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Sensitive men and women in every culture are struggling with the demand to create a new, global social order amid the overwhelming collapse of the old. Those who care passionately about the transformation of local communities where people are suffering are deciding to love the local church. They are enabling the local church to pick up its destined role of forging out a new social vehicle for authentic humanness for the next thousand years.

Wherever this is happening across the globe, a body of people is being raised up in history to move against the depth contradictions in society and to stand as a sign that the local church is renewed in our time.

In APIA, SAMOA a graduate of the International Training Institute has enabled the youth groups of several local churches to grasp anew their religious heritage by recovering the practice of meditation, contemplation, and prayer in a twentieth century context.

CARACAS, VENEZUELA: Churchmen have come together to analyze the sickness of the current images of the male and female and to participate in defining what the new roles of man and woman need to be.

5TH CITY CHICAGO: Trained community leaders have shaped the social structures to be an ever-present sign of the impossible made possible in a parish experiment.

BOMBAY, INDIA: A cadre of indigenous churchmen has initiated The Urban Ashram, a sign of corporate living, which is building the models to enable the renewed church to transform the inner city and developing a strategy for reduplication.

MOWANJUM, AUSTRALIA: Aboriginal tribesmen, having reappropriated their heritage and recognized their gift to civilization, have covenanted themselves in a radical experiment in community reformulation.

The question which reflective men these days are asking themselves is "How do I give myself to the release of creativity in my own community? How should my life be expended to move history toward the new humanness?" This has been the question of serious churchmen throughout history.

It assumes new urgency today. The task, as Teilhard de Chardin has said, is "to build the earth."

What is this new shape of the earth to be? What new social forms are we called upon to affirm or construct? On whose behalf do we do battle? Who are the oppressed and poor in spirit? And what new forms of the local church are going to be required as men stand genuinely present to other cultures and to the indigenization within them of the Word of life? These questions are profoundly interrelated, for it is the church's mission to pioneer innovative roles, styles, and structures on behalf of all of society. It is therefore the reconstruction of the local church that is the key to releasing local man's creativity as well as the decisional expenditure of his life which is at the root of the new humanness.



we stand

beyond

our life



and see

Recently one of the staff members of the Ecumenical Institute assigned to the enablement of the continental Local Church Experiment was asked about the first year of Phase II of the experiment. Here are some of his comments about the experiment.

What is the local church experiment?

The local church experiment is a methodology for making available the best wisdom about concretely renewing the local church: how to forge grassroots corporateness and how to weave together spirit passion and tactical thinking to bring about significant change within a local congregation. Its aim is to tactically impact the life of the church in an ordered fashion.

The experiment is divided into three phases. From 1966 to 1970 was the phase we call Research. The signal event of Phase I was Summer '70 when 500 churchman pulled together the practical wisdom in church renewal into one tactical model. From 1970 to 1976 is the phase of Experimentation; during this time the model created in Summer '70 is being tested and refined in 552 churches in 108 metropolitan areas of North America. From 1976 to 1984 is the Controlled Replication phase. That's where a thousand churches will begin use of the model of Local Church Reconstruction each year.



What does the local church experiment look like?

This year it looks like groups of local church leaders, from four different churches called a galaxy, working together in disciplined weekly structures in thirty-six metropolitan centers across North America. These groups meet on Tuesdays and on six weekends a quarter to sharpen their spirit methods and employ tactics for the reconstruction of their local churches. It means working with fourteen different denominations at this point and dealing with churches that are in every sociological stratum possible. It is working locally for the reconstruction of the local church everywhere. It is based on local leadership doing the job. The tactical system serves as the guide.

How do you get people to commit themselves to the experiment?

Churchmen, finally, commit themselves because they see that the rebirth of the church is necessary for the future of mankind. They see that rebirth is possible through a corporate missional thrust. For instance, last year in Washington, D. C. thirty-eight people attended a galaxy meeting. Those attending were ages 18 to 82. They were black, yellow, and white churchmen who represented various denominations in the galaxy. It was, for me, a concrete sign that it is possible to unite people and that unity always comes from having common symbols, common images, common methodologies and a common missional task.

Who actually does the tactical system?

