



URBAN ADVANCE

The Office of Urban Advance, World Vision International

Volume 1, Number 3

Through its Urban Advance, World Vision International ministers with the poor and lost in third-world cities as it builds and equips an international partnership of the churches in those cities and churches in the developed world.

FEATURE

Community organization: what does it have to do with the urban church?

Community Organization. What is it? How does it work? What does it have to do with the work of the church in the city?

This issue of *Urban Advance* will explore some important insights about community organization and look at some basic community organizing resources. Perhaps such a study may enable us to enrich our own urban ministries as we seek to be faithful to God and our neighbor in the city.

What is Community Organization?

Community organization is that process by which the people of an urban community organize themselves to "take charge" of their situation. It is a particularly effective tool for the poor and powerless as they determine for themselves the actions they will take to deal with the essential forces that are destroying their community and consequently causing them to be powerless.

The assumption upon which community organizing is built is that "united we stand; divided we fall." It recognizes the tremendous power generated by people acting collectively. Particularly the poor and powerless of a city—whether in the first, second or third worlds—are excluded from full participation in the social, political and economic life of their city. Community organization empowers them to meaningfully encounter, cope with and sometimes change these urban structures and systems. But only if they act collectively!

The organizing of a community occurs around the continuous use of the process of reflection and action. Reflection enables the people to identify both the systemic causes and their personal attitudes and actions which have led to their powerlessness. It provides the means for continually evaluating the actions the people can take to address these causes and attitudes.

But words without action are meaningless rhetoric. The process of reflection and action also provides the opportunity to take concrete, specific actions that come out of their reflection.

These actions are always undertaken and developed by the people themselves. And no action is complete unless its results are analyzed by the people and inform both their corporate reflection and their next actions.

Because it is an organization of people collectively addressing the issues of their neighborhood, a community organization is:

- *Consciousness-raising*, thinking globally and systemically about issues;
- *Pragmatic*, acting locally and doing what the community identifies as needing to be done in that community;
- *Winnable in the actions it takes*, carefully selecting its issues so that people experience success in the early stages of the organizing effort and so that actions are always realistic in scope;
- *Democratic in its decision-making*, including all the groups (both formal and informal) and peoples in that community in the decision-making process;

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE

- **Luscombe called to World Vision urban post**
- **"If you use what you have, you won't need what you don't have!"**
- **Opportunities and resources**
- **News from our readers**

- *Developmental*, committed to a process of discovery and action, rather than following “canned” programs and procedures;
- *Systemic*, not preoccupied with direct service for the needy of its community (although some direct service may be an integral part of a community organization’s program), but concerned with giving people power to make decisions so that structural changes can be made;
- *Leadership intensive*, not staff intensive; usually a community organization needs only one staff organizer; a primary part of his/her job is to awaken, develop and train the natural leaders of the community to assume effective leadership of that community;
- *Pro-active*, rather than reactive; with a long-term vision for that community, the organization can decide the issues they will address rather than react to the decisions and actions of the politically, economically or religiously powerful;
- *Seizes the initiative*, rather than being defensive; it anticipates what will happen next and acts upon that anticipation. In that assertive action, it is not afraid to confront the “principalities and powers” of its society;
- *Value-based rather than issue-based*; the community organization acts from the standpoint of faith, vision and conviction in its commitment to that community; it is not established around single issues like housing, economic development, health care, etc.

Comparing community organization and development

Community organization is often seen as something distinct from community development. In reality, there are many similarities. Both community development and community organizing have the same essential objective—the empowerment of people, so that they can assume responsibility for their own community.

Community organization is actually a further stage of empowerment than development. Its difference with development is a difference in degree, rather than in kind. The two differ as follows:

- *Long-term*: Community organizing is oriented toward a long-term approach to development, one which is concerned to build a force for the self-determination of the people for the life of that slum or squatter settlement; traditional community development is medium-term in duration.
- *Inclusive*: In order to be truly successful, a community organization must include as many formal and informal groups in a community as possible; it is, in reality, an “umbrella” organization of that community; this would include groups of diverse and even opposable ideologies.
- *Responsive*: A community organization concentrates on identifying its issues and actions out of the pain and frustration of the

people; it will therefore not plan or manage by objectives to the degree that community development would.

