

March 17, 1972

STATEMENT ON THE LOCAL CHURCH EXPERIMENT

Recovered Roles: Reengaged Churchmen	Mutated Style: Tactical Thinking	Futuristic Thrust: Deep Resolve
1-15	16-23	24-32

1. It was in December of 1970 that this body, the Continental Presidium, made a decision: to go for broke with the Local Church Experiment using the system of tactics that been the creative pulling together of all the wisdom in the Church. We decided that this indeed was the experiment, and that this was the time for the move to be made. So it is my task today to report to the Presidium on the progress of the Local Church Experiment at the conclusion of the first year of actualization of those tactics in the local church situation.

2. I am Mark Poole from the Cleveland Galaxy. I represent the 80 churches that were launched in the first year and the 64 that were launched at the beginning of this year and will begin the actualization of the tactics following the end of this training quarter. Therefore, I bear greetings from every one of those 144 congregations as well as all of those other congregations which have yet to decide to be part of the experiment, which is finally every other congregation on the face of the globe.

3. I have a growing sense that we have not initiated anything in this past year, but rather we have continued that which was initiated a long time ago. I sense that John the Baptist may have been the convenor of the global presidium that was responsible for a galaxy which was launched some time ago. The decision had been made that a particular kind of renewal effort in the life of the Church was needed. So after that decision was made, he led the body to clear the way for that experiment to come into history. Then it was the anxious time of looking and waiting to see what was going to follow the path. He was eager for a report. Maybe something of that report is what we have here, in Luke 7 in a brief section following the passage where Jesus has saved a servant's life.

Not long afterwards, Jesus went into a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd. As they approached the city gate, it happened that some people were carrying out a dead man, the only son of his widowed mother. The usual crowd of fellow-townsmen was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said,

"Don't cry."

Then he walked up and put his hand on the bier while the bearers stood still. Then he said,

"Young man, wake up!"

And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus handed him to his mother. Everybody present was awe-struck and they praised God, saying,

"A great prophet has arisen among us and God has turned his face toward his people."

And this report of him spread through the whole of Judaea and the surrounding countryside.

John's disciples reported all these happenings to him. Then he summoned two of them and sent them to the Lord with this message,

"Are you the one who was to come, or are we to look for someone else?"

At that very time Jesus was healing many people of their diseases and ailments and evil spirits, and he restored sight to many who were blind. Then he answered them,

"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind are recovering their sight, cripples are walking again, lepers being healed, the deaf hearing, dead men are being brought to life again, the good news is being given to those in need. And happy is the man who never loses his faith in me."

4. I sense from this that Jesus was neither trying to convince the disciples of John nor John himself, but rather that he was convinced of something. He was saying, "I'm not really sure what you had in mind when you cleared the way, but you can report to John what you see and hear, and he can decide whether that is what he had in mind." So I am here today in that tradition, not to convince anybody of anything, but rather to report what is going on that you might see and hear and decide for yourselves if this is what you had in mind. I ought to say at the beginning that my conviction about what is going on will probably show through at many points, but your freedom to decide is assured.

5. The first way that I would report is to talk about the fruits of the first year. Next Tuesday night we'll be working out the last twelve tertiaries for the first year, then launching immediately into the second year. The end of the first year has been for us a time for great celebration, in gratitude and in joy. The gifts of the first year include the fact that the tactical system has provided the possibility for grounding one's decision to love the Church. Through RS-I the vision of possibility is brought forth. RS-III A enables many people to decide to affirm that what is needed is to love the local church. In the PLC all of that happens in one happening.

6. The tactical system then is the instrument which enables one to move beyond the clarity of what is needed to ground that decision and actually be that decision. The tactical system offers a way of caring for every member of the congregation. It was quite easy to decide in RS-III A abstractly to love the local church; but it was another step in the journey to see first hand that that meant to love, to care for, every member, every group, everything that goes on within the life of that congregation, within that parish, and within that particularly defined geography.

