



**STAY IN
THE CITY**

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FORWARD MOVEMENT PUBLICATIONS

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Preface

For the past twenty years, the Church has had a deep concern about what we have called the "urban crisis." Much has been done through our parishes and by the laity who, having been nurtured by our parishes, carry something of the mind and heart of Christ into their roles as spouses and parents, citizens and workers. Much has been done by our Bishops and by Episcopal agencies in speaking to the causes of the crisis and ministering to those most oppressed by it.

However, when we look at city ministry as a whole, there are three areas we have neglected. *First, we have not been imaginative and stable in regard to our city parishes.* We have tended toward faddish experimentation and reduction in our approach to urban parishes. We have frequently directed our attention to the "bigger issues" while ignoring our roots in the city's neighborhoods.

Second, we have not developed a long-range perspective. Even the frequent use of the word "crisis" may get in our way. To most of us a crisis is something that is temporary. It passes, or we deal

with it, then we get on with our normal life. What we face in the city is no temporary thing. It is not some temporary interruption to our normal ministry: it is our ministry.

If the present trend continues through the next generation, there will be few parishes left in the city. We need to develop a long-range perspective to our urban parish work if we are to stay in the city.

Third, we have not had a comprehensive approach toward our urban ministry. We seem to get caught up in work that gets held up, for a time, as an example of our commitment — special community organization, housing or Team Ministry projects. We need to understand our urban ministry in relation to the whole system of the Diocese — clergy deployment, financial support, the effect of symbolic actions, things and people, what we expect of clergy and laity, etc.

Because of the work of the Urban Bishops, the Episcopal Urban Caucus and numerous individuals and groups within the Church, we have begun to think in terms that are more comprehensive, long-range and, in some cases, parish based. This paper is my offering to one part of that thinking — what is required for the Diocese of Pennsylvania (and, by implication, urban centers elsewhere) to have a stable, faithful and strong witness in the city in and through our parishes.

I. The Situation

Since 1940 we have seen the death of almost one congregation per year in the city of Philadelphia. Between 1900 and 1940 we averaged one closing or merger every other year. Sixty parishes in eighty years.

Each case had its reasons. At the time, I'm sure most of the reasons appeared sound, practical and sensible. However, taken as a whole it all appears shortsighted, irresponsible and faithless. While the population of the city increased, we closed and moved. When the population of the city began to decrease in number, but increase in color and poverty, we fled and reduced. Even as we bemoaned the desertion of the city on the part of business and industry, we deserted neighborhood after neighborhood.

In one statement after another we have declared our concern for the city, our love for its people, and our commitment to a creative and faithful response to the urban crisis. As our statements are released with one hand, we keep closing city parishes with the other hand.

The painful truth is that it is the operating policy of this Diocese to leave the city. It's not our stated intention, it's not the desire of our leaders, it's not the result of any conspiracy or plan, but it is our behavior. It is our betrayal of the city — a betrayal of the working class and poor, of Black, Asian, White and Hispanic.

There are many reasons. Some are shameful, some are well-intended, some are both shameful and well-intended. Regardless of the reasons, the effect is clear. We have slept in the midst of agony and fled in the face of the Cross.

As always there is one proper response — repentance. It is time to turn around. It is time to stop closing and to start building. We must say it. Without excuses, without exceptions, without “maybe’s”, we must say clearly, publicly and forcefully — “We are staying. We will share the pain and joy of the city. We will serve the city and its people. We will increase the number of parishes. We will strive to bring more and more people to Christ and his Church. We are staying.”

The situation we are facing is not merely a reflection of the general loss in membership that the Episcopal Church has experienced. The Church in Philadelphia has declined at more than two times the national rate. The parishes in the relatively urban deaneries of the Diocese have lost members at almost three times the rate we see in the relatively suburban deaneries. We have not even attempted to open a new parish in the city for over forty years.

Our goals are unclear and our means uncertain. We seem to have no overall approach for deployment of urban clergy, maintenance of facilities, or renewal of mission. Accountability is weak, resources limited, and long-term planning non-existent. New approaches in the city seem directed more often toward reduction and short-term cost saving than a long-term commitment to a growing ministry in the city.

The picture in other cities is considerably better than what we face in Philadelphia, yet it is still a picture of “hanging on” rather than growth. Rough estimates indicate that during the last ten years we have closed two parishes in New York City and only one in Boston. In Washington, D.C., only one or two have closed in the past twenty years; during that time, two or three moved from mission status to

parish status. In Chicago, four have been closed and two new Hispanic missions begun in the last twenty years. During the same period, Baltimore has closed three.

In some cases the way in which other dioceses have managed to keep parishes open has been at a heavy cost to the Church’s evangelization and servant tasks. However, at least they have maintained their ability to renew these ministries because they have kept their parishes alive.

II. A Different Approach Is Possible

What we are facing is not fate — some inevitable process that we have no power to influence. Ours is an issue of vision, commitment and will. We simply have not been willing to do what must be done. Perhaps we don’t even see what must be done.

The Lutherans in Philadelphia saw what had to be done and they did it. A 1975 Center City Lutheran Parish report gives the picture.

