondering; what could I do to be better?" The man turned his piercing gaze upon the young businessman. "If you want to be perfect," he said,"sell everything, give it to the poor, quit your job and begin living for others." He smiled as he said it, and the young businessman, avoiding the unsmiling eyes, patted the evangel's back (he loved to pat backs, especially his own), and thanked him. But that night, as he ate his well-prepared meal, the hard eyes of the evangel kept flooding his mind. Finally, his wife heard the young businessman mumbling. "What are you mutterring about?" she asked. "Oh I just said, 'What the heck, nobody's perfect.'"▪

xecutive's Word

by Arthur B. Rutledge
Executive Secretary-Treasurer, HMB

Old Handicaps or New Hope?

Since I wrote material for this page a month ago, 1970 has ended and the financial reports have been prepared. Last year's record makes the 1971 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions more important than ever.

Annie Armstrong receipts totaled $4,966,985 in 1970. This is $78,733 less than the 1969 offering, which topped $5 million for the first time.

The goal for last year, as for 1971, was $6 million. We had hoped for at least $5.5 million, and when it became apparent that the offering would not reach even this figure we began to slow down the appointment of missionaries and the beginning of new projects.

As a result the Home Mission Board closed the year with 13 fewer missionaries than a year earlier—2,222 compared with 2,235. Had even the $5.5 million been received—still a half million dollars below the goal—it would have been possible to support an additional 100 missionaries.

The slowdown came in a year when opportunities were greater than ever before—for inner-city ministries to disadvantaged people; for the starting of congregations in "pioneer" fields where Southern Baptist witness is small and Christian service urgently needed; for the employment of student workers on strategic campuses in the newer areas of the Convention; and among language culture groups, where opportunity is practically unlimited.

Cooperative Program support increased slightly. The total of $5,083,680 for operating expenses was $99,680 higher than 1969 contributions. This was a two percent increase.

Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering contributions totaled $10,050,665, an advance of $20,907. This is an increase of just .2 of one percent at a time when an increase of six percent is needed to equal rising costs due to inflation.

The past year, therefore, was a "hold the line" year in SBC Home Missions. Nevertheless there were significant victories.

Preliminary calculations indicate that the number of baptisms Convention-wide showed a slight gain over the previous year. I like to believe that our evangelism program leaders, working with the state convention evangelism leaders, made a major contribution to this record.

In the "pioneer" mission fields growth was exceptional. There were 350 new churches and church-type missions. The baptismal ratio in these areas was one baptism to every four members compared to one to about 30 members Convention-wide.

New language missions ministries were started in several large cities, including the appointment of an experienced couple to serve internationals in our nation's capital. The Department of Work with National Baptists added new personnel in five states, in cooperation with respective state conventions.

Christian social ministries were begun in several large cities, with 3,126 baptisms reported as a result of these ministries. The Board sponsored 940 student summer missionaries—it's largest group.

I have cited only a few of the highlights of home missions, 1970. Perhaps, because our work has expanded for the three decades, we have assumed that as a denomination it would continue to grow.

Now we face a new situation. Most of our church program organizations have experienced a decline in enrollments during recent years. Many churches are facing puzzling community changes; practically every church is encountering changed attitudes toward life.

The complexity of today's problems calls for a deepened commitment to Christ and a renewed urgency in the sharing of our life-changing Christian faith with every person we can reach.

That is the thrust of the March 7-14 Week of Prayer for Home Missions: "Sharing . . . With One or One Thousand."

The week offers outstanding opportunities for the entire church family to study home mission action at home, and more generous financial support of the Home Mission Board as it reaches out to share God's love.

