

Twenty-five years ago The Kerner Commission published its report on racial conditions in this country. One of its conclusions was that the United States was becoming two Americas: one white, one black with the division becoming more and more unequal. Today there is a growing awareness of this division. Webster's Dictionary defines reconciliation as "restoring to friendship and harmony, settling or resolving difference, and making consistent with what was meant to be."

For most people who grew up in the 50's and 60's, images of racial injustice, intolerance, and segregation remain indelibly imprinted on their minds. Rosa Parks on a city bus, police shooting their fire hoses, governors barricading schools - the battles for civil rights and equality were emotional, violent, moral, and deeply spiritual. The battles were not only against political injustice but against principalities and powers of evil.

The battle for reconciliation is still raging. Some might say that it's too little, too late. But God's eternal mission is to reconcile sinners to himself. He has already torn down the wall of sin that separates. Reconciliation is one sign that shows the power of the Gospel. If Christians could put faith before race, it would witness so powerfully.

Racial reconciliation differs from integration which was brought about by changes in the laws. But laws can't force the descendants of slaves and former slave owners to sit down at the table of brotherhood together. That can only happen when both want it. That's why it's important to understand that reconciliation is much different from integration. Reconciliation is part of the Church's great missionary outreach. It is Christ himself transforming all of us to be more Christ-like--doing as he did, loving as he loved.

Reconciliation is spiritual. Integration forced some people to change their behavior. Reconciliation invites the changing of hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Reconciliation asks Christians to live up to the high ideal of oneness that Jesus taught. Reconciliation is more than tolerating people whose skin color is different than ours. Tolerance isn't enough. Reconciliation encourages us to demonstrate love - not by tolerating one another, but by accepting one another as brothers and sisters. As the apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 3, "You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ.

Reconciliation is testimony to the world what we, as followers of Jesus Christ, believe. Given the history of racial strife in America, overcoming racial and ethnic divisions offers us, as

Christians, the chance to show the depth of our faith. Demonstrating racial healing and unity would support our claims that Jesus Christ is the answer.¹

In the mid-1960's I developed a passion for brotherhood. My rabbi was involved in the "Freedom Rides" and marches in Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. During this time I was involved with United Synagogue Youth in rallies to encourage support among teenagers of our Black brothers and sisters in their struggle for human rights.

In 1966 I was saved through the ministry of a Black friend and members of his church. My passion continued to be nurtured.

Today my passion is, with the help of God, that the church be transformed into a compassionate, accepting and loving people of many nations and tongues who love our Lord Jesus Christ and one another as brothers and sisters all created in his image.

Community Building Theory

A community is a group of people gathered together who are united in purpose, goals and vision. It is a group focused on a specific task in a specific place and time.

In the Bible we read about this type of group in the book of Acts:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-44).

Community is multi-faceted. In many ways, it reflects the grace of God. It is mysterious. It is miraculous. It is inclusive. It is real. It is humble. It is self-giving. It is compassionate. It is welcoming and intimate. It is a safe place. We need community. We should not be isolated. M. Scott Peck states that we need the intimacy of community—it is the rain which is a gift to a parched plant.²

But communities don't just happen. They are built over a lengthy process. They are built by tearing down walls that hide and divide and by building up walls that protect and include.

Peck says that true communities are realistically inclusive. They always reach to extend

1. Adapted from articles on Racial Reconciliation, World Vision Magazine, c. winter 1995.

2. M. Scott Peck, *A Different Drummer* (New York: Touchstone, 1987), 30.

themselves to the full range of human differences and human emotions.³ In community alienation is transformed into appreciation, reconciliation and humility, brokenness is shared, selves are examined and people are genuine and real.⁴

Communities welcome the stranger and transfer him/her into a guest. Communities turn hostility into hospitality. Henri Nouwen tells us that Old and New Testament stories not only show how serious our obligation is to welcome the stranger in our home, but they also tell us that guests are carrying precious gifts with them, which they are eager to reveal to a receptive host.⁵ The warmth of this welcoming provides the spirit of healing for those estranged and alienated. It alleviates fear and creates a spirit of community.