In one generation inner city Philadelphia churches (Lutheran) had dwindled from 46 to 26. A planning study in 1964 predicted two more closings within the near future; three other churches were in serious trouble; six more were barely holding their own. It was obvious that unless something drastic were done, there would be little or no Lutheran witness within another generation.

The report went on to describe the Lutheran Synod’s response.

In the fall of 1964, inner city churches were invited to participate in the newly formed Center City Lutheran Parish (CCLP). Twenty-two joined. Each parish remained autonomous with their own council, control of finances, and normally their own pastor. Respect was shown for the ability of each pastor and council to know its own parish needs best. CCLP provided assistance in responding to those needs, and a context of accountability and direction in regard to basic standards.

Since 1964, none of the parishes have closed. Black baptized membership went from about 500 to 3,400. In 1960, 7% of the membership in racially integrated neighborhoods was Black, while the population of those areas was 44% Black. In 1975, 80-85% of the membership was Black, with the overall Black population reported at 67% in 1970. Congregations in white neighborhoods were slowly declining.

Emergency food centers were established, major work with youth has been started, congregations are involved in the issues of their communities, the Director has been involved in city-wide issues, the giving of members has increased.

The report saw several factors related to their successes:

+*Clergy Leadership.* The Lutherans report a link between steady growth and long-term, experienced pastors whose efforts are not interrupted by long vacancies. They seek pastors who are interested in and qualified for inner-city work. They have moved away from the situation of these parishes being served by older pastors who feel "trapped" or idealistic younger pastors who lack experience.

They normally require the pastor to live near the church building.

The director of CCLP plays a strong role in clergy placement. A seminary intern program was started which serves to train and screen potential inner-city pastors.

+*Adequate Funding* for a significant period of time was guaranteed each parish. This has been very costly. Large sums were committed from local and national sources. Money was invested in property improvements. The CCLP arranged for a system of bulk purchasing and helped raise foundation funds for special projects.

+*A Weekly Gathering of Pastors* provided a support system.

+*The Synod* has been very supportive. Synod Presidents made the CCLP work a high priority.

+*Lay Leadership* was developed. People were trained in evangelism and stewardship and involved in staffing outreach programs.

III. What It Takes

If we are to stay in the city and minister with strength, there are ten commitments to be made:

1. Increase the number of parishes within the city.

If we are to be taken seriously — in fact, if we are to take ourselves seriously — we must not close or merge another city parish for at least ten years. No excuses! "It's not involved in mission." "Its people wouldn't change." "Its leadership is weak." "Its membership is too small." "Its stewardship is inadequate." Change it, challenge it, love it, pray for it, wait it out, replace the leadership, send in an evangelist, attract a new congregation. Once we are clear about our intention to stay, all the excuses become problems to be solved rather than rationalizations for despair and reduction.

Putting a hold on any closings or mergers for ten years is a concrete, dramatic sign of our commitment to stay. Given the trend of the past eighty years, we need to draw the line if we are to begin to turn that pattern around. The trend must be reversed if we expect to attract stable, faithful clergy who will make long-term commitments; to free the energy of people to give their attention to growth and ministry rather than survival and self protection; to develop reliable relationships with members and neighbors.

We need a long-term commitment to increase the number of parishes and members in the city — a commitment to learn how to fully incorporate the city's diverse people into the unity of the Holy Catholic Church. There are new works to begin — the

formation of Asian and Hispanic parishes and the establishing of parishes in neighborhoods where none exist. There are existing works to be strengthened and expanded — in North Philadelphia, Kensington, Frankford, South Philadelphia and West Philadelphia.

Once we have put a dramatic stop to the pattern of closings, and have a credible plan to stay and to grow, there may be cases requiring the closing or merging of a parish. Each time we close or merge, another parish should be started. There may be locations that are not satisfactory because of problems with visibility, parking, or lack of space to expand. The parish may need to build at another location within its community so as to solve these problems.

To stay means being present as *congregation* (people), *priest*, and *property*. One without the others is inadequate. Our experiments at presence that involve some reduction in these basic elements have undermined our long-term presence and ministry in the city.

It is the congregation, gathered to hear the Word and to receive the Sacraments, that is scattered to family, neighborhood and work to represent Christ and His Church. The congregation exists to worship God and so point all people to the Holy City. It exists to proclaim and to share the Catholic Faith and the Christian life and so to incorporate, one by one, family by family, ethnic group by ethnic group, all people into the death and resurrection of our Lord. It exists to serve and to love as Christ serves and loves, and so to bear the pain and celebrate the joy of the Living Christ at work in the city. The congregation is an essential element of an incarnate presence.

The priest is a second element in an incarnate presence. Our tradition assumes the existence of various orders of ministry as a basic structure for advancing the mission of the Church, grounding her witness in the Catholic Faith, and living the fullness of the Christian life.

We must be present as property. Property is an outward and visible sign of our commitment. In its holy space the encounter with the Divine is focused. Fully human life requires a sense of the sacred, of transcendence and awe. Human dignity is advanced as an awareness of the depth of life is revealed and participated in. This sense of the sacred involves dramatic action, special architecture, vestments and symbols. Properly used, they reflect a sense of Christian order which sustains us and endures under and beyond all anxiety.