The pressing need of a much larger Annie Armstrong Easter Offering this year lends me to urge you to help your church make a worthy offering. A 20 percent increase is needed Convention-wide to reach the goal of $6 million. This is not a day for "business as usual" in the work of our Lord, but a day for advance. We have a nation to win, under God. ▪

Leadership Section

Your Church and Mission Action

BY LOYD CORDER

Does your church take seriously its mission in the world? The world is most tangible and accessible to you as it exists in your own community. You cannot love God and neglect your neighbor. The best expression of your commitment to world missions is what you do about human needs where you are. Mission action as designed and promoted by Woman's Missionary Union and the Brotherhood Commission provides the most effective approaches known for the practical use of ministry and witnessing in fulfilling your church's mission where it is.

The WMU and Brotherhood define mission action as "the organized effort of a church to minister and to witness to persons of special need or circumstance who, without this special effort, are often bypassed in the church's direct outreach activities.

"Mission action is taking Christian love into all situations of need; into all places where persons are victims of society's indifference and complexity.

"Mission action is the work of dedicated Christians who expand their narrow circle of concern and become involved in meeting the crucial needs of persons in the name of Jesus Christ.

"Mission action is love in action."

Pastors, deacons and all other church officers should give their best encouragement to mission action. The church missions committee should consider this as the first and best approach to recommend for meeting the many kinds of missions needs for which it is appropriate. It can also be most helpful when used together with other approaches in larger projects such as new churches or mission centers.

An important and necessary step preceding mission action projects is the discovering of mission action needs. The missions committee should take the initiative in making studies about local mission needs.

A number of tools are available for this process. The Survey and Special Studies Department of the Home Mission Board has developed procedures and techniques. In addition the WMU and Brotherhood have produced a Mission Action Survey Guide that is available from the Baptist book stores, and the Church Administration Department of the Sunday School Board has suggestions for churches taking a total look at their programs, organizations, and communities.

These surveys should answer the questions: Where are the persons or conditions of need in our community? What kind of needs do persons or groups have and what is the extent of their needs? What is being done to meet the needs by any other group in the community? What can our church do to meet or help meet these needs?

Following the survey of both the community and the resources of the church and other agencies, the missions committee/or WMU and Brotherhood where there is no missions committee, recommends to the church council the proposed mission work. The council establishes priority and determines how much work should be undertaken and suggests assignment of the responsibility to the appropriate organization.

The WMU and Brotherhood make the following suggestions concerning mission action:

CONDUCTING MISSION ACTION

I. Through Ongoing Action
   a. Definitions:
      1. Ongoing Action: A sustained ministry and witness to the same person or persons over an extended period of time. This kind of activity is carried on by mission action groups.
      2. Mission Action Group: A group of adults and/or young people assigned the responsibility for sustaining an organized effort in behalf of the church to minister and witness to persons of special need or circumstance.
   b. Actions to be taken by a Mission Action Group
      1. Launch Actions
         (a) Personal preparation actions—Individual group member studies specially designed materials to build a general awareness of the needs of others and a sensitivity to what is involved in meeting needs.
         (b) Orientation actions—Group study designed to acquaint group members with the who, what, why and where of work with persons to whom mission action is directed.
         (c) Survey action—Group surveys actual needs to put group members in direct contact with the persons with whom they will be working.
      2. Continuing actions
         (a) Planning actions—Group determines for itself what it can do to meet some of the needs which exist and plans the ministry and witnesses activities it will carry out.
         (b) Ministering and witnessing actions—Group carries out the plans it has made.
         (c) Sharing and evaluating action—Group members share with the group their joys, problems and evaluation of their work.
         (d) In-service training actions—Group studies to build further understandings and skills.
   c. Through Mission Action Projects
      a. Definition: Projects designate short-term service which is conducted at a point in time, but is not continuing over long periods of time. A project usually has a distinguishable beginning and ending.
      b. Ways Projects Relate to Other Organizational Work
         1. Projects as follow-through to study
            Example: Unit studies about internationals. Created interest leads to conducting a single service to internationals such as a banquet for internationals.
         2. Project in response to request from mission action groups
            Example: Mission action group working with the economically disadvantaged decides to have a mission vacation Bible school. They need assistance with transportation, teaching, crafts and refreshments.
         3. Projects as response to other needs
            Example: An emergency is created by fire or some other tragedy. Immediate assistance is needed for persons suffering loss.
      c. Choose a Project
         1. Does project meet real need? Does it allow members to bear a positive Christian witness?
         2. Is the need being met by some other group?
         3. Does the organization have the resources (time, money, skills) to conduct the project?
         4. Will the project respect the dignity, pride, and personality of the persons being helped?
         5. Are members of the organization sufficiently interested to see the project through?
      d. Determine The Actions Necessary to Carry Out The Project
         1. What actions will members need to take? When?
            (a) What specific resources are needed?
            (b) Who will be responsible for each action?
         2. What preparation must be made?
            (a) Do members need special training?
            (b) Do members need to secure special materials or equipment, or to make special arrangements?
            (c) What will the project cost? How will funds be secured?
      e. Conduct the Project—Minister and Witness
      f. Evaluate the Project
         1. Were the plans adequate?
         2. Were the members of the organization adequately prepared?
         3. Were the techniques suitable and well used?
         4. Did members encounter problems that they were unable to cope with adequately?
         5. Did members establish meaningful relationships with the persons helped?
         6. In what ways were these evidence of spiritual growth on the part of the helped and the helpers?