- *Action-orientation*: A community organization reflects participatively only in order to determine the actions it needs to take against its commonly-identified foes; it is not primarily process-oriented as is community development nor program-oriented as is a project.
- *Confrontive*: A community organization has a very realistic understanding of power, including the recognition that there are no permanent enemies and friends. It recognizes that often the only recourse open to the people is to confront those who are choosing to be enemies on a particular issue. Many community development groups view confrontation as intimidating and seek to cooperate with those in power; such cooperation can often lead to the group being seduced by those in power.
- *Staff*: Community organizing staff has one primary job—that of working with the people to organize themselves to set and carry out the agenda they determine is necessary to make their community self-determining. No community organizer should ever assume the role of project director. If community organizing is truly effective, it should require a very small staff (usually no more than one or two organizers) who ought to eventually work themselves out of a job; ideally, a truly self-determining community organization should have no staff at all.
- *Permanent structure*: Truly effective community organizing will lead to a permanent organization of the people, an institution which will remain the focus for the power of the people in that community for decades to come—no matter who moves in or out of that community. Traditional community development projects do not necessarily create long-term institutions representing the interests of the people.

Community organization is community development adapted to the city, a peculiarly urban approach to dealing with the concentrations of economic and political power in the city as well as large bodies of the poor and powerless. It is significant that, whereas community organizing has proven the most effective development methodology in cities over the past fifty years, it has not been particularly successful in rural and village settings.

Why the urban church should be involved

But what does the Church have to do with community organization? If community organization is the process of mobilizing the poor in a given slum or squatter settlement to take responsibility for their situation, what place does the church have in that? And what does this have to do with the Gospel?

The unique power of Jesus Christ in his work of redemption among us was that he became one with us. Our God was not an

(continued on page 3, bottom)

Luscombe called to WV urban post

Dr. Robert Linthicum, the director of World Vision International's Office of Urban Advance has announced the appointment of Kenneth L. Luscombe to the post of Associate Director. Rev. Luscombe, a Baptist pastor from Melbourne, Australia, will begin his ministry at World Vision on May 1. His appointment completes an eight-month search, held on six continents.

Ken Luscombe comes to World Vision from the Ecumenical Coalition for Urban Ministry of Melbourne, where he was the director of its EMU (Education, Mission, Urban Action) Project. Besides providing direction to this cooperative ministry, Mr. Luscombe serves on the faculty of the School of World Mission, Whitley College, the Baptist College of Victoria, where he lectures on urban mission.

As Associate Director of WV's Urban Advance, Ken will work with World Vision field offices and urban church coalitions in Asia, Africa and Latin America, helping them to develop and implement urban strategies. He will also lead workshops and training events for urban pastors and churches, be responsible for WV's urban research, maintain its international urban network and edit this newsletter.

Previous to his work at the Ecumenical Coalition for Urban Ministry, Rev. Luscombe was the pastor of the Newmarket Baptist Church in Melbourne for seven years. There he led that congregation into significant renewal and organized that decaying community to creatively address change and to confront its powerbrokers. For three years previous to his Newmarket pastorate, Ken was Youth Minister and then Church Administrator for the East Keilor Christian Fellowship of Melbourne.

In his work with ECUM, Ken leads local training initiatives

in urban ministry, works with theological colleges to encourage their adaptation to the needs of urban ministry training, has developed, stimulates and informs an existing urban ministry network throughout Melbourne and Australia, and develops resources on and conducts urban ministry training worldwide. Ken is a member of the Australian Association for Urban Mission, chair of the Urban Baptist Coalition, and editor of the Inner City Baptist Association Journal. He was a member of the team which built the first urban covenant made between the Uniting Church in Australia and the Baptist Church. While at Newmarket Church, Ken was involved in community organizing through the Flemington Association and developed and operated urban discipleship training programs for laity from the Flemington, North Melbourne and Kensington communities of Melbourne.