Many groups within a local church are related to actualization of the tactics, with the local auxiliary playing a catalyzing role. The local auxiliary is made up of the clergy family unit, and one or two families of committed laymen. The local auxiliaries from the four congregations in the galaxy meet with the auxiliary prior team from the religious house on Tuesday nights and in weekend councils to do training and the planning. As they work with the rest of the congregational leadership, they use available plans and methods to enable the congregation to intensify its service in the world.

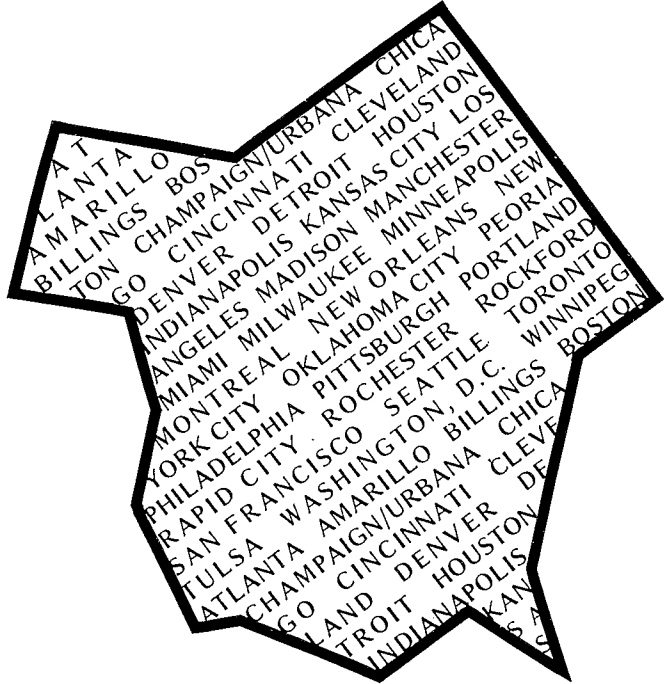


What is unique about this experiment?

It's practical, comprehensive, applicable to every situation—and is designed to remotivate missional corporateness. One Louisiana clergyman said he had been in every renewal program of the Church for the last twenty-five years. "These programs," he went on to say, "failed at the point of demanding a group to be a disciplined, covenanted body of people. The strange thing about this experiment is that it begins precisely at that point of commitment." The real key, though, is the spirit life. Any time people are trained to be tactical and intensify their level of self-consciousness, then they tend to burn out and give up if they are not constantly nurtured. Therefore, every Tuesday night the local galaxy gathers for a corporate meal, spirit and scripture conversations, brooding on the social process and frequent celebrations. Then during weekend councils, there are Psalm conversations and the observances of the Canonical Hours interwoven with the tactical work.

In the past year, has the experiment come up to expectations?

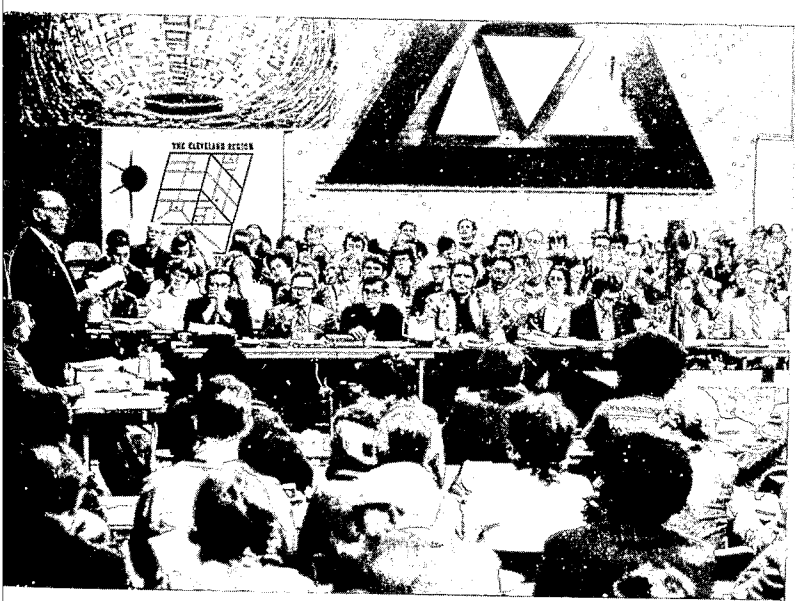
Yes, it has exceeded our expectations. The happening which signals the success of last year