III Through Individual Mission Action
Individual mission action is the ministry and witness conducted

by an individual as a result of the efforts of the mission action emphasis in study materials or in mission action group activities.

MISSION ACTION MATERIALS:

Mission action group guides: *Economically Disadvantaged, International, Juvenile Delinquency, Language Group, The Sick, Combating Moral Problems, Non-Readers, Prisoner Rehabilitation, The Aging, Negroes, Headliners, Military Resort Areas, Drug Addicts* (June 1, 1971), *Apartment Dwellers* (June 1, 1971).

Project Guides: *For Baptist Women and Baptist Young Women, For Acteens, For Pioneer Royal Ambassadors, SMAY* (Summer Missions Activities for Youth) for Acteens and *Pioneer Royal Ambassadors* by John Burns.

Books: *Effective Christian Witnessing* by Nelson Tull; *Interfaith Witness* by M. Thomas Starkes.

All materials can be obtained at Baptist book stores.

Corder is director, Division of Associational Services, HMB, Atlanta, Ga.

Chaplains Prayer Calendar

Apr. 1: Ronald L. Roberson, Ind., Navy. **Apr. 2:** Davie E. Gregory, Md., Institutional; Swayne Payne Jr., Ga., Air Force; John L. Sharp, Tenn., Army; Paul L. Stanley, Va., Air Force. **Apr. 3:** James L. Fox, [illegible], Air Force; William J. Clardy, Tex., Navy; John J. Wilson, Ga., Navy; Douglas Underhill, Pa., Navy.

Apr. 4: Dale L. Rowley, Ill., Institutional. **Apr. 5:** James A. Nichols, Miss., Army; David K. Shelton, Va., Air Force; Richard S. Tipton, Ill., Navy. **Apr. 6:** Joe H. Parker, Tenn., Navy; James M. Pilgrim, S.C., Institutional. **Apr. 7:** Elbert N. Carpenter, Ky., Navy; Robert E. Evans, Va., hospital. **Apr. 9:** Joseph L. Jolly Jr., Miss., Air Force. **Apr. 10:** Fred A. Duckett, W. Va., hospital; Maurice Eugene Turner, Tex., Navy.

Apr. 12: John H. Craven, Mo., Navy; G. C. Dennis, La., hospital; Billy R. Nix, Ala., Army; Charles F. Pitts, Tex., hospital; Charles F. J. Jordan, S.C., Navy. **Apr. 14:** James F. McVay, Ala., Army; Archie V. Lawrence, Ark., Navy; Marvin V. Enquist, Ga., institutional. **Apr. 15:** Richard M. Christian, Tex., institutional.