Ken has been married to Joy since 1974; she is a teacher, mother, and accomplished jazz musician. They are the parents of two children who will be accompanying them in their move to southern California in mid-April. Ken is a graduate of the Australian College of Theology and the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Ruschlikon, Switzerland. He will complete work on a second degree from Ruschlikon this spring in Systematic Theology, his thesis being on the topic, "The Concrete Imagination: Theology and the Urban Question."

World Vision International is excited at having a person of Ken Luscombe's calibre and experience on its Urban Advance team. His addition to the staff will strengthen this Christian relief and development organization's attempt to strengthen the work of the local church in world-class cities throughout the Two-Thirds World. ■

Community Organization (continued from page 2)

absentee God who demanded that we come up to God's expectations. Rather, the scriptures tell us:

*(Jesus) did not cling
to his equality with God
but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as we are;
and being as we are,
he was humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross. (Phil. 2:6-8)*

When Jesus sought to win humanity to God, he became one of us, lived among us, voluntarily took upon himself our limitations, and "was humbler yet, even to accepting death ... on a cross."

That is exactly what Jesus calls the Church to be and do in the city. If we are to win the city's poor for Christ, we will do so only as we become one with them, live among them, voluntarily take upon ourselves their limitations and join with them in addressing our common problems and issues. That is what the Bible means by "incarnation"; that is the imitation of Christ to

(continued on back cover)

“If you use what you have, you won’t need what you don’t have!”

When wearied and embattled Abraham Alvarez settled down with his family to watch TV on that evening in 1975, he little realized that the motion picture he was about to view would change his life. It was just a little entertainment he had chosen so that for a few hours he could escape the pressures of a collapsing business and a confusing life. But, instead, Abraham Alvarez met with God and with a message that changed the course of his life.

Abraham had been born the son of a Methodist pastor in Mexico City. Because he wanted to avoid the economic hardships of an evangelical pastorate in Mexico, Abraham had gone to college to study for a CPA, got married, had two children and had started a small family-based ceramics business. But he wasn’t happy. Something was missing from his life.

Abraham’s pastor, sensing the young man’s despair, invited him to attend a seminar sponsored by Campus Crusade. It was at this seminar that Abraham began to discover an experiential faith and began a journey that would lead him to participate in Latin America Mission’s “Evangelism-in-Depth” program in Mexico City. This, in turn, introduced Abraham to other churches and, finally, into the charismatic renewal. “That,” Abraham later reflected, “represents a turning point in the life of any person!”

With an increasingly vital and Spirit-filled faith, Abraham Alvarez made two decisions: to found a charismatic Methodist Church and to upscale his ceramic workshop into a small industry. Both became reality in 1971. The church was born in the living room of his home. The business was named Fabrica de Loza Anahuac. It expanded rapidly with the infusion of new money from the bank. And by 1975, it was time to expand the business once again into a mid-size industry. It was then that the 45-year-old Alvarez began the greatest crisis of his business life!

Television and the Word of God

Abraham received credit from the bank to begin his expansion, which was soon underway. But, suddenly, the Mexican government announced a radical devaluation of the peso and, no longer having sufficient capital, the factory’s expansion had to be stopped. Abraham requested a new loan, but the bank denied credit. Abraham’s expanding business was now threatened with collapse.

It was then that Abraham decided to seek escape in a few hours of television. In the film “Around the World In Eighty Days,” the little party making this encircling trip faced numerous obstacles. At each obstacle, someone in the party would say “We won’t be able to continue.” And the hero would always reply, “If you use what you have, you won’t need what you don’t have.” Then, he would pull from his trunk some apparently irrelevant object which, creatively used, would enable the party to overcome that obstacle and continue their journey.

As he was drawn increasingly into the film, Abraham suddenly recalled Hebrews 1:1, “At various times in the past and in various ways, God spoke to our ancestors, but in our own time he has spoken to us ...” He realized that God was speaking to him through this thoroughly incongruous vehicle. The next day, filled with new determination, Abraham went to his office, reviewed what he had, and used what he had been given to take the next step. Thus it was, through one national fiscal crisis after another that Fabrica de Loza Anahuac tenaciously struggled to stay alive.