Community often occurs in small groups. This body can then be a catalyst for growing community within the larger context of an organization. According to Glenna Gerard and Linda Teurfs, for organizational change to be lasting, a shift of mind or change in consciousness has to take place. They state that “sacred places” need to be created in order for dialogue and safe conversation to occur. In this created environment of non-judgment a larger view of reality is possible where listening becomes a building block and attachments are suspended so that deeper levels of listening, synthesis and meaning may evolve.⁶ Through dialogue community is created and organizational culture is transformed behaviorally, experientially, attitudinally.

The community is a learning organization. It is like a child on the brink of adulthood content with the present status and fearful of becoming an adult. Yet, as a learning organization, this community-in-process provides acceptance and opportunities to grow and a safe place for communicating. Through weaving a common fabric the community develops insight and new possibilities. It also develops new leadership—actually a community of leaders—all of whom “own” the process. These “owners” are a servant-leader type, that is, people who lead because they choose to serve one another and to serve a higher purpose. Stephanie Ryan tells us that learning communities involve commitments to a collaborative journey of thinking, communicating and acting together in service to the whole.⁷

Learning requires change and change requires taking a risk of facing the unknown. To learn is to mature, to move into adulthood--a frightening journey to the unfamiliar and unknown.

3. Ibid., 61.

4. Ibid., 63.

5. Nouwen, op. cit., 66.

6. Glenna Gerard and Linda Teurfs, “Dialogue and Organizational Transformation” in Kazimierz Gozdz, ed. *Community Building* (San Francisco: New Leader Press, 1995), 143.

7. Stephanie Ryan, “The Emergence of Learning Communities,” *ibid.*, 89.

Peter M. Senge states that this learning occurs between a fear and a need⁸ but, according to Peck, to be a true Christian one must live dangerously.⁹ The goal of community building is to face the fear together and create a place for nurture and growth, development and belonging, where people's dignity is respected and where their person has worth.

Learning involves questions of deep long-held beliefs. Is what I hold to be true actually true? Why do I believe and act the way I do? Learning and community building require that we stick our necks out continuously and learning from each experience, according to William Clarkson and Lyman Randall. As we do, old barriers crumble and new community emerges. Bridges are built that benefit the whole.¹⁰

Bridges help community reach uncharted waters. Here a "map" is need to guide us. In Christian community building the gospel map guides us and the love of God persuades us. And vision makes it possible. Vision is the basic building block which inspires creativity to what is possible. Vision catches the spirit. The role of leadership is to hold forth the vision and purpose of the full human potential.¹¹ A leader with vision regards the welfare of others. S/he models Christ so others may follow. The leader knows where s/he is going—prayerfully seeking God's will for direction. The leaders build on people without climbing over them. The leader initiates, proclaiming, "Do you see what I see!". Above all, the leader is proactive and innovative. S/he does not let the words, "We never did it that way before" discourage community building and growth. The leader encourages new ways of thinking and action.

In his book *Paradigms*, Joel Arthur Barker states that "we need a leader who innovates, has a long range perspective (with an eye on the horizon) and challenges the status quo. This person needs to be a good manager of people and a visionary."¹²

What is a paradigm? It is the collective consciousness, that is, the grid which people view their world. Adam Smith in *Powers of the Mind* states "A paradigm is a shared set of assumptions. It is the way we perceive the world. When we are in the middle of the paradigm it is hard to imagine any other paradigm." In *An Incomplete Guide to the Future*, Willis Harmon writes that a paradigm is "the basic way of perceiving, thinking, valuing, and doing associated with a particular vision of reality". Another definition of paradigm is our field of thinking. It is a

8. Peter Senge, "Creating Quality Communities," *ibid.*, 52.

9. Peck, *op. cit.*, 296.

10. William Clarkson and Lyman Randall, "Needed: Leaders to Stick Their Necks Out," *ibid.*, 393.

11. Beth Jarman and George Land, "Beyond Breakpoint: Possibilities for New Community," *ibid.*, 32.

12. Joel Arthur Barker, *Paradigms* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 168.

physiological filter, a set of rules of thought which do not change. Barker calls this paradigm paralysis or hardening of the categories. Notable comments include “That’s impossible,” “That’s not the way we do things around here,” “We’ve never done it that way before,” “We tried that before and it didn’t work.”¹³

According to Barker, the opposite of paradigm paralysis is paradigm pliancy. It is the purposeful seeking out new ways of doing things: “I never thought about it that way before, tell me more.”¹⁴ It is learning to speak and hear a new language. It is made possible by the transformation of attitudes. With a pliant spirit, organizations and communities have the ability to enhance their paradigm--optimizing the best of the present with the needs for the future.

The leader who will bring a paradigm shift or enhancement is one who is a catalyst or pioneer. Barker states that the pioneer is the person who will take a risk—those who settle for the status quo are the settlers.¹⁵ This pioneer will ask the question, “What is impossible to do in your business, but if it could be done, would fundamentally change it?”¹⁶

The paradigm that my community-in-the-making is exploring is the one given by Carl F. Ellis, Jr.: *Christianity-ism*. Ellis states that there is a phenomenal difference between the Christianity of the Bible and *Christianity-ism*. He quotes Frederick Douglas

Between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest difference—so wide, that to recognize one as good pure and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt and wicked. To be the friend of one must be the enemy of the other.¹⁷

Tenth Presbyterian Church is a living organism which is ever growing—never static--on the way toward its final destination. As we look at our spiritual map to see what path to take to get there, we need a sustained learning in the whole gospel in order to be prepared for change and new challenges that arise as a result of the growth process. As “pioneers” we need to pay close attention the entire process.¹⁸ We need to be proactive as we anticipate and respond to needs, recognizing what our long-term investment will do to this organization.

13. Ibid., 156.

14. Ibid., 157

15. Ibid., 70.

16. Ibid., 136.

17. Carl Ellis, *Free at Last?* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 20

18. Kazimierz Gozdz, “Creating Learning Organizations Through Core Competence,” in Gozdz, op. cit., 58.

Peck's Model

In *A Different Drummer* M. Scott Peck presents his theory of community building stages: Pseudo-community, Chaos, Emptying, and Community's Formation. Pseudo Communities are a superficial group of people who feel they are "community" by virtue of the fact they meet together. This facade is a form of denial. Group members deny differences and minimize conflict. Thus in appearance they seem to be community. Peck speaks of it being artificial, having the face of fakers, making it appear as community.¹⁹ But is it only in appearance and not long lasting.

In the Chaos stage individual differences are out in front and these difference, according to Peck, make people feel uncomfortable. We seek to rescue, heal and convert while hitting walls of resistance. Peck says that the desire to heal, rescue and convert is a self-centered desire for comfort by obliterating differences.²⁰ As we are intolerant of views different from our own we attempt to fit everything in a box. Based on our own needs and insecurities we seek to control and manipulate and organize people and group outcome. The need to control is rooted in our fear of failure. It is a time of uncreative, unconstructive, and unpleasant struggling. But fighting is better than pretending you are not divided. People are unable to confront, rebuke. They ignore individual differences and seek to please one another. It is painful but it is the beginning of community growth as it brings people through a healthy process.²¹

Yes, Chaos is healthy. In Chinese our word crisis consists of two characters: one represents danger and the other hidden opportunity. Our psychological health is measured by how early we can meet the crisis. The healthy life consists of resolving crises as early as possible so we're ready to meet the next one. But Peck states that the pain of chaos is good. It shows you're fighting for truth and it must be fought for in order to achieve the next stage of community building.²² The benefit of this process we become conscious of our prejudices and become ready to empty ourselves of them.

Emptiness is the other side of chaos. It is not escape through organization or manipulation or control. There is no attempt at rescuing or healing one another. It is a time of personal release and submission to the benefit of the whole. It is here that we remove internal

19. Peck, op. cit., 89.

20. Ibid., 99.

21. Ibid., 94.

22. Ibid., 80.

blindness and walls which hide and divide and where we are free to be open and vulnerable. Only as we die to self that we can enter into community. It is in emptying that we give one another the space to be themselves in an atmosphere of freedom and dignity.

Commitment to this process is crucial and difficult. Like a marriage it requires hanging in there during the rough times. It is a time of transformation—a time for creating a safe place where people are valued, not judged and where people are converted from hostility to hospitality. It is a time for dropping of masks, exposing of wounds, and sharing weaknesses. This makes possible our struggling together—not against—one another to resolve conflicts through the power of the Holy Spirit.²³

Emptying is a time of sacrifice. It is a dying to self, becoming vulnerable and openly transparent. It means placing ourselves on the altar and being healed and converted through the purging of sinful attitudes and behavior. It is the beginning of our re-birth. Peck states that to achieve wholeness we must work on our weak spots—fear, loneliness, and the desire for independence. We cannot be ourselves until we are free to share the fact that we are weak, imperfect, and inadequate.²⁴ We need one another. In the emptying process we learn to model the attitude and behavior of Christ as servant-leader. He allows us the privilege of being broken and then appreciating others who acknowledge their own brokenness. We learn to honor and enjoy the dignity of diversity.

Emptying is the beginning of our spiritual healing. We see each person as a gift to us. Our hostility becomes hospitality. Our independence becomes a healthy mutual dependency. Each member shares in carrying the load. This occurs when a strong leader is willing to empty him/herself of the need to control. We mirror behavior and develop new behavior and attitudes—maintaining and capitalizing on our diversity. In the group process everyone is equal and important with like dignity and integrity. In the group process a team is created with the same passion in a constant state of learning about ourselves and each other in relationship of self-discovery and mutual understanding. Joel and Michelle Levey state that a spirit of community emerges as we create a context for committed people to remember, discover and share personal values and priorities. The quality of community is defined by the quality of relationships in an intentional community with continued and sustained learning.²⁵

23. *Ibid.*, 70.

24. *Ibid.*, 58.

25. Joel and Michelle Levey, "From Chaos to Community at Work," in Gozdz, *op. cit.*, 106.

Healthy community requires continued nurture and observance of its character. The Levey's state that good communication is the lifeblood of community. There is a need for increased clarity and caring. Trust enables blossoming. Purpose guides vision. Vision informs values. A shared commitment will result in a realized goal with love and compassion working together.²⁶ It then becomes a transferable model and role model for others to imitate. Juanita Brown and David Issacs similarly state that contribution is the life blood for building strong community. Healthy communities provide opportunities to utilize the full diversity of member's talents and gifts which are strengthened through the weaving together of personal relationships.²⁷ Community building focuses on things people care about—matters of the heart—relying on God's timing. The organization must care for itself and its members. It hurts to touch and care, to let in another's joy, pain, love and dreams. Risk is a dance of faith.²⁸ We can become frustrated if we don't understand what is going on in the process of community building.

In the process is something called the "Shadow Effect." Jeanne Borei and John Pehrson state that just when we thought that we had made considerable progress in solving [the problem] issues began to resurface and were now facing us with all the strength, size and vehemence of large man-eating dragons.²⁹ Old baggage was released only to reappear under various guises of anger, guilt, and fear. But Borei and Pehrson tell us not to worry. They say that the community building process wasn't failing! It was working! The Shadow Effect was simply a catalyst that accelerated the surfacing of deeper hidden issues. When the psychological surface debris is recognized, dealt with and cleared away, deeper issues come bubbling to the surface.³⁰ If members are willing to face reality together they can develop a true connectedness which is sustainable.

Sustainable collective learning—the ebb and flow of the community life cycle—is responsible for the organization's ability to sustain itself as a learning community while simultaneously acting and making decisions. This requires skilled shifting between head and heart allowing the collective consciousness to be put into action and helps the group work on interpersonal awareness of uncovered barriers.³¹ This sustainable learning also allows for the shift or enhancement of the organization's paradigm for the long term benefit of the

26. Ibid., 110.

27. Juanita Brown and David Issacs, "Building Corporations as Communities," *ibid.*, 75.

28. Rondalyn Varney Whitney, "Caring: An Essential Element," *ibid.*, 204.

29. Jeanne Borei and John Pehrson, "Enter the Shadow," *ibid.*, 395.

30. *Ibid.*, 401.

31. Gozdz, *op. cit.*, 60.

organization. Peck says that the only obstacle to this type a paradigm shift or enhancement is politics. Complex systems are not readily changed. He states that you must “map” the organization’s dynamics and focus on how the present paradigm enhances or blocks growth and community.³²

Beth Jarman and George Land state that community building is not an event, but a process. It is the central challenge to understand the relationship of all these problems and get underneath what community really means.³³ This evolving past where we are requires boldness, courage and