7. This year has been a spirit happening. The tactical system, the Local Church Experiment, has been an enabling structure for the deepening of one's spirit, for the bringing into being of the iron man. That is clearly what is required for loving the church. I see that particularly in terms of the recovery of the permission-giving opportunity for every clergyman to recover his sense of what it means to be a pastor; to renew or recommit himself to be the pastor that he had once decided to be. That role of the clergy as we are all clear, is one of the deep crises of our time. For a while we thought we could move on with the renewal of the Church and just ignore the clergy; but we did not go far before we saw that that was just a pipe dream. What is happening on the front line is the recovery of the clergy as pastor.

8. There are many ways to see that. I think of a clergy couple from the Cleveland region, who, up until a year ago, were ready to leave the Church. That was their decision after brooding on it for some five years. They have been recovered not only to just continue to fill the role of pastor, but I mean to fill the role of PASTOR; to be that family that loves that congregation and provides the sign of leadership that enables the whole congregation to see the possibility of being the Church in a new way. Today they talk about preaching as being a whole new experience. Whereas before it was that dread experience where you slither up the aisle and crawl up and hang on for as long as you have to and then slither out; today it is the image of standing tall and giving witness to the Word which is the only Word of possibility, not only for the Church but also for every human being.

9. What is going on in the front lines is not only the recovery of the role of pastor for those clergy who are directly in the experimental churches, but also the offering of that style as a sign for every clergyman. One of my colleagues, who has been captured by the sign that he sees going on in the experiment, took a PLC some time ago. He wanted to float his way beyond that, but just can't let go of the vision that he is seeing. He is seeing a new style, he is seeing a new possibility. Last week he spent a day recruiting for the PLC after telling himself for two years that he wasn't sure that he wanted to do anything for the Ecumenical Institute. What released him was that he was able to see that recruiting for the PLC is creating a care structure or caring for one's colleagues.

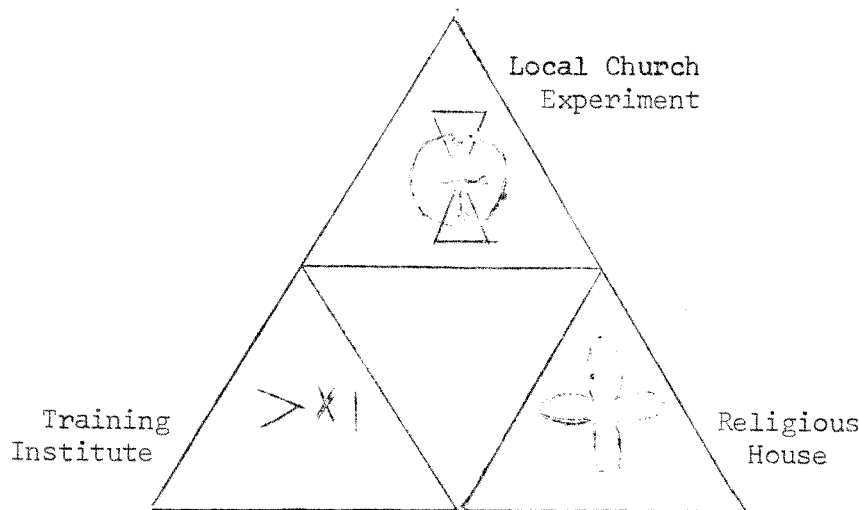
10. Another way we see the recovery of roles is recapturing the dynamic of what it means to be a bishop in the Church. Every denomination has some structure of care for the clergy, a dynamic of care for the total Church, or the assuming of responsibility for all of the congregations. Whether that is the bishop, the executive secretary, or whatever that might be, that role has been recovered this year, and particularly the past two quarters. Galaxy members have been assigned on field visits and consults to other galaxies. To receive that kind of presence has been an exciting happening for all of us. For those who are sent on that kind of mission is to experience the recovery of responsibility for the whole church in the whole world.