But by 1985, after ten years of struggle and four consecutive years of losses, Abraham Alvarez decided to give up. There were simply too many problems—lack of money, issues with the workers, a shrinking market, economic lassitude throughout the capital city. The best way out of the crisis was just to give up and close the business. Abraham prepared a balance sheet in order to liquidate his business.

New solutions to old problems

That Sunday in worship, the pastor spoke about Gideon and his obedience to God’s command to lead the 300 into battle against the Midianite host. Once again, God spoke to Abraham Alvarez through the image of Gideon called by God to the front lines of the battle. The next day, Abraham put aside his balance sheet, changed into working clothes, went down with his workers and talked with them about the impending close of the company. Reminding them of John the Baptist’s message of “Repent, for the kingdom of God is here,” he challenged the workers to join him in changing their way of thinking to look for new solutions to old problems.

“If you use what you have, you won’t need what you don’t have.” Remembering their experience ten years earlier, the

workers and Abraham formed a team to change their manager and worker mind-sets. And the real miracle of Fabrica de Loza Anahuac began.

The first change was unheard of in Mexican business circles. Abraham—the owner and manager—became one of the workers. Instead of coming to the office at 9:00 as was his former habit, he joined the workers at 6:00 in the morning and worked alongside them in the factory until noon. Then he would change to business clothes, visit banks and wholesale the ceramics to businesses.

How to rescue 1,000,000 pesos

He took outstanding workers and made them coordinators of teams who worked together on how to do more with less. Their first campaign was based around the question, “How can we rescue 1,000,000 pesos from the trash?” The workers came to realize that there was much waste that could be converted to money, if they were more careful. And with the introduction of profit-sharing, it became worth the worker’s while to reduce such waste.

The Mexican government passed a law requiring businesses to share eight percent of their profits with their workers. Abraham went a step further; he distributed 32 percent of the profits. Applying the parable of the workers in the vineyard who were paid equally despite their differing starting hours (Mt. 20:1-16), Abraham distributed to his workers an equal share of the profit.

Boss for the week

Perhaps his most innovative program was the “Boss for the Week” program. Selected productive workers were made “boss” for a week, and assumed the position and function of an administrative leader in the company. Thus workers came to appreciate the struggle of being a manager. And managers came to appreciate the workers’ difficulties, as well.

Since that day in 1985 when Abraham first changed clothes and went to work with the employees, profound change has occurred at Fabrica de Loza Anahuac. In 1985, this company was sustaining four years of losses, liens placed against it by banks and government, and wages delayed by fifteen days. By 1987, it had recovered its losses of those previous four years. Today, it has doubled its profits and profit-sharing with employees, twice as many employees now work at the firm than did in 1985, a recording studio and construction company has been added to the business, a handball court has been added for workers’ recreation and a day-care center for workers’ and neighborhood children is now being built. Intriguingly, the recording studio is used exclusively to record every hymn in the Methodist hymnal so that rural churches without instruments can sing both contemporary and traditional hymns of the church.

“If you use what you have, you won’t need what you don’t have.” A Christian business man willing to apply biblical insights to his business, to think dangerously-new thoughts and to invite his workers to dream with him, has created an economic miracle in Mexico City which is enhancing his business, his neighborhood and his church. And all because that man was willing to listen to God’s voice from a most unlikely source!

Urban Advance is published three times a year by the Office of Urban Advance of World Vision International to encourage and promote WV Field and Support Offices in their pursuit of urban ministry, and to interact worldwide with urban pastors and laity, denominational leaders, researchers and scholars, urban technicians, para-church leaders and urban conciliar leaders.

President, World Vision International
Vice-President, Corporate Services
Director of Office of Urban Advance

Graeme Irvine
Bryant Myers
Robert Linthicum

Urban Advance is an internal publication of World Vision International sent to members of our International Urban Network. Correspondence should be addressed to: Editor, *Urban Advance*, 919 West Huntington Drive, Monrovia, California 91016, USA. Telephone (818) 303-8811 WORVIX MROV.

Opportunities and resources

■ *L.A. dream*

The City of Los Angeles has recently completed a comprehensive study, L.A. 2000. Because it essentially ignores the religious Los Angeles community, a lone Presbyterian pastor decided she needed to do something about it. The result is that the Rev. Nancy Moore has gathered around her a wide-ranging group of pastors who are discovering together a common dream for the City of the Angels. On April 29, the first stage of that dream will start to come true.