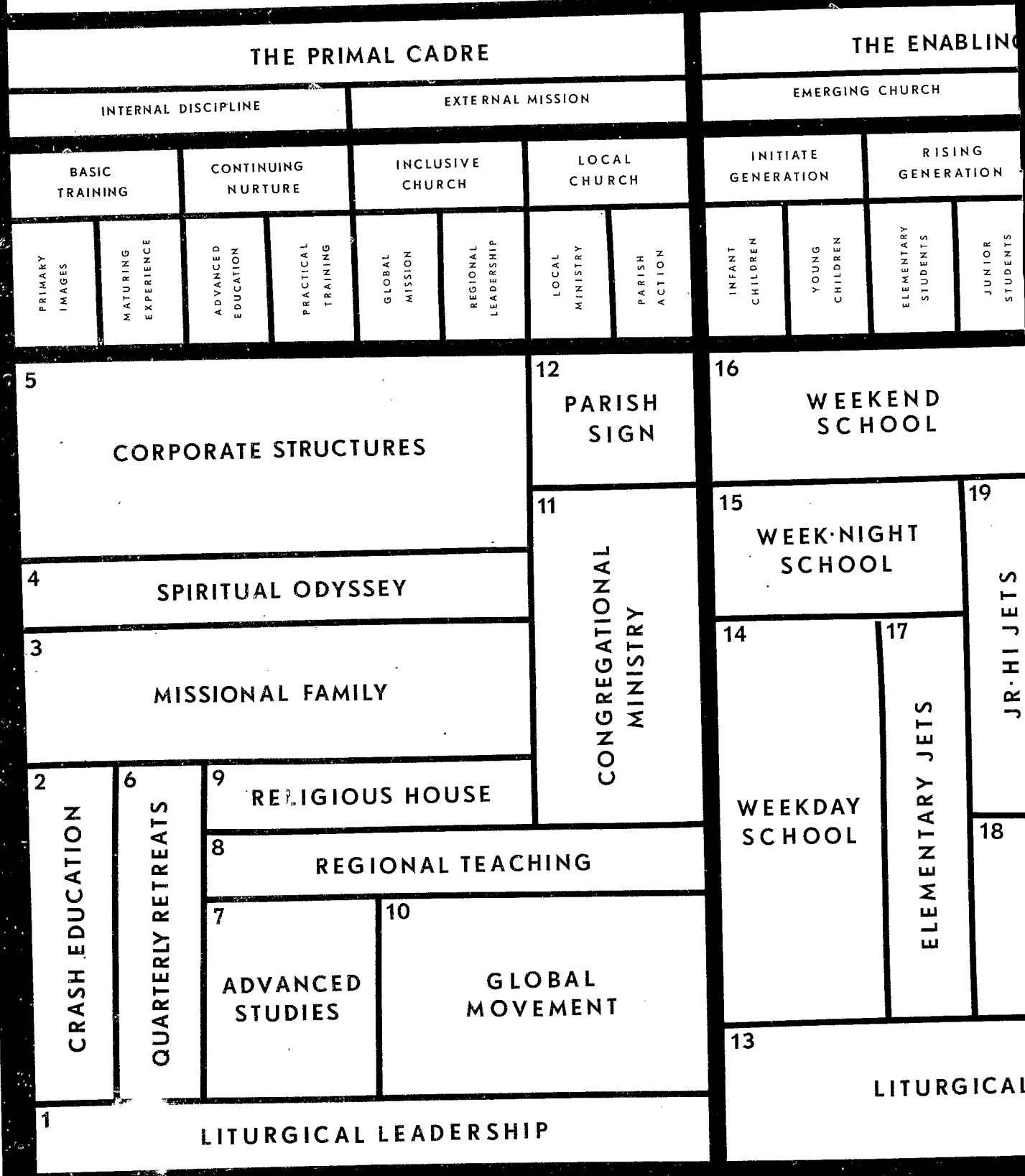
**a time
to set forth
a new demand**

and points to the promise of the future is the leadership exchange this past quarter. For example, one clergy couple from Milwaukee helped lead the field visits in Minneapolis and Winnipeg. As a missional family they shared their year's experience in the galaxy and corporately dealt with issues raised at the field visit. They were a concrete sign of the clerical family and of globality, as well as evidence that the tactical system really works. Great things happened to the people who made the visits across the continent. They became aware of themselves as ministers of the whole church, not just of their own local church. Through the exchange they could see the gifts and the weaknesses of their local situation with brand new objectivity and they returned to their local congregations with new passion.