Parish property is also a place for meeting, in which the people of the neighborhood can gather to experience the fact of their interdependence, to strengthen their bonds, and to plan for service and life together. A church building is a symbol related to identity, stability and strength. Because it is a place beyond the control of politicians and social service bureaucracies, it offers the space for new thinking and the base for bold actions.

Congregation, priest and property together make for an incarnational presence of institutional commitment, availability, independence, and transcendence.

2. Seek the best clergy leadership

We need to seek men and women with a vocation to urban ministry and the gifts necessary to fulfill that

vocation. We need to search for these people throughout the Church, not limiting ourselves to those readily available in the local diocese. Such a search will, in itself, show the seriousness of our intention and raise the work to a higher standard.

An urban parish training program is needed. Programs that help clergy understand something of urban life and how to approach urban problems are not enough. We need training that is directed toward equipping for urban *parish* ministry. A process of disciplined reflection is needed during the first few years of ministry in city parishes. We need to establish intern programs in which seminarians and deacons can test their calling to this ministry and receive initial training for it.

Urban parish ministry must be presented as a vocation which is long-term, even lifelong, in nature; a vocation requiring competence and sacrifice; a vocation requiring the complete program of college and seminary studies normal for our Church, plus additional specialized training. We need to hold up this vocation to the young men and women of the Church as one worth giving their lives to.

3. Establish basic expectations for clergy

We need to expect something of our clergy. We face the danger of getting caught up in the difficulties and burdens of urban ministry and using them as rationalizations for laziness or sloppy work. All forms of ordained ministry have their unique difficulties and burdens. Urban ministry should not receive some special dispensation. At the same time, expectations should be grounded in the needs of the parish's development.

Our expectations of clergy involvement in diocesan and national Church affairs, community groups, etc., are often based on the image of a stable suburban parish, where there may be even more than one priest. To ask the same level of involvement from an urban priest is often to divert his or her attention from the primary development work that is a life or death question for a city parish. These parishes should not be pressured to get "on board" with a particular diocesan or national emphasis if this interrupts or distorts an orderly and responsible plan of development.

Some basic expectations for clergy which would undergird the development process include:

a. *Staying at least seven years* in the parish that has called them. There may be a few situations where the requirements of the development task will lead to a shorter stay. A priest that follows a long period of decline may have to challenge and change so many of the existing patterns of parish life so rapidly that the pastoral relationship is blocked and his tenure limited to a few years. Careful consultation between the priest and diocesan authorities is required in such cases.

Many of our troubled city parishes have suffered because of a series of short-term placements that didn't allow for the slow process of membership growth and spiritual formation. Placements should be based on a mutual expectation of at least seven years. As we get used to the idea of longer-term placements, the informal norm will hopefully grow to ten or fifteen years.

b. *Living in the community in which they work* (or at least in a city neighborhood that is of the same or lower social-economic position). The issues here are availability for and identification with the people.

c. *Having a rule of life* that enables continued growth and stability in one's ordination promises and provides for adequate means of rest and receiving support.

d. *Being accountable for our work to some appropriate diocesan authority.* We should be expected to work hard. Brief but frequent reports are needed to encourage reflection as well as accountability. Every three years an in-depth evaluation is necessary. Urban clergy should not be on the spot to be accountable to a half-dozen groups and individuals. It's a waste of time and an unnecessary strain. Expected meetings should be reduced and focused to enhance and support urban parish ministry. It appears that the more troubled the parish and the more the parish is in need of their priest's time, the more the expected meetings and reporting. Accountability must be focused.

Accountability requires a gentle toughness. We should be expected to work hard at a full parish life of worship, study and action. When we fail we will need understanding and possibly forgiveness. The time may come when we need to be removed. It is no favor to a priest to let him continue in a situation for which he lacks the vocation or ability. Accountability needs to include both acceptance and confrontation.

e. *Enabling the parish toward a full, balanced, and rich living of the Catholic Faith and the Christian Life.*

1) *Worship*: Full Prayer Book worship, including the Holy Eucharist as the principal act of worship on Sunday and the use of the Daily Office. Training people in methods for personal devotions, for participation in corporate worship and for receiving the sacraments. Training lay people as lectors, chalice bearers, and officiants of the Daily Office. Each parish a spiritual powerhouse.

2) *Doctrine*: Teach the basics of Scripture and Holy Tradition. Bring people in contact with the truth that is the city of God. Help people know *the Story as their Story*. Encourage all to use their minds and hearts to understand the Faith of the Church. Train lay catechists. Conduct regular study groups.

3) *Action*: Corporate action of evangelism, advocacy, service, and stewardship. Each parish involved in the fullness of Christian action by giving attention to each of these expressions of faith. Enabling lay people in their vocation and ministry.