On April 29, pastors and church leaders will gather for breakfast at Immanuel Presbyterian Church to explore together a dream for "A Celebration of Christ in the City of the Angels." Besides Mrs. Moore, this gathering will be led by L.A. pastors from a wide diversity of Anglo, Hispanic, Black and Asian churches, denominational and parachurch leaders and seminary professors. The purpose of this meeting is to organize a citywide effort to celebrate in 1990 God's presence in a city which tends to ignore the Lord, particularly stressing the Body of Christ's interaction with community issues.

If you would like further information, either contact URBAN ADVANCE or Rev. Michael Mata, the Bresee Institute, 3401 West Third Street, Los Angeles, CA 90020.

■ *Eagles and Cockroaches*

"If you don't receive Christ, you will come back as a cockroach!" This rather unorthodox statement by an earnest but not well-grounded Christian frightened Peter Chao into receiving Christ as his Savior and Lord (God works in mysterious ways!). Eight days later, the young Peter Chao preached his first sermon, and Eagles Evangelism was born.

Eagles Evangelism was given birth in 1968 out of a Singapore youth gang, the Eagles Boy Club.

After Chao's conversion, most of that club's leadership—John Ng, Michael Tang, Mark Chan—came to Christ. As the result of their conversions, these youth decided to undertake an evangelistic ministry to other teen-agers in Singapore.

Out of that desire, Peter, John, Mark and Michael have developed a most innovative and creative outreach to young adults based around highly professional concerts, drama, evangelistic campaigns and intense leadership training. Their ministry has now moved beyond Singapore to youth in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hong Kong. To learn more about this effective and highly creative ministry, contact Michael Tan, Eagles Evangelism, 68 Lorong 16 Yeylang, #03-04/05 Association Building, Singapore 1439.

■ *Community organizing resources*

If you are interested in doing further reading on community organizing, *Urban Advance* would recommend the following materials:

- Alinsky, Saul. *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1969), \$4.95. Originally published in 1946 by the dean of American organizers, *Reveille* is the standard presentation on community organizing.
- Bobo, Kimberley. *Lives Matter: A Handbook for Christian Organizing* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1986), \$8.95. While focusing on the issue of hunger, Bobo presents basic philosophy and techniques of community organizing, including the characteristics of effective organizers.
- Maglaya, Felipe E., *Organizing People for Power: A Manual for Organizers* (Asia Committee for People's Organization, 1982). A succinct "how-to" manual for organizing in a third-world urban context; must reading for pastors and community leaders in third-

world cities. Contained in Simpson's and Stockwell's workbook (see below).

- Pierce, Gregory F., *Activism that Make Sense: Congregations and Community Organization* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), \$6.95. An excellent presentation on community organizing philosophy, Pierce's book develops the relationship between the Christian faith, church life and mission and community organization. Must reading for a Christian.
- Simpson, Dick and Stockwell, Clinton, *Congregations and Community Organizing* (Chicago: ICUIS, 1987), \$15.00. A compilation of major articles on community organization, this workbook is an extremely effective introduction to the field because of its unique mixture of historical reflection and practical instruction.
- *The Organizer Mailing* (San Francisco: Organize Training Center). The Organize Training Center periodically distributes the *Organizer Mailing*, which is effective in keeping one informed on developments in the field. All books listed above can be ordered from the Institute on the Church in Urban-Industrial Society, 5700 S. Woodlawn, Chicago 60637; telephone: (312) 643-7111 at cost of book plus 10 percent postage and handling. The Organizer Mailer can be ordered for \$50.00 per year from the Organize Training Center, 1095 Market Street, # 419, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 552-8990.

■ *The 1990 Congress on Urban Ministry*

Concerned about the international urban mission of the Church? Well, it isn't too early for you to place the Congress on Urban Ministry on your calendar. On April 2-6, 1990, urban Christians will be gathering in Chicago from all over the world to attend the conference, "The World Comes to the City: Challenges for the Church." Sponsored by the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) and chaired by veteran urban missions consultant Ray Bakke, the 1990 Congress will be a key event for urban ministry practitioners throughout the world.