11. But what is crucial is not only the recovery of the clergy role, but also the recovery of the lay role. This demands a spirit training at the local level that enables a new decision from everyman. There is one woman I know who until two years ago never had journeyed out of her own yard. I mean that almost literally. Her husband was the one who went to work and maintained contact with the world while she did the hanging up of the clothes, the cooking and the cleaning. She didn't see herself as one who had any being beyond the bounds of her own yard. Then her husband was struck with cancer and died. She was at the point of suicide because there was nothing left for her; there was no supporting structure. Somehow she found her way to going 500 feet to the congregation's headquarters, and from there was enabled on a spirit journey that brought her here in December as part of the Basic Training School. That school exploded all of her images so that she knows herself now to be a global citizen, and to be the global Church, responsible for everything that happens in the world in the name and in the spirit of Jesus Christ. That is the spirit journey that has been enabled through this project.

12. Recovery has also taken place in terms of completing the triangles of the regional movemental dynamic. A few years ago, the only dynamic there was the Training Institute. At that time when you talked about the spirit movement, you were clear that you were talking about recruiting people for courses, running courses, and then wondering what to do with course grads.

13. Following that, a few years ago, the Presidium decided there needed to be a second dynamic, the Religious House. I first experienced the religious house a threat to the Cleveland Region. First of all, they recruited the strong regional leadership for the house. Then they started to propose strategies for "our territory" in terms of what was needed for recruiting and formulation and all the rest. The regional structure and religious house didn't seem to come together at many points, and when they did there was a bump.

14. What has happened this year in terms of the Local Church Experiment is that it is the third dynamic which completes the triangle and which in turn has released spirit across the Movement. That is to say, the Spirit Movement is that dynamic which is always trinitarian. There is the training dynamic, the knowing pole; the nurture dynamic, the being pole; and finally, the action dynamic, the doing pole.



15. The power of that awareness first came in the diagram. It took us two quarters to get the diagram. Finally we saw that it held an image of what we are about. Then it took only about six minutes to start to actually experience the completed dynamic. Once we had the vision of what was going on. So now the regional dynamic is clearly one dynamic. In the metro, House Church is celebrated with all three dynamics in the one dynamic. The sign of collegiality of one body is there in a way that I have never experienced before. That is seen in all the movement tasks where everyone participates in all three dynamics while simultaneous particular emphasis or thrust in one is clearly visible. The galaxy and the house participate with the training institute in penetration. All dynamics likewise participate in research and nurture. And all finally are seen as part of the dynamic of the Local Church Experiment, or the action dynamic.

16. Further, another gift of this first year has been the mutation that has taken place in us, whether we are part of a particular galaxy or not. Everyone here and everyone in the Spirit Movement has been mutated into a tactical thinker in a new way this past year. We ought to say a prayer every few minutes for those who are involved in the Basic Training School and being trained in the Local Church tactics. I remember the training school last year as pure agony. It got clear to me at that time that we were an experiment, and no one knew what was supposed to happen. In spite of all the people who pretended that they knew, there was no one who knew. It was a wrenching experience to look at that tactical system and be awed by its

mystery. But finally, we realized that through the faith decision we were enabled to give ourselves to the task of operating tactically rather than wishfully, which had been a common methodology before for a lot of us. But clearly tactical thinking is that which is necessary for authentic are in the revolutionary movement of our time.

17. A lot of you have heard the story of Hathway Church. I am here to testify that the story about the cadre being janitors for a year is a true story. But all that it does is illustrate grappling with what it means to be tactical. I hope that people haven't rushed out to be janitors after hearing that story, for that is not the point. It so happened that at a particular time in the life of one congregation all roads led to being custodians as the keystone that would unblock several things. The spirit analysis from observing the situation as it is and deciding what was necessary to break loose the contradictions was important undergirding to that tactical approach.

18. In analyzing that congregation we saw fairly readily that it was a body of people who just didn't know how to say yes. The board at this church consisted of people who showed up very responsibly but their understanding of what it meant to be responsible was to say no to any new possibility, because they saw it as a threat of taking away what little was there. We decided that the thing they couldn't say no to was a gift of \$900. Since that was the one thing they couldn't say no to, it became the tactics.