It is time to let go of the assumptions that eat away at a strong urban ministry. The part of us that doesn't want anything to be expected of us needs to die. The desire to own our home, for our family to live in a "better" neighborhood, for the children to go to "better" schools, for our own "advancement" to a "better" parish — all are understandable desires in themselves, yet may be

incompatible with the task before us. The use of urban parishes as "stepping stones," as places for experiments, or as a base for some "more significant work", need to be seen for the damaging, self-serving acts they are. We are faced with the uncomfortable fact that men and women must be called to a life of costly and personal sacrifice. Those who understand something of the cost, and are willing to pay it, can also expect to experience the special joys of life in the city, where our relatedness to one another is often revealed in dramatic and redemptive ways.

4. A priest full time in each parish.

The renewal of an urban parish is a full-time job. Clergy working on a part-time basis can do little more than maintain a parish. Any parish ministry is more than a series of functions to be performed — worship to lead, sermons to prepare and preach, vestry meetings to conduct, etc. The priest in charge of a parish has the primary responsibility for oversight in that particular community of God's People. To lead the congregation into the Holy Order of Christ, to enable spiritual formation, to envision and plan, all require time for prayer and thought. To represent Christ and his Church in presiding at worship, administering the sacraments, proclaiming the Word and, yes, even in conducting the vestry meeting requires the time to root oneself in Christ and his Church, in Scripture and Tradition, in the people of the congregation and the neighborhood.

We must stop playing games with this basic element of parish life. The fact is that significant renewal and growth are unlikely without the presence

of a priest on a full-time basis in each parish. In the places that have experienced some degree of renewal and growth with a priest working part-time, it has often resulted in the priest being physically, emotionally and spiritually exhausted within three years.

One of the illusions that stands in the way of urban parish health is the assumption that the less the clergy time in a parish, the more lay ministry will develop. There are several things wrong with the assumption. First, it represents a narrow picture of the nature of ordained ministry. A major part of the priest's work is to enable and equip lay ministry; to help people live the Christian life begun in Baptism; to guide men and women in the discerning of their vocation and gifts; and to strengthen people for ministry. The priest must be the priest for the Church, so the people might be priests for the world. The converted Christian receives all the traditional ministries of the Church as the means of renewal and strength for conformity to Christ and service to humanity.

The result of moving from priests on a part-time basis to a full-time basis should be an increased and strengthened lay ministry. If that is not happening, we need to look at the relationship between priest and people in that particular parish to find out what has gone wrong.

Second, it seems to reflect confused thinking about the nature of lay ministry. The result of reducing a priest's time in a parish is frequently a disordered body and a lay withdrawal from ministries within the Church and in the world. Any increase that does seem to occur is either a pulling of lay people away from their primary vocation in family, community and work into a "clericalized ministry;" or a lot of

activity centered on parish survival; or the establishment of a lay group that dominates the parish's life. While a superficial glance at such parishes may reveal lay ministry, a more in-depth, discerning look will often reveal a growing imbalance in and reduction of the fullness of Christian life. The democratization and clericalization of the laity is not the same thing as the Baptismal ministry.

Some of the distortion seems to flow from the fact that clergy do need lay involvement in the mechanics of parish life. It also arises because lay people with a vocation to such strong involvement in the governance of the Church often fail to see that *their* vocation is not one to which most people are called. These two groups set much of the tone in a parish or diocese. They tend to raise up a small element of the laity's ministry to a position of primary importance, and so undermine the value of the major part of the lay vocation, and distort parish and diocesan strategy.

Third, excessive demands on lay people to take responsibility for the running of any parish tends to interfere with family life. In many of our city parishes, this pressure is put on families struggling to feed and house themselves — trying to establish a minimum degree of order in their lives. It is poor spiritual guidance that would distract these people from what is probably their primary ministry. It is misguided mission strategy to place people in an unnecessary conflict between their family and their parish by understaffing the parish.

Finally, the proposal to reduce clergy time seems to be put forward more frequently in the case of troubled city parishes than in relatively affluent, suburban parishes. Such reductionist experimenting with

inner-city parishes opens the Church to the appearance of class discrimination.

Renewal, growth and a strengthened lay ministry will be advanced as we increase the number of full-time, long-term clergy placements in our city parishes.

5. Provide the necessary resources

a. *Parishes need stability in their finances.* Knowing what to expect for several years at a time allows for realistic developmental planning.

b. *We need to drop the superficial logic that complains of "all the money going to salaries and property with little to program." Staff and property are program!* The real issue is mission and development oriented stewardship of these resources.

c. *We need a fair, coordinated, planned system of making grants and loans to parishes.* Possible categories for grants or loans are:

1) *Basic* — to keep a parish going at a minimal level. This would supplement whatever a parish raises internally.

2) *Short-term development* — to assist in meeting specific stewardship and membership growth goals that seem attainable within three years.

3) *Long-term development* — to be used in situations where growth seems possible only if we engage in a long-term commitment of ten or fifteen years.

4) *Establishing special ministries* — short-term grants to develop and test ministries in special areas of need.

5) *Continuing special ministries* — to maintain parish-based ministries in special areas of need.

Such a system needs to be firm enough to allow for stable planning and commitment, yet flexible enough to respond to opportunities.

d. *Having to justify the funds received by an individual parish to several different groups, at various times each year, in differing processes is very disruptive.* There needs to be an accountability system that allows for stability and doesn't tie up great amounts of a parish's time and energy.

