

## 'One Parish'

# 'Going Off Together'

(Catholic Press Features)

In some parishes, the idea of "getting away for awhile" has great appeal to the parish leaders — not for a rest but for the opportunity to get to know each other, and their parish, better.

In one parish, a "people encounter" or workshop weekend has been conducted the past four years. The parish council members, together with their spouses and any other interested parishioners, spend 24 hours together away from their homes, usually at a retreat house.

There, the time is spent "praying, playing, discussing and

communicating about the problems and purposes of their parish," according to a spokesman for the parish.

The first three times the parishioners went away, they were joined by theologians and well-known priests and lay leaders who shared their insights with the parish council members.

This year, the emphasis was on "local talent," with people from the parish putting on playlets, one of them a satire of a famous TV series and titled, "All in the Parish."

Other activities were designed to encourage the people to get

to know one another better and to foster the idea of working together toward a common goal. The activities were highlighted by a Liturgy celebration.

A number of other parishes have tried the "day away" or weekend workshop idea.

The pastor of one such parish found that his people "liked the idea of getting away and dealing with the subject of Church in a reflective atmosphere" instead of the usual parish meeting halls they were so accustomed to.

"They were concerned not only about the theory but about the execution, practically speaking — where we are, where we should be and how to go home and act that out."

Another plus, he believes, is that at a time when emphasis is being placed on "community" — but when community cannot be built because people don't know each other — the weekend allows people to inter-act. The community can then emerge from that experience, he suggested.

## Our Parish COUNCIL

by Bernard Lyons

On assignments for community organizations, I've had the privilege of working with several social concerns committees of Methodist churches.

I'm impressed with their Christ-like concern for others and their willingness to become involved in their communities, sometimes without the support or in opposition to the general church membership. For example, one committee, in a racially changing neighborhood, joined the community organization, when the congregation, through its board, refused to do so.

Recently I sent for some of the literature from the Board of Christian Social Concerns of the United Methodist Church. I would like to share with you some of the underlying Christian convictions that motivate the work of these social concerns committees.

"The freedom in Christ is a wonderful, but heavy burden," says the Guidelines for Social Concerns. "As individuals, we know the weight of the necessity to make decisions when the alternatives are not clear-cut; as churches and social concern committees, we know the difficulty is almost infinitely magnified."

"Nevertheless, the church that would be Christ's church in the world God has handed it must decide how it will be the church. And that necessity makes the 'social action' of the church crucially important."

"Will the church in this city or that town move to affirm the infinite worth of men, women and children who live there? That, and no other," declares the Guidelines. "is the question before the work area chairmen on social concerns."

The nub of the question, as the Board of Christian Social Concerns sees it, is: "Do we really believe Christ died for all men?"

"Social concerns are not, of course, some 'extra' tacked on to the real business of the church," says the Guidelines. "Instead, they are the context within which mission and evangelism take place."

"When the work area and the congregation struggle to alleviate a social injustice, they are taking steps to make the future different from what it would be had they not entered the struggle. They are working to create a world in which the wonderful possibility in Jesus Christ may become real for living human beings."

Social concerns committees are not "hung up" on success.

They believe their style is more important than what they do specifically. They believe that style determines the specific action, and that our times appear to ask that the Church adopt a flexible way of life and work.

"When God shows up as a new movement or issue or problem or as a new wrinkle in what was thought to be understood, then the church that 'sits loose' to its social preconceptions is free to respond and to act."

Admitting that most of us have learned to react defensively when events turn out differently from what we expected, the Guidelines remind us that we do not always need to "succeed."

"As success oriented people, we often tend to believe that unless everything turns out the way we planned it, we have failed. But God doesn't act according to our dictates and, more often than not, He leads us down paths that are unfamiliar and, sometimes, dangerous."

"When the church moves actively into the social order, it should expect to 'fail,' knowing all the time that God is the ultimate victor. When we no longer must succeed, we are free to do what needs to be done, allowing God to be the final judge of our efforts."

## School Bus Requests Due

Requests for transportation of children to any parochial or private school in the Auburn school district must be submitted by April 15, according to school transportation director Lew Clay.

Forms for requesting transportation for the 1972-'73 school year are available at Auburn parochial and private schools. The completed forms should be forwarded to the transportation director at Education House, 130 South St.

Transportation requests are required from parents of children entering a parochial or private school for the first time in the fall or transferring to a different parochial school than they attended this year.

It is not necessary for parents whose children will attend the same parochial school as this year to submit the request form, only for those who are transferring schools, Clay said.

Transportation will be granted only on the basis of the busing policy set by the Auburn school board. The policy calls for busing those children living inside the city limits more than one mile from the nearest available parochial school and those living outside the city at least six-tenths of one mile from the nearest available school.



Plaque for Chaplain

At a recent ceremony in New York, Msgr. John F. Albert of Rochester received an appreciation plaque from Cardinal Terence Cooke, military vicar for the Armed Forces and Archbishop of New York. Brig. Gen. Albert is deputy chief of Air Force chaplains.



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