January marks the first anniversary in Phase II of the Local Church Experiment on the North American continent. It is a time to be grateful for the year that has been. It is a time of further expansion from the original eighty congregations in twenty galaxies to 144 congregations in thirty-six galaxies. It is a time to recall the promise that the local church, the Body of Christ, is the hope of the world.



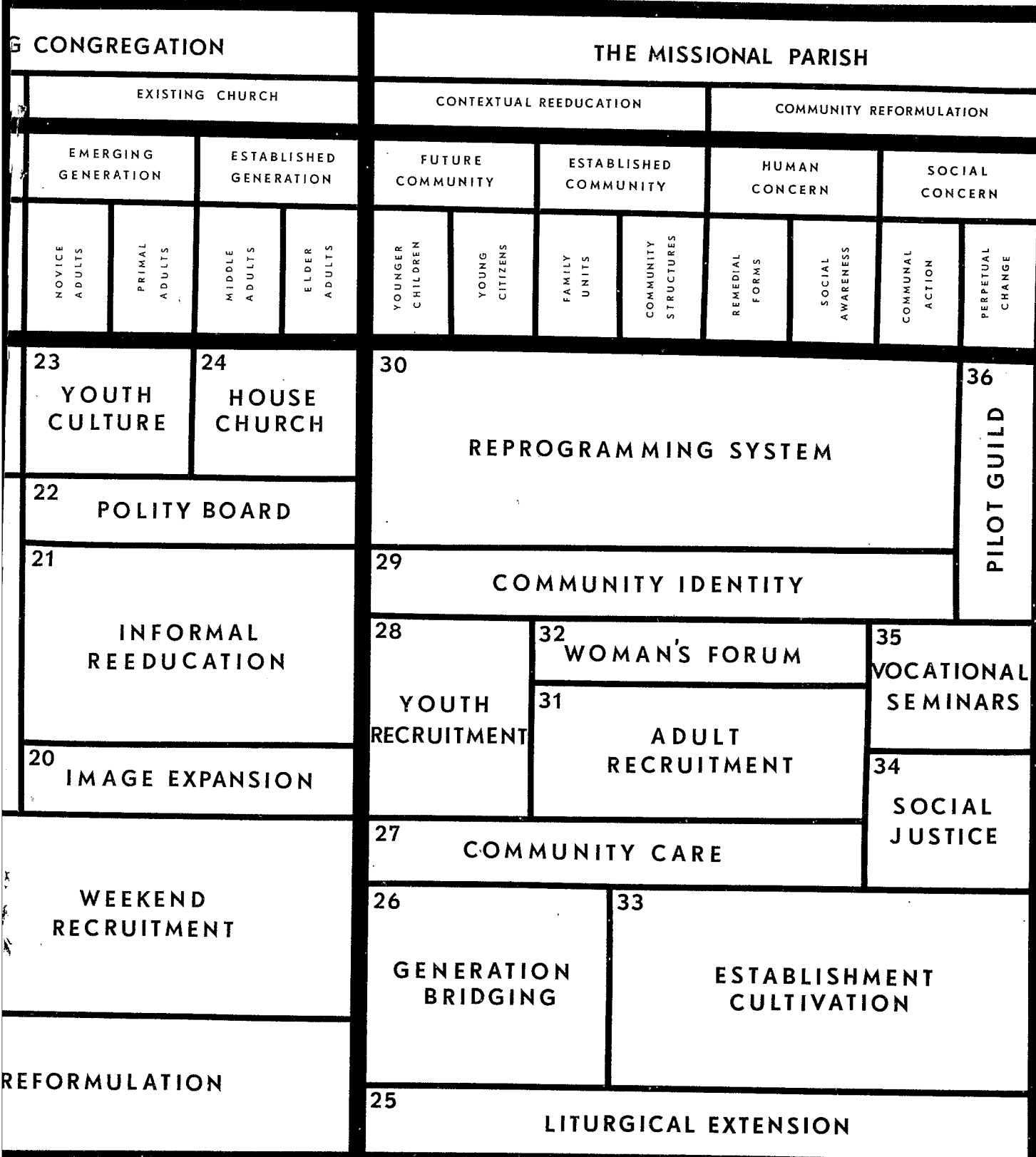
THE TACTICAL SYSTEMS FOR THE RE



The Local Church Experiment is designed with three tactical systems; the committed leadership (Cadre), the gathered local congregation (Congregation), and the local focus of the congregation's mission (Parish). This contextual chart is a

CONSTRUCTION of THE LOCAL CHURCH

CONTEXTUAL
CHART



dramatic visual picture which shows the relative weight of the thirty-six tactics through the tactical systems. It is designed to capture and retain the whole spectrum of complex relationships between the tactics.