Although these Congresses are held every two years in the United States, this Congress will be of particular interest to the readers of *Urban Advance*. For the focus of this Congress will be on the worldwide city and urban church. Pastors, denominational and parachurch executives are expected to attend from all over the world. The Congress will be designed to concentrate on the urban church and major cities of different continents each day. Workshops will deal with a plethora of subjects, including worship and spirituality, service and justice issues, community and economic development and international partnering for mission.

The Congress will be preceded March 28—April 2 by a Consultation for Urban Church Resource Collectors and Researchers. It will be followed by a Symposium for Theological Educators on April 7-9, thus giving specialists the opportunity to learn from each other.

If you desire additional information on the 1990 Congress, you may write SCUPE, 30 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60610; (312) 944-2153.

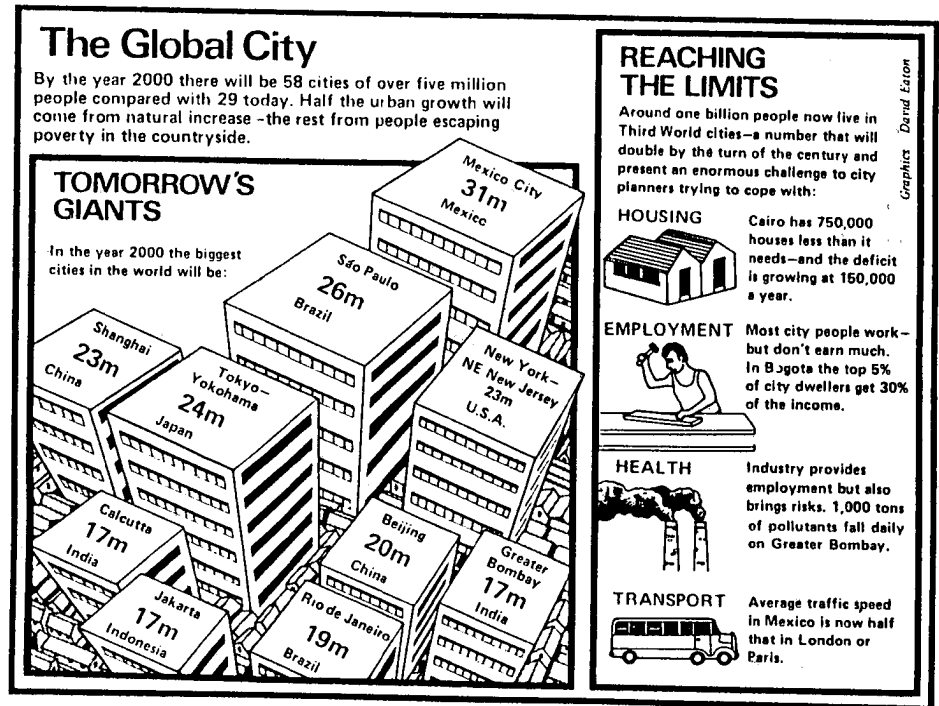
Unreached cities at Lausanne II

Jimmy Maroney, Senior Consultant on Evangelism and Church Growth Ministries for the Southern Baptist Convention, wrote *Urban Advance* regarding our article in the November 1988 issue on the "urban track" at the upcoming Second International Congress on World Evangelization (Lausanne II, July 11-20, 1989 in Manila). He reminds us, "The Unreached Cities track will deal with cities of over 1 million people where conventional/traditional Christian ministries are restrictive and public witness is practiced only at grave consequences." Rev. Maroney reminds *Urban Advance* readers attending Lausanne II to be sure to examine the Unreached Cities track along with the Urban track, in order to get as broad a picture as possible of the potentials for urban ministry throughout the world. ■

Urban workshops in third-world cities

World Vision International is currently holding a series of urban workshops for pastors, Christian leaders and World Vision urban staff in selected cities in the Two-Thirds World. The first was held in November in Nairobi, with delegates from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The second and third were held this February in Mexico City and in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. In June, final workshops will be held in Bangkok, Thailand and in Taipei, Taiwan.