Apr. 17: James R. Brown, Ky., Air Force; Paul D. Foxworthy, Mo., Air Force; Homer Thomas Hiers Jr., S.C., Navy. **Apr. 18:** Dennis Barnes, Tex., hospital; Richard G. Cook, Va., Army; Thomas N. Pettus, Ky., hospital; Jack Orville Varnell, Tenn., Navy. **Apr. 19:** George W. Fuller, Tex., Navy; John E. Green, Tex., Army; Jerry M. Poteet, Tex., Army; Buddy Michael Reeves, Okla., Navy; John L. Clough, Fla., Navy.

Apr. 20: Isaac M. Copeland Jr., Va., Air Force; James H. Eastland, Kans., Air Force. **Apr. 21:** Kenneth R. Thompson, La., Air Force; Aubrey T. Quakenbush, N.C., hospital. **Apr. 22:** Jacob A.S. Fisher, Tex., Navy; Joseph W. Magruder, Okla., Army; Huel E. May, N.C., hospital. **Apr. 23:** Gordon J. Boston, Okla., industrial. **Apr. 25:** Ine P. Self Jr., Tex., institutional. **Apr. 26:** Clyde E. Brazeal, Ala., hospital; William James Clark, Wisc., Army.

Apr. 27: Dillmus William Barnett, Ala., Army; Leroy A. Sisk, N.C., Army. **Apr. 28:** Carl H. Burton, Miss., Army; Thomas L. Jones, Fla., hospital; Merrill C. Leonard, Penn., Navy. **Apr. 29:** Alfred J. Albernethy, N.C., Air Force; John H. Carnes, Ga., Navy; William H. Heard, Ark., hospital; Jerry C. Wond, Va., Navy. Richard Allen Headly, D.C., Air Force. **Apr. 30:** William H. Cuthriell Jr., Va., Air Force; Melvin Brown, Tex., institutional.

Contents

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ON THE COVER

Suburbia. That's it. People. Homes. Children. dogs. Cars. What more can we say? (If you're interested, our report begins on page 9.)

Photo by Don Rutledge

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Letters

Starting the New Year Right

The January 1971 issue is terrific. It will really fill a void in the literature that is currently available. You have a compact and yet comprehensive document that should be of great help to churches and the laymen....

Lowell F. Lawson
Louisville, Ky.

We want to thank you for your excellent Jan. 1971 issue. We have truly been waked up to our responsibilities as a church in the seventies and it is mostly due to your excellent coverage and challenges presented in this issue....

Marion DuBose
Gloucester, Va.

Your Jan. 1971 issue of HOME MISSIONS is excellent....

W. Joe West
Greensboro, N.C.

...the January 1971 issue...is the best ever....

T. L. Christian
Covington, Va.

...I received your January issue today and it is great....

Mrs. Ronald Hicks
Austin, Tex.

...For almost nine years I was a Navy chaplain and during those years I was the fortunate recipient of the HMB magazine. There were many times when I wanted to drop a note from somewhere in the ocean to say "thanks" for making me think, or for inspiring me, or for just plain informing me about developments in the mission work of the SBC....I'm grateful that our denomination has a man with your talents in the position of leadership that you have. I can assure you of my prayers that God will continue to use your pen in the ministry of writing.

Donald N. Paulson
Athens, Ga.

...I cannot hold back any longer—it's wonderful. I salute your forward looking editorial policy....

Stan Barnett
New Orleans, La.

...The January edition was of special interest to us since we are considering several areas of mission action presently in our church program. Specifically the article on "Day Care" really rang a bell!...

Paul T. Thomas
Thomasville, Ga.

Our church is two years old. From the church's inception we have looked to HOME MISSIONS as one source of insight in the fulfillment of our mission task. We have not been disappointed! It is our opinion that no magazine published by Southern Baptists is as razor sharp in its understanding of the whole Gospel and total responsibility of the church as is HOME MISSIONS....I started to close this letter with the words, "Thank God for your courage, but I suddenly recall the statement that prefaces [Editor Wade Knight's] book, *Struggle for Integrity*. That statement says, "The witness of our churches has become so compromised that simple integrity is called courage."