Renewal is occurring in congregations across the continent as the Local Church Experiment continues. There is serious adult study of the church and world, increased pledging to enable a relevant mission, and radical discipline for the church's crucial role in today's world.

In celebration of the completion of the first year of the Experiment, here are a few stories witnessing to these transformations.

UNITING IN MISSION

Church men are excited by the discovery, even in our fragmented times, that the church is a focus that unites everyone in common mission.

For example a local church layman from the Midwest reported: "We had a congregational workshop in March that was a result of initial Experiment work. Now eight months later, people are beginning to see how other people are cared for. Maybe that's the key—it's over the long run that the message is going to get through. What did we do? We had an all-day workshop to plan next year's strategies and tactics and specific goals, growing out of the general goals of the congregation. A third of the families of the congregation were there laying out all the work and going through models, goals, strategies, timelines. And though not everyone fully grasped what we were doing that day, everyone is beginning to see how lives were and are being changed by our work together." Another story is from a priest who recalls hearing from some colleagues that they were in some "experiment." They were getting up at 5:30 in the morning and had regular corporate structures. "I called them and said, 'I have lived with you fellows, and for you to decide to take that time out to pray and to study every day, that is indeed a miraculous event. What's going on?'" He is now in the Experiment.

REAPPROPRIATING THE HERITAGE

One powerful sign in the first year of the Experiment has been the reappropriation of the great heritage of the Church. A question was raised by one of the Institute faculty to a group of clergy about which topics parishioners want to discuss. A pastor replied that they always wanted to talk

about the saints, but he hadn't been interested. "In thinking later about that discussion," said the priest, "I became clear that to appropriate the meaning of commitment and zeal and living as a pioneer in history, all you have to do is read the story of any of the saints, because that's what their lives are all about. That question unblocked me in terms of being able to reappropriate a great tradition that I had abandoned."

CELEBRATING THE NEW

Year One indicates that the clergy and laity of the established church can move beyond cynicism and despair when they participate in corporate structures that give them a vision of reconstruction, hold them accountable to their decision to be the renewed church and provide them with a method of tactical renewal.



From a galaxy church in the Northeastern part of the US: "Of the three master strategies of the Experiment (Contextual Reeducation, Structural Reformulation, and Spiritual Remotivation), we were particularly eager to begin the tactics having to do with the spirit life. We had a celebration that was a turning point in the life of the church and within our local church here. At a pancake breakfast last spring we had the largest turnout for that meal of any ever held at the church. After the breakfast we built montages of what our church is in history. A couple who hadn't been to church for five years dropped in to see what was going on. As they turned ready to walk out, some one called to them to help build a montage. They came back in and have continued involving themselves in the life

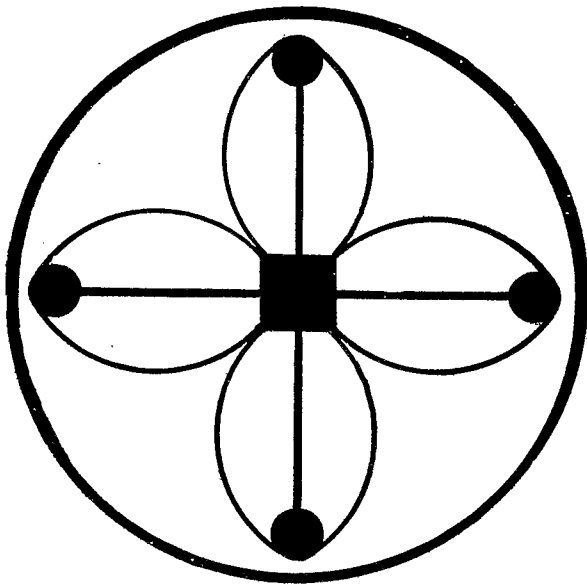


of the congregation. At the end we had a grand procession and put up the montages. We discovered the spirit of celebration."