19. But it was deeper than financial. The issue was their self-image. That congregation was saying, "We're nobody." And it was true. Externally by the judgment of this world they were nobody. We were nobody. We were a body of people less than 300 members which is a negative sign already for a suburban church which previously had been an urban church of 1200 members. We were a blue-collar, non-professional collection of people--and I mean a collection, not a body--a collection of individuals who couldn't make it any place else, so we had collected together out of our common nothingness. The way that that story got verbalized was, "We can't even ask anybody to clean the church. We've tried it, and all it ends up in is a fight, and people leave the church because their efforts haven't been appreciated." That was an actual happening. So we were paying \$75 a month just for someone to walk in there a hour or so a week to throw a rag and a broom around and walk out, not caring for the task, but only for the money.

20. So it was decided that at one board meeting there would be four things that the board had to say "yes" to, and the janitor was the key one, the first one. It was presented by a very attractive young lady who had just gone through RS-I and was greatly excited. She just got up and said, "Harold and Clarence and I would like to be custodians of this church for one year." Then there was a stunned silence. Then, "That is very admirable." And then another long pause. Then, "Well, we've tried that before and it won't work." So Betty just stood back up and said, "Well, I am here to say that it will work." And another long pause. Then somebody rather meekly said, "Well, what will we do at the end of the year?" Those are exact quotes. That was the way it was. It took 45 minutes, painful minutes. I just sat there squirming. Finally, it was just deadlock. Finally the question had to get raised, "The question is, can we say no to a one-year gift because it is not a five-year gift?" That allowed the answer of "no," but on the other side of the "no" was clearly a "yes." So the next item on the agenda took only 30 minutes for a "yes" to get said. And since that time, that board was a body of people that learned how to say a collective "yes".

21. The real test of that didn't happen until the end of that year. Everybody was watching. The model for the task was just a little bit better than what had been done the year before when they were paying for janitorial services so that people would say, "Gee, we are getting better care than we were before and we are not paying for it." At the end of the year the question went out, "Who will be the custodians for the coming year?" A retired man, the one who had been most bitter, probably the strongest church lover there, and also the one who was most cynical in telling the story that it wouldn't work, said, "My wife and I will do the sanctuary area if someone else will do the fellowship hall area." And somebody else did.

22. That is what I would point to with tactical thinking and tactical work. All that had happened before Summer '70. That was our one big tactic, and it brought in great signs, but the Messiah did not come riding in on his white steed to make everything different. We were not changed. We would have drowned in cynicism and despair-- except that a system of 9216 tactics was born that has enabled us to see that the way you move is to deal tactically with the whole arena for as long as time shall be. That has been the care. It enabled the decision to move. It enabled the clarity of vision on the other side of the journey.

23. Thus, the report of the past year is that it has been a Spirit happening. It has been that which has involved some people directly, but finally everyone indirectly. It is a part of the whole movement; and the whole movement is tactical, is corporate, and has spirit deeps in new ways today because of that happening.

24. I want to say a few words about where we are and where we see the immediate extension of the Local Church Experiment. We are just winding up Year One. As soon as that is done, the countdown will begin for the launching of Year Two. We are already on the launchpad. We have already worked out our contradictions and strategic objectives for the coming year, and particularly the coming quarter. The launchpad picture includes the fact that we have already 144 churches on that pad, not 80. That is more than a statistic; that is a sign. Those of us who have been around in this for a year are probably as clear about the sign as anyone else. What has been going on is a leap-frogging. Much of the experience of the first three quarters, was nothing but literally being buried under an avalanche of paper. That struggle has been struggled. We are still at an early stage in the technical refinements, but the new galaxies are going to go through the first nine months in nine minutes.

25. Already in the last quarter, we first-year churches have learned things we just couldn't figure out from those that are coming into the experiment in the second year. I learned things on field visits to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. And the funny thing was that what I learned I couldn't articulate until two months after that field visit. The new galaxy is exciting. It is the discovery of the new. No one else before has entered the experiment one year into the experiment. That is obvious. But what it says, of course, is that there are things that are going to be seen from that vantage point that we never saw at all.

26. While our thrust was moving in one direction things were happening all over. Clusters were developing with three galaxies in a region. That is a happening which does a lot of things to the interior as well as to the exterior.