In situations that seem promising for development and growth, yet are failing to meet that promise, the threat of a cut in funding seems inappropriate. If diocesan authorities are dissatisfied with the work being done, replace the priest. If the problem isn't the priest, but rather long standing resistance from lay leaders, consider supporting the priest in developing a new congregation alongside the old. If neither of these approaches seems possible and the situation has long-term potential for growth, put the parish "on hold." Provide sufficient funding to keep the parish going at a minimal level, while waiting for internal changes. A more drastic approach would be to close the parish, hold onto the property, then open a new parish directed at the growth possibilities in that community. Our accountability system needs to focus on the long-term development possibilities rather than getting caught up in our current frustration.

e. *We need to identify and implement ways of reducing costs without reducing the life and ministry of a parish.* We need to invest in establishing

energy efficient buildings without giving up our tradition of sacred space and availability of facilities to community groups. A diocesan-wide system of purchasing and contracting should be explored. Costs might be cut by developing diocesan agencies to provide Church supplies, vestments, printing, books, sexton services, even funeral needs.

6. Explore and implement approaches that lend themselves to growth and development; cease experiments that are reductionist in orientation.

a. Evangelism and membership growth require special attention, including

- 1) Training clergy and laity in the basic principles of Church growth; and,
- 2) Becoming familiar with the research and experience of Anglicans and other Christian communions;

b. Most city parishes need to focus their work in the eight-block radius around the church building. The membership of the parish should reflect the population of the surrounding community. As a neighborhood changes the parish membership needs to change. When a neighborhood changes from White to Black, or from Black to White, the parish needs to work to bring the people of the neighborhood into the Body. There will, or course, be exceptions in the case of parishes based on special communities — university, ethnic groups, historical, center city, etc.

We need to give a renewed emphasis on the responsibility of a parish as extending beyond the congregation to include the community of which it is a part. The parish's concern for the well being of people needs to be focused on, but not limited to,

the eight blocks surrounding the parish buildings. Community concerns and groups can be offered up in Daily Office and Holy Eucharist. We can and must respond to the pastoral and material needs of all people within the parish "boundaries." We can and must be advocates for dignity and justice in the neighborhood. In various ways we can further the building of the bonds of community and the needs of the neighborhood in representing itself to the agencies of government. We can and we must invite every unchurched person in the parish "boundaries," into the fullness of Life in Christ and his Church.

c. Development strategies based on research and experience need to be applied to fit each case. Each situation requires a different approach — changing neighborhoods, parishes in slow decline, parishes with undeveloped or resistive leadership, parishes with patterns of destructive clergy/lay relationships, etc.

d. Mission stations, possibly in store fronts, can be used as an outreach of existing parishes. This is a way of making contact with parts of the parish's geographical area currently not strongly touched by the parish. Within a parish's focus area there are many people unaware of its existence or its welcome. Weekday worship, education, services to help people in need, and support for community organization will provide a necessary ministry and be a means of drawing people into the larger fellowship of the parish. Stations can serve as a kind of "way station" for people currently unable or unwilling to bring themselves into full relationship with the parish.

e. *We need to try new approaches to increase the staff available in city parishes.* Starting with the assumption of a priest serving full-time in each parish, there are several ways to increase the total staff time available: for example, making increased use of religious orders, requesting secularly employed priests to serve in city parishes, training and ordaining a deacon for each parish, making use of Canon 8 to ordain priests to expand the outreach of the parish, assigning deacon interns, seeking volunteers to staff parish offices, developing a guild of highly trained lay catechists, etc. All such approaches toward increased staff require a context of clear job descriptions and strong leadership and authority on the part of the priest in charge of the parish.

f. *Encourage parishes to keep and increase endowment funds.* The existence of such funds stands for parishioners as a symbol of their future. We need to stop the welfare mentality of forcing parishes to use up these funds before they are eligible to receive diocesan aid.

g. *We need to learn to recognize reductionism.* It is reductionist to use religious orders, lay volunteers, Canon 8, and deacons as a way to reduce the priest's position to less than full time. It is reductionist to our sense of mission to continue to speak of "congregations" while attempting to eliminate the use of the word "parish." It is reductionist to use parish boundaries to limit a parish's outreach rather than to serve as a focus of ministry. It would be reductionist to use store fronts to replace existing parish buildings, rather than as extensions of parishes. It is reductionist to use inter-parish cooperation in ways that reduce the total

number of people worshipping, the number of people served and evangelized, or people's sense of loyalty and connection with their parish.

It is reductionist in its effect on worship and evangelization to attempt to solve our energy cost problem by closing the church rather than filling it with warm bodies. It is reductionist to a parish's comprehensiveness, evangelism, and spiritual life to reduce the number of Sunday Eucharists or avoid the public reading of the Daily Office on the basis of the number of people attending. It is reductionist to close parish after parish in the city on the basis of its current membership or funds.

Reductionism is usually based on a limited understanding of what is "practical," on a short-term view rather than a long-term vision; and is all too frequently rooted in a non-sacramental, non-incarnational view of the world.