ACTUALIZING TACTICS

Year One has also confirmed the belief that lay adults are the key to renewal and that the time is right for serious equipping of laymen to be the church in the world.

During the summer quarter the galaxy churches worked at "actualizing" tactics having to do with vacation church school and several other established summer events. One report came from a church in the North. "As a matter of fact our vacation church school was a kind of sleeping beauty. The congregation was asking whether we should wake it up or let it sleep through the summer. The attitude was, 'Well, we have to have church school, I guess. We always have. But I don't want to help with it.' And then, suddenly, I think because of the corporate methodology and support, from the local church auxiliary team, we had enthusiasm going. The teachers caught on to it. They had something they really wanted to get to the children. The children also caught the enthusiasm and had a great time! We had the feeling that something was happening this summer

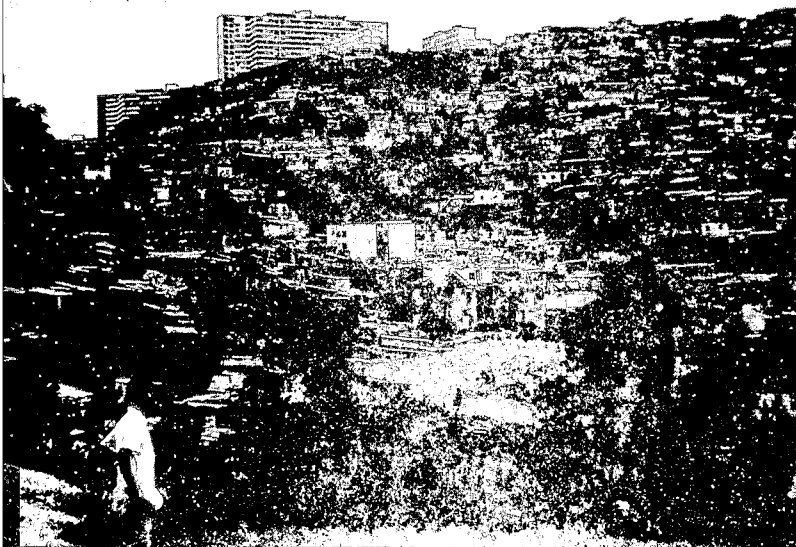


**transformed because
they bring forth
human life**

that hadn't happened before. One teacher said, 'If you hadn't had those teacher's training sessions, half of us would never have been there.' There was a brief evaluation session on the last day. We started to ask if they wanted an extensive evaluation session, but they were already on the way to setting the date. One of the recommendations was to have the same kind of training in the church school in the fall. The exciting thing was that most of us weren't aware that we were working out of the tactics. It seemed to just happen, yet we know what went into the planning."

CONTINUAL GROUNDING

Year One has shown that the task is not the creation of new structures in the congregation. It is rather *working tactically through the present structures* of polity, worship, study and action to disclose the promise of the past and the future as it focuses in the spirit life of every local churchman. The project is predicated on the conviction that the Word of God in Jesus Christ is experienced as the radical and total claim of history on a man's life. The new social form of the renewed local church will finally arise out of the continual grounding of the Gospel in the spirit struggles of society.



The Academy is no longer an experimental program. It has become an essential dynamic within the whole continental movement to reconstruct the local church as surely as RS-I or religious houses. In the midst of several major shifts and adaptations, it continues to be the basic instrument of the Spirit Movement for advanced training.

MEDITATION, CONTEMPLATION, PRAYER

The Academy began at almost the same time as the religious houses. During Summer '68, depth experimentation with the recovery of meditation, contemplation and prayer led to the commissioning of the first religious houses to the task of giving form to the spirit life of the Movement and the Church. In the fall, the first Church Academy opened. From the outset, it was understood that the Academy was a wholly new venture in educational design—that it was an eight-week experiment in being the new secular-religious community as well as a vehicle for pushing to the deeps of the twentieth century's religious and cultural wisdom.

Summer '69 was the fourth consecutive quarter in which the Academy was held. As the largest Academy to this point, it indicated the new seriousness of the movement about obtaining comprehensive training for mission. At the close of this Academy, participants and faculty prepared course manuals for each part of the curriculum. This in turn permitted the gathering, working through and polishing, during the following months, of movemental wisdom in the arenas of social, intellectual and religious methods and the translation of this wisdom into a set of new courses within the Academy.