Presently the workshops are being led by Dr. Robert Linthicum, the director of WVI's Office of Urban Advance; Rev. Ken Luscombe, associate director, will share in workshop leadership after his arrival at World Vision on May 1. The workshops explore a biblical theology for urban ministry, understanding your city, principles for community-based ministry in the city, and particular attention to the urban techniques of networking and community organization. ■



Evangelism vs. social action

Mike Miller, of Organize Training Center, shared with *Urban Advance* this significant statement by John Stott, made in an address he gave at the Urbana (IL.) Missionary Conference in 1976:

"The Christian mission, like Christ's, is a mission of compassionate service. True, man's most fundamental need is salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Nothing is more liberating, nothing more humanizing, than an experience of forgiveness, reconciliation to God and new birth. But this is not man's only need. If Jesus did not restrict his own mission to the preaching of the gospel, or even to dying for our sins and rising again in order that there might be a gospel to preach, then we have no right to limit our mission to evangelism alone.

It seems to me that the controversy between the rival claims of evangelism and social action was a sterile controversy from the start. Some Christians have concentrated exclusively on evangelism, others on social and political involvement. But we have no liberty to pick and choose between the people's needs, the needs of the body or the soul or of the community. Christian evangelistic and social activity are both compassionate responses to human need. Both were included in Jesus' mission. So both must be included in ours." ■

which God calls the Church in the city. The very essence of urban ministry is for God's people—the Church—to identify with the needs of the poor and powerless and to join with them in bringing about biblical justice.

But it goes further than that. A community organization has great potential. But it also has a great capacity for evil. Whenever people gain power, they can use power for their own self-aggrandizement. And the poor are no less likely to do this than are the rich, for the poor have learned their lessons well! But if God's people have really entered into the life of that slum or squatter settlement, working side-by-side with them in the cause of justice, then that church gains a profound credibility in that community. It can become the conscious of that organization, the body that most shapes the spiritual grounding of that organizing effort.

But it goes even further than that. The Church that has undertaken that kind of incarnational ministry and has placed itself on the line with the poor is a church that gains a profound respect in that community. In being willing to lose its life, it saves it. The people of that community will listen to that church, because that church has earned the right to speak! The people will want to hear from that church about a Christ who incarnated himself in our world, and they might respond to that Christ. That is why, today through out the world, the city churches which uniformly most experience growth are churches which are intensely involved in community organization.

In the third century A.D., the pagan Celsus and the Christian Origen engaged in a debate on Christianity. In the course of the debate, Celsus reportedly declared,

"When most teachers go forth to teach, they cry, 'Come to me, you who are clean and worthy,' and they are followed by the highest calibre of people available. But your silly master cries, 'Come to me, you who are down and beaten by life,' and so he accumulates around him the rag, tag and bobtail of humanity."

Origen's response to Celsus' attack ranks as one of the most profound statements ever made about the power of Christianity. He replied,

"Yes, they are the rag, tag and bobtail of humanity. But Jesus does not leave them that way. Out of material you would have thrown away as useless, he fashions men, giving them back their self-respect, enabling them to stand on their feet and look God in the eyes. They were cowed, cringing, broken things. But the Son has set them free."

This is the work to which the Church is called in the cities of the first, second and third worlds. This is the ministry it needs to have to the broken, the poor, the lost in the slums and squatter settlements of our giant cities. To enable people to free themselves from being cowed, cringing, broken things. To enable the poor to regain their self-respect. To support people as they fashion themselves into people of pride and dignity out of material exploiters would use and then throw away. In the name of Christ, to unbind them and to let them go free! This is the work of the Church in the cities of the world. And community organization gives to the Church the means to undertake that ministry—not only in rhetoric, but in the action that liberates a people! ■

World Vision International
919 West Huntington Drive
Monrovia, CA 91016

URBAN ADVANCE

FROM:



WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL
919 West Huntington Drive, Monrovia, California 91016

TO:

Dr. Paul Hiebert
Fuller Theological Seminary, SWM
135 N. Oakland, #94
Pasadena, CA 91182
USA