7. Support parish identity and ministry

a. *Each parish needs to be encouraged to develop its own sense of strength and identity.* On the one hand, this is found by living fully within the Catholic Faith and the Christian life as this Church has received them. On the other hand, it requires that the parish be part of the community and culture in which it finds itself. These two purposes are complementary and compatible. Each parish needs to be rooted in the life and ways of its community in such a way that its universal dimension is upheld and advanced.

b. *People's loyalty to their parish needs to be encouraged.* For that loyalty to be of benefit for individuals and the whole Church, it must be set

within a broader loyalty to the Holy Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church and the diocese. This can help people in a small struggling parish to be aware of being part of something larger, grander and more enduring. However, it is the parish that provides most Christians with their immediate relationship to the larger Church and is the context of their growth in Christian maturity. It is in and through parishes that people gain their connection to the diocese and the mission of the Church. The ability of the diocese to minister effectively and faithfully in the city is dependent on the strength of its parishes, for it is primarily through the parish that the diocese has its presence in each neighborhood.

c. *Regional teams and deaneries have value if they strengthen the participating parish and/or are vehicles for carrying out ministries that require joint effort, and/or are significant participants in the Bishop's discussions regarding mission strategy.* They are dangerous if their effect is to weaken and undercut parishes. The use of regional ministries to bring the closing or merger of parishes, or the reduction of clergy time in each parish, is a way to ensure the long-term decline of the Episcopal Church in that area and to weaken people's willingness to engage in any cooperative ministry.

d. *We must learn to identify various levels of parish development and how to support parishes according to what is needed at each level.* Parishes in serious trouble need to focus on basics. Parishes with overwhelming property problems, inadequate management systems, etc., will need to deal with

these issues adequately before they are likely to give serious attention to growth or service. We have parishes that have not had an active, legally constituted vestry for many years; that lack the basic equipment and material needed for administration, worship and education; that are oppressed by years of neglect to their property; that live in fear of being closed by diocesan authorities; that have had no stability or depth to their worship and spiritual life for years; that fear speaking openly, honestly, and forcefully with their Bishop because they believe that to do so would result in a reduction in their financial support, etc.

Parishes lacking an adequate degree of order, security and stability tend to have their attention and resources pulled into dealing with these basic needs. Such parishes need to be free to ignore or give limited attention to many of the concerns and expectations appropriate to more developed parishes. They need time and help to remove the conditions that oppress them. We must stop the cheap shots about "parishes only interested in survival." Let's help each, not only to survive, but to grow. A parish in trouble will focus on survival. It *should* focus on survival if that is the issue facing it. Responsible leadership can help a parish face such a challenge with boldness, setting it in the context of a larger mission.

8. Develop a long-term diocesan plan

a. *We need a long-term plan for urban parish development that is based on the centrality of the parish for urban ministry, is clear regarding the strong oversight needed from the Bishop, is rooted*

in our tradition's understanding of the Catholic Faith and the Christian life, and is visionary and practical. Such a plan would be our response to the work of the Holy Spirit. While we need to plan and to work with all the competence and energy available, the Holy Spirit will do things with our plans and competence that we never imagined.

b. *There will be no cheap or quick results.* Missionaries to other lands would often wait years before the first person would be presented for Holy Baptism. We, too, need to learn how to wait on God, to discern the movement of the Spirit in a parish's life, and to see a parish not only in terms of its present life and ministry but in terms of its life and ministry in future generations.

c. *We need a ten-year financial plan that estimates the cost of staying in the city, inventories the financial resources available, identifies additional sources of financial support, and suggests where we will have to reduce expenses and program in other areas of the diocesan budget.* Over the next twenty-five years we will need several fund-raising drives on the scale of Venture-in-Mission. We need to build an urban parish endowment fund to underwrite some of the basic expenses of staying in the city. We need to devote large sums toward property improvements, energy efficiency, and opening parish-based outreach stations, day care centers, schools, and community centers.

d. *We need to review diocesan policies, procedures, and programs in terms of their effect on urban parishes.* What may make sense for most of the diocese may not make sense given the developmental needs of some urban parishes.

e. *We need at least one person on the Bishop's staff with full-time responsibility for oversight of city parishes.* This person should not be given additional diocesan-wide duties. His or her office should be in a city parish or in a city-based cathedral. The job description should call for frequent visits in each parish. We need someone who can be totally available for and with the city parishes — someone who will come to know deeply the clergy and people of each congregation. We should consider electing a suffragan bishop for such work.

f. *We need a cathedral in the heart of the city* — a powerhouse of worship and preaching, of education and service, that is for, with and of the city.

g. *We must be clear about where the decisions for action have to come from.* Individual parishes that have experienced financial, membership and ministry declines cannot on their own decide to engage in significant, long-term efforts at advocacy, evangelism, or service. They cannot say to their members or neighbors, "We will be with you for this next generation, join us in worship and ministry." It is the Diocese, focused in the office of the Bishop, that can make such commitments. Whether the Episcopal Church stays in the city, whether a particular parish stays open, is largely up to the Bishop and other diocesan leaders.