Harvey C. Love
Haleyville, Ala.

Congratulations! Your aim as stated on page eight of Jan. HOME MISSIONS is and will be accomplished as far as we are concerned. Members of our church staff are reading with great interest the entire issue and expect to move into action as a result. We are finding direct ideas that relate to our situation and many more suited to our situation ideas that occur to us after reading the issue. Many of the things that are referred to in this issue we are doing and intend to beef up. We definitely intend to launch out into many new fields as a result of your prodding.

One need among our membership at present is to maintain high morale in our work and ministry. It seems to me that as we engage in worthy ministries the morale will increase accordingly. The personal testimony of J. W. Wynn on page 28 seems to bear this out. You may wish to prod at this point more in subsequent issues since I feel moral building a need among a vast majority of our Southern Baptist churches.

Keep up the good work.

"Hoyt R. Wilson
Birmingham, Ala.

HOME MISSIONS continues to improve, if that is possible. In the January issue, I feel as though you reached a peak in perception and "how to" ministry that I have never seen rivaled in any Christian publication.

Neil E. Wilson
Severn, Md.

...a superb job. This type of publication has been needed for some time and fills a big gap in Southern Baptist publications about how to actually do what we talk so much about doing, but never have any good material to tell how to do it.

I appreciate so much the brave stand you have taken in the HOME MISSIONS magazine. So many people who have almost lost hope for renewal and change in Southern Baptist life are looking to HOME MISSIONS as a source and inspiration. I hope the pressure will not become so heavy that you will have to change any of your policies.

Martin L. Pratt
St. Louis, Mo.

May I congratulate you on your creative community ministry booklet in January HOME MISSIONS. This should be an immense help to our churches who are attempting to begin new community ministries. I think it's just great!

Max L. Caldwell
San Antonio, Texas

I am deeply impressed with the Jan. HOME MISSIONS magazine. Your treatment of community Christian ministries is clear, incisive and helpful. Comparisons may be odious, but it is nevertheless true that of the many periodicals which I read, yours is in the very front rank.

Please accept our real appreciation for your MISSIONS.

Dana H. Johnson
New York, N. Y.

Responses to the January issue have been great; we're amazed. Several thousand additional copies have been requested, and other orders come in daily. We thank you. We also want to point out again (in case you missed it before) that a great deal of the material for this issue was based on the work of Lloyd Henderson of the Direct Missions Department, Baptist General Convention of Texas. The "how-to-do-it" idea was originally his, and four sections of ours—Clinics, Day-Care, Tutoring, Clubs—were "stolen" (with his permission) from pamphlets he had prepared. Because Lloyd did a lot of work with little credit, we felt he also deserved to bask in (or get sunburned by!) the glory.

It's Not all Trash . . .

I must express again my commendation and appreciation of your excellent magazine. The February issue ranks with any publication, religious or secular, in timeliness and social responsibility.

The articles on earth stewardship, dealing with the ecology crisis are convincing, true to Scriptures and the Christian ethic.

Adiel J. Moncrief
Tampa, Fla.

A Few Get Rained Out

I am renewing my subscription for one year, although it has reached the place where I don't think it is worth reading a lot. I am interested in our missionaries and what they are doing, where they are working. Not a lot of high-toned articles—I just scan all of them, look at the pictures and read what is about it.

Your Chaplain's Prayer list is so skimpy with information it is useless when praying for them. Can't you leave out some of those "learned dissertations" and really tell us things about the work?

Mrs. Robert E. Keylon
Kingston, Tenn.

Late Issues

Several readers have mentioned that their copies of HM have been coming late each month. One excuse (not the only one) is that we are changing to computer mailing. The Circulation Department asks that you be patient with us for a few months; your magazine may be late or you may get two copies, but you will get something, eventually.

Study Groups For Suburban Church

(See articles beginning on page 16.)