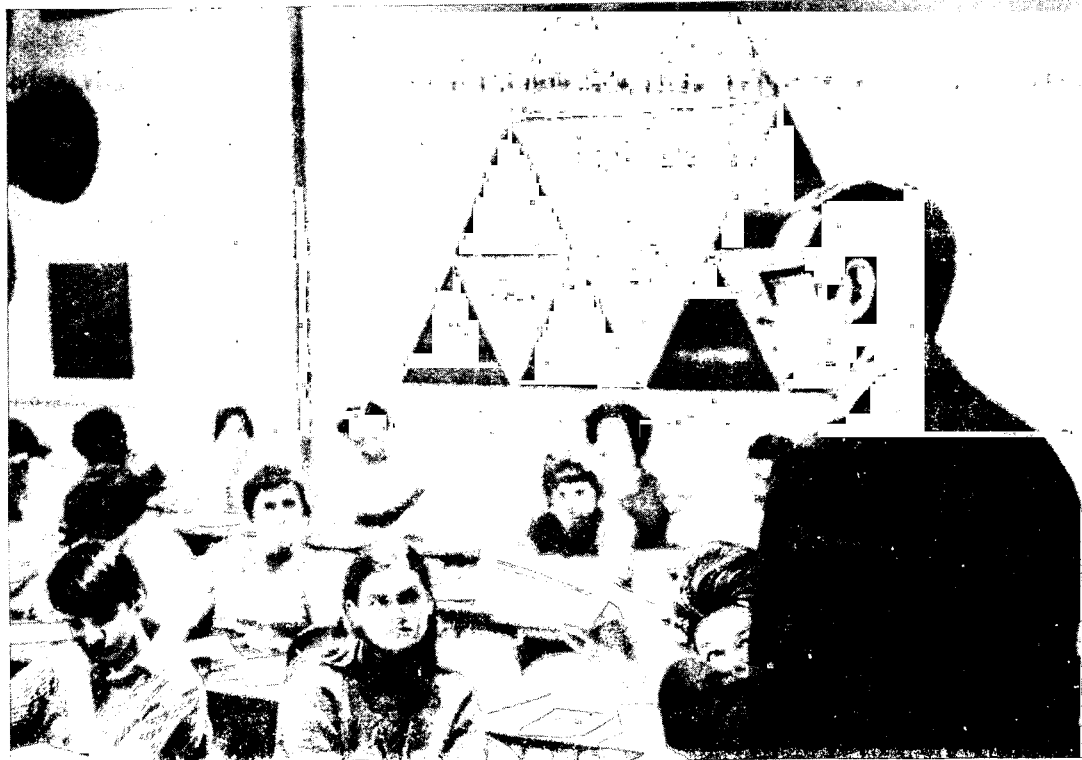
LOCAL CHURCH BACK-UP

Summer '70 saw the formulation of the Local Church Experiment, a happening which initiated a new phase in the life of the Academy. It quickly became apparent that the Academy was one of the essential back-up systems for the Experiment, providing the kind of wisdom and methods training necessary for laymen and clergy who are assuming

the responsibility for the reconstruction of the local church and the redirection of the civilizing process.

Now, on the other side of Summer '71, we are confronted with the question of the implications for the Academy of the research which has been done on the New Social Vehicle. Already there is a sharpened grasp of the social processes and a new finesse in the realm of sociological analysis and futuristic model building.

Churchmen today are acutely sensitive to the inadequacies of available ways of relating to the social issues of our times. They see that to respond only negatively to the status quo does little to alter the dehumanizing effects of established social



patterns. On the other hand, they know that simply to be faithful to those existing patterns will not create the new humanness which the future demands. Their cry is for the concrete vision and the practical methods that will enable men to direct their vocational energies effectively toward responsible social change.