27. On the launchpad we see ourselves as moving into the second time around the tactics. It is going to be nice to get back to congregation and cadre tactics after a quarter of parish tactics. We have looked, as we all did in Summer '71, at the research behind the new social vehicle. That is what this whole quarter has been,

every week--twelve more tertiaries dealing with the parish. And you want to say, "We don't know enough; we haven't gotten a hold of enough to know what to do." We are looking forward to coming back to that through the congregation and cadre, getting another look at that the second time through.

28. But the main thing in terms of what we see about ourselves on the launchpad for the second year got said last evening in the continental galaxy meeting. It was from the prayer chart: the words "Deep Resolve." The place where we are in the Local Church Experiment is at the point of deep resolve. My image of that is of one of my colleagues who spent three of the last four quarters trying to find a way out. It has been just within the last quarter that a whole new human being has come forth. There is just a confidence, a decision. It is a commitment; there is no need to continue looking around for some other possibility. The last quarter has been the most difficult, as I have experienced it, because of the parish tactics. And yet, I have not experienced panic at all. We experienced a lot more panic just trying to learn how to read through a tactic booklet a year ago. Then we were looking for a way out. But I don't see people looking for a way out today. There is a deep resolve. It is clear that the second year is just a matter of the second year, and being alert to all that is demanded during that time. It is being out to win, and it is the clarity that the victory is there. It is just that serious kind of stance toward the long march that we are very lucid about and also very dedicated to.

29. Finally, I have a word about the future thrust. What is going to be experienced during the second year which is launched on April 2? The second year of the Local Church Experiment begins very appropriately on Easter Day. Upon us is the demand to expand our global context. Much of this year was spent just getting clear on doing tactics. But a beginning has been made on expanding the global context. Where we have experienced this is in beginning to teach. Every auxiliary in the galaxies in the last two quarters has had course assignments. That needs to be expanded, for teaching courses is a sign of new life. Something new is going on in courses where there is a local churchman up front along side someone in the symbolic order, an intended order and an extended order. There is something new happening there. One colleague said something to me last spring after we had been in the experiment for just a few weeks. He had just come back from a PLC in Texas and said, "What this project has done is to close the last escape route for clergy. It is a visible sign of what we had been saying for years." Finally, the only thing we are out to do is to enable life at the local level for every human being. The local churchman is the one who holds the sign of obedience, while the symbolic order person holds the sign of poverty, or detachment. Together a whiff of chastity is communicated. The thrust is to expand that global context. As we do parish tactics, we need to have first-hand contact with the globe. Whether it is through global odysseys or whatever, we need to see that when we are operating in a particular situation, we are the global dynamic. We are responsible to be the local dynamic every place in the globe.

30. The launch, the future thrust, will include expansion. Where are the galaxies, the new galaxies, one year from now going to be located? How many of you are in congregations that have already decided that you are going to be in the experiment a year from now or else? That puts a demand on all of us as the corporate body responsible for making those decisions. We are clear already that the demand is going to be more than was envisioned when the original timeline was created. We are already ahead of that timeline.

31. Summer '72 is crucial. We could not go through those parish tactics one more time this side of Summer '72. To put handles on the vision that was pulled together last summer is going to release the passion of the local churchman, that he might give his life in caring for every human being and every blade of grass and every fire hydrant. The tactical system will release a vision, which will release the passion that needs to be released.

32. The edge struggle for all of us is to envision what Little Big Man could not do. We are clear on what it means to be establishment. We are clear on what it means to be dis-establishment. We are clear that both of those finally support the same impossibilities. What is needed is to invent that style that will transcend both of those. It will be a style that assumes responsibility for both. It is the transestablishment style. Our brooding during the last two days directly concerns what it means to invent that style. In the past we have invented the style of pedagogue, of the guru, the teacher, the spirit man. What does it mean to invent the style of the one who enables the new social vehicle to become that which overtakes the old? That is the edge of our struggle in this time and this year. A year from now that style will have been invented.

Mark Poole