9. Identify and confront assumptions that exclude people

We seem to hold on to many assumptions that have the effect of excluding people and insuring little change in the racial, ethnic and class composition of

the American Church. Those I've heard include:

a. *"They're all Roman Catholics."* For my first three years at St. Elisabeth's this was almost a liturgical response to any mention of evangelism or membership growth. It was the reason we couldn't grow. I've heard of other parishes facing similar statements — "They're all Baptists," or "Jewish," or whatever. The conclusion is, "Therefore we can't increase the membership of this parish." The apparent hopelessness of the situation excuses us from any responsibility for our poor or declining membership picture. "We can't do anything, and we aren't to blame."

Of course, the basic assumption is wrong. "They" are not all any one thing. Neighborhoods are more diverse than that. Every neighborhood is full of unchurched people, people who either have no religious background, or who have been long inactive in the tradition in which they were raised. Now we don't hear this excuse very often at St. Elisabeth's. Most of our new members are former Roman Catholics. Half of our vestry members are former Roman Catholics.

b. *"Black people don't belong because the Episcopal Church is a white Church."* I've heard this said in various ways by whites who want it to be true and by blacks who are afraid that it is true. This challenges the legitimacy of thousands of Episcopalians and of the great historical black parishes. It ignores the fact that we are Catholics and so called to a broad and radical inclusiveness. It ignores the fact that we are Anglicans who now experience our greatest growth in Africa.

This is no attempt to deny the struggle black

Episcopalians have had to go through and continue to face in establishing themselves within this Church. However, if the facts that most of the members of the Episcopal Church in the United States are white, and that black people have had to struggle are used as a way of excluding blacks from the Church, we only compound our sin. The first truth is His will that all people find their unity around his altar.

c. *"How many Episcopalians are there in the area?"* This question seems to get pulled out whenever we consider whether to open, close, or support a parish. It's the wrong question. We need to ask, "How many unchurched people are there in the area?" The answer will be "Plenty."

d. *"Isn't this sheep stealing?"* Our approach must be absolutely clear: we are only interested in stealing sheep from Satan and the evil powers of this world, to reclaim lost sheep, to bring in the lapsed and unchurched. I have no interest in trying to get an active Roman Catholic to become an Episcopalian. In fact, my first approach to an inactive person of any Christian communion is to urge them to reconsider the tradition they come from. I do this in full awareness of our long-standing disagreements with Roman Catholic and Protestant communions, and even though I am convinced that our Anglican tradition is a fuller, even better way. If a person has not been active in any Christian communion for several years and has no interest in renewing their former ties, then that person should be warmly invited into this part of the Body.

e. *"We must minister to their needs."* This is a subtle one. It may be a statement of Christian servant ministry. However, when raised in the context of a discussion on evangelism and Church growth, it may be a means of reducing people and excluding them from the Church. The danger is that we will treat people as "clients" whom we must take care of. They remain *outside* the Church to be served by the good people of the Church. We implicitly reduce them and their needs to the lowest level.

"They" are created in the image of God and called to the likeness of Christ. Jesus Christ wants them to be part of his Body, the Church. All people are called, not just to be served by the Church, but to become disciples of Jesus in service to God and their neighbors. Here is a more complete truth about human needs.

Two things are necessary — we must serve people without reference to their membership in the Church; and we must invite all people to join themselves through Word and Sacrament to our servant Lord.

f. *"We don't want to grow, it will damage the warm family feeling of our small Church."* I can imagine our Lord instructing the eleven to "go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; baptize men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit . . ." I can also imagine the response coming back, "We don't want to grow, it will damage our warm family feeling."

Parishes need to be expected to evangelize and to grow. It's not a bad thing that there are several

congregations in a parish; it's a sign of the diversity brought together in Christ. Within the limits of space and oversight, new congregations can be established within the parish, each with its own uniqueness, yet part of the whole parish and rooted in the Catholic Faith and the Christian life. Within limits, buildings and staff can be expanded. When our efforts at evangelism are bringing in more members than we can reasonably include, it's time to work with the Bishop in establishing a new parish in the area. Evangelism is an essential element of the Christian life, not an option to be attended to or ignored as we please.

10. Our understanding of mission in the city needs to be securely rooted in our tradition.

a. *What we represent and offer is Jesus Christ — the Catholic Faith and the Christian Life.*

Our commitment to stay is grounded in our incarnate and compassionate Lord. We must not base our commitment on anything less. Most especially, we cannot base it on the assumption that we have the specific solutions to the troubles of the city. We can't base it on the strategies offered in this paper, the particular approach of the Urban Caucus, or any other set of solutions — liberal, evangelical or catholic. What we do will change according to our changing and various perceptions of faithfulness, effectiveness, and the human condition, but our basic commitment to stay must be able to endure beyond our changing perceptions.

To stay does not require that we make any claim

to know the solution to all the specific problems of the city. The city parish experiences the pain in its own body — inadequate health care, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, substandard housing, crime, wife and child abuse, hunger, abortion used as birth control, disordered family life, poor education, people afraid to walk their own streets, prejudice. The bonds of community, mutual regard, and concern for others are weak in many of our neighborhoods.