PRACTICAL TRAINING

The Academy is the structure designed to equip men with this vision and practical training. It offers the possibility of operating out of a stance toward society which neither negates its gifts nor ignores its inadequacies—a stance which allows one to focus his involvement upon the creation of a more human future for all men. It enables the

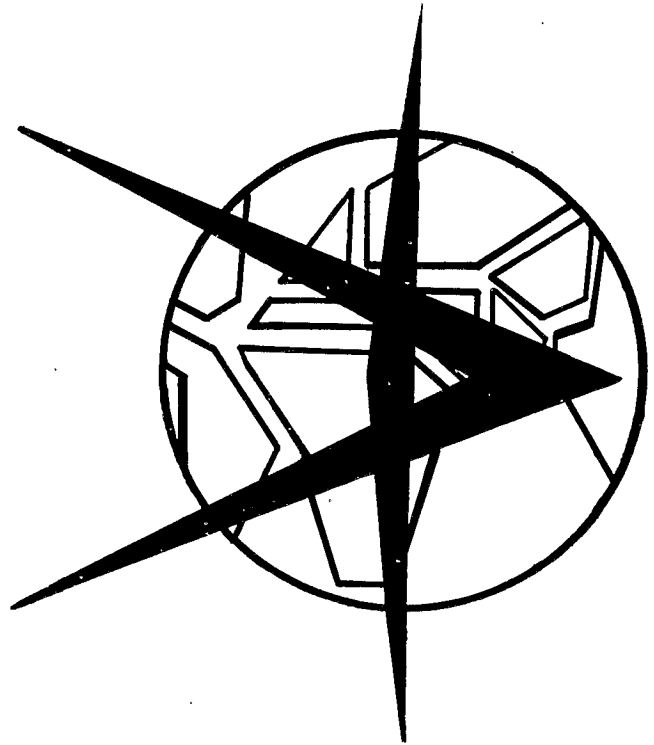
STALE
**BE
MY
PEOPLE**



engagement with one's own particular situation within the comprehensive and global content.

A JOURNEY IN HUMANNESS

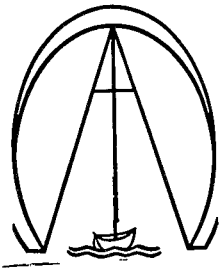
One high school girl evaluated her experience at the Academy in this way: "The labs were invaluable because they gave form to the demand to be the Church. The lectures helped to keep the rest of the work and study in perspective. It was great when I discovered I could be corporate with people I disliked. Symbolic life became more and more important, worship as a reminder of one's



the global task now has claimed our lives



decisions, and House Church as care for the journey of the whole body. In the Ecclesiola, the songs, the games and the conversations on the New Religious Mode charts, the New Testament readings and Psalms conversations were all especially helpful. The internal operation of "one-day wonder" and team assignments was a powerful image of possibility. You experience the rebirth of wonder, only to discover that you have only begun to penetrate the fathomless depth of the fantastic creation you are. The Academy is a powerful push in the journey of being humanness.



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January 1972

Dear Fellow Churchman:

The Lord has brought us to a New Year—1972. For some reason I always have to remind myself that the New Year has yet to be created—that it awaits our decision to give it form.

What the Lord of History is requiring of the twentieth century is a renewed church—a global fellowship of committed churchmen, willing only one thing with their lives. And that is to see that the local church is, in Word and Deed, renewed for the sake of civilization. For this, the whole of creation is waiting.

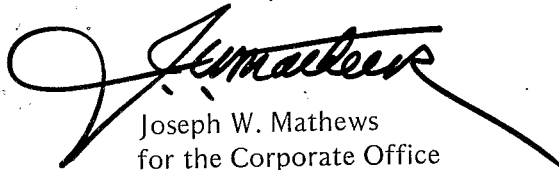
January marks the beginning of our second year in the Local Church Experiment. Thousands of people have worked long and difficult hours during the past year to bring that Experiment into being. The reports I have seen coming in from the Galaxy pastors have been encouraging. At the same time, the expansion, both here and in South East Asia, has been dramatic and is demanding a new intensification in the Movement.

1972 will bring to a close our first decade in Chicago. On January 7th, we moved a portion of our staff to the Kemper Building in the Uptown area of Chicago. This fine eight-story building, which has been donated by the Kemper Insurance Company to the Ecumenical Institute, comes at an opportune moment, when our four hundred staff members based in Chicago have expanded beyond the limits of present facilities. This gives us a new opportunity for hosting crucial programs in Chicago.

As we move together into the promise of this New Year, let me encourage you to remember the Institute in your budget planning. Regular gifts provide essential support for our common mission, without which we would certainly be handicapped.

Let us now go forth to labor freely, gratefully, and sacrificially in this year of our Lord, 1972.

Grace and peace,



Joseph W. Mathews
for the Corporate Office

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