Taking Captivity Captive: Rex Lindsey, Dudley Wilson, James H. Landes, J. R. Huddlestun, Thomas C. Bourne, Tom Graves, DeLane Ryals, Gleaton F. Rickenbaker, Henry M. Windsor.

Renewing the Suburban Church: Vernon Davis, Harold Mincey, Findley Edge, Jack Clark, C. Wilson Brumley, Homer Davis Jr., H. Floyd Folsom, J. Ward Holland Jr., J. R. Janese, Walker Knight, Dale Cross, C. D. McCollum, Dudley T. Pomeroy, Robert J. Sanderson, Jim Martin, Robert F. Cochran, Bill Nichols.

Ministering in Suburbia: Kenneth Haag, Mahan Siler, Warren Rust, Grady Snowden, Larry Bryson, Joseph T. Green, Dan Laird, James Lowder, Mrs. David McClurty, Lewis Markwood, W. D. Millican, Roseanne Osborne, John W. Patterson, Jack W. Robbins, Ernest C. Upchurch, Charles Vandersice, Robert Wells, Joseph W. Wortmen.

Evaluating the Suburban Church: Jack Prince, Larry Matthews, O. D. Morris, Bill Burkey, John Daley, Helen Falls, Walter E. Grubbs, Franklin Perry, Lloyd Spencer, G. Allen West.

MISSIONARY APPOINTEES

1. **ROY NICKELL**
   BIRTHDATE: February 5
   BIRTHPLACE: Denton, Tex.
   POSITION: Director, Capitol Avenue Baptist Center; Atlanta, Ga.

2. **SARA NICKELL**
   BIRTHDATE: August 2
   BIRTHPLACE: San Antonio, Tex.

3. **JACK MERRITT**
   BIRTHDATE: July 2
   BIRTHPLACE: Terrell, Tex.
   POSITION: Director, Weekday Ministries; LeFrak City, N. Y.

4. **PHYLLIS MERRITT**
   BIRTHDATE: November 8
   BIRTHPLACE: Dallas, Tex.

5. **FERMIN A. WHITTAKER**
   BIRTHDATE: May 24
   BIRTHPLACE: Colon, Republic de Panama
   POSITION: Pastor, Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur; Pico Rivera, Calif.

6. **OLIVER W. MARSON**
   BIRTHDATE: June 7
   BIRTHPLACE: Baton Rouge, La.
   POSITION: Pastor, First Baptist Church, Fairbanks, Alaska.

7. **ELLIE LEE MARSON**
   BIRTHDATE: January 1
   BIRTHPLACE: Louisiana

8. **JAMES KINNEY**
   BIRTHDATE: December 25
   BIRTHPLACE: Scranton, Ark.
   POSITION: Pastor, First Indian Baptist Church; Enid, Okla.

9. **LOIS MAE KINNEY**
   BIRTHDATE: September 17
   BIRTHPLACE: Magazine, Ark.

10. **CARL HOLDEN**
    BIRTHDATE: October 24
    BIRTHPLACE: Orlando, Fla.
    POSITION: Director, Greater Worcester Weekday Ministries; Worcester, Mass.

11. **JULIA ANN HOLDEN**
    BIRTHDATE: June 26
    BIRTHPLACE: Monte Verde, Fla.

12. **DANNY MOON**
    BIRTHDATE: August 28
    BIRTHPLACE: Seoul, Korea
    POSITION: Worker with Chinese; San Diego, Calif.

13. **MARGARET MOON**
    BIRTHDATE: August 13
    BIRTHPLACE: Tremonton, Utah

14. **JOHN T. DAVIS**
    BIRTHDATE: February 15
    BIRTHPLACE: Bienville, La.
    POSITION: Pastor/Director; Capital City Ministries; Albany-Schenectady-Troy; Central New York Baptist Association.

15. **BERTIE MAE DAVIS**
    BIRTHDATE: October 19
    BIRTHPLACE: Arkansas