Our faith does not provide us with detailed answers for the complex problems of the city. It does provide us with insight as to the nature and needs of humanity, a vision of the Heavenly City, and a calling to work with others in building a society where "peace may prevail with righteousness, and justice with order."

If the Church is to have any claim to participate in the rebuilding and renewal of the city we must first be willing to feel its sorrow, to enter into and bear its pain; and there, in the places of sorrow, pain and oppression, to proclaim the Holy City, to live the Christian life, and discern the things that are of health and salvation.

Our staying is not based on the truth of the sorrow and pain, but on the Truth which is the Holy City. Grace and hope, mercy and love rise out of every neighborhood. Light fills the dark streets. Christ heals, frees and strengthens. Our commitment is grounded in his immeasurable love, the means of grace and the hope of glory.

What we offer is Christ as Lord and Savior — the one who wept over the city, who struggled and prayed and suffered in it, and who died just outside its walls. What we represent and offer is

the Catholic Faith and the Christian life. We proclaim it, we pray for it, and we participate in it. For this to be effectively offered in the city we must be incarnate in the life of the city. We must be present with, for and of the city and its people.

b. *We need a wholeness of language and of action.*

Our Anglican heritage allows us to offer a rich and deep expression of the Christian life. Our tendency toward wholeness, balance and comprehensiveness, and our fusion of worship, doctrine and action are a special contribution we have to make to the mission of Christ in the city. We have, at our best, an ability to hold together and affirm the various elements of Catholic tradition — Word and Sacrament, doctrine and devotion, fact and feeling, evangelism and social action, experience and tradition, the visionary and pragmatic, authority and freedom, personal conversion and sanctification.

There are those among us who lack this sense of balance. In their single minded commitments they would lead us into an insensitive spirituality, an institutional authoritarianism, a forced triumphalism, a new fundamentalism, a rootless liberalism, a superficial humanism, or a compulsive activism. Fortunately, there are relatively few of these people in our communion. Unfortunately, those that do exist affect the environment we all work in, and there seems to be a tendency on the part of many of us to label, or to bend over backward to protect ourselves from being labeled. Statements with a defensive tone are released assuring us that this group or that conference are

not "secular humanists," "schismatic catholics," or "fundamentalist evangelicals." We all try to explain to each other how our humanism, catholicism, or evangelicalism is securely anchored in the broader tradition. It's time to move beyond such statements, toward those that start out by representing the wholeness of our tradition through a powerful blending of its various elements.

More important, we need to see the wholeness, the blending, expressed in parish life. We need to see parishes living in the fullness of our tradition, alive in worship, doctrine and action. A pattern of life including the primacy of Eucharistic worship, the reciting of the Daily Office, the full use of the sacraments, Bible study, programs that help relate the holy tradition to our current experience, evangelism, service, advocacy, stewardship, effective parish management, spiritual direction, opportunities for fellowship, etc. All these aspects of parish life are means for pursuing the mission of the Church. In the fabric of life created by the weaving together of these elements, human beings are "restored to unity with God and each other in Christ."

The lifting up of some elements to the exclusion or neglect of others may seem appropriate at a given time. However, it soon brings distortions to the parish's life. The Body requires wholeness. Each element finds its completion and best expression in relation to the others.

Individual lay people may, according to their vocation and gifts, enter more fully into one or another form of spirituality or Christian action. Some will be more inclined to study, others to

evangelism, some to prayer, others to service. All require the same basic rooting in the ways of the Christian life. There are times when personal inclinations must be sacrificed to a greater need of the whole Body. But, in general, vocation and gifts, personality and inclinations are to be affirmed. Within the fullness of the Church's life the individual's tendencies and talents are brought into harmony, a larger unity and directed toward His glory.

On the other hand, the parish priest has no right to give way to his or her personal inclinations and preferences. By its nature, the vocation of parish priest involves a commitment to wholeness. The priest has a special responsibility to provide for, protect, and enable balance and wholeness in parish life.

In recent years advocates of urban mission have made statements affirming that the people of the city "have a claim on the Episcopal Church's concern and resources" and telling us that our mission is "to show concern in the name of Christ for the suffering, the friendless and the needy." What they have proclaimed to us is true, but it doesn't go far enough. Left on their own, these statements turn people into clients to be served or the fortunate recipients of the benefits of a social reform movement. The language suggests, without directly saying it, that these people are not "us;" that "they" are on the outside of our community and will stay there. This is an inadequate understanding of the real needs of people as seen in the light of faith.

William Temple spoke to the issue of our needs.

Man needs education; but still more he needs conversion. Man needs political progress and social reform; but still more he needs redemption; man needs peace and security, but still more he needs eternal life.

We do live by bread and that must be attended to; however, we do not live by bread alone. Both go together. The attempt to do the one without the other is an incomplete understanding of the needs of humanity and the mission of the Church.

Archbishop Temple described the relationship in his great book on social order:

This book is about Christianity and the social order and not about Evangelism. But I should give a false impression of my own convictions if I did not here add that there is no hope of establishing a more Christian social order except through the labor and sacrifice of those in whom the Spirit of Christ is active, and that the first necessity for progress is more and better Christians taking full responsibility as citizens for the political, social and economic system under which they and their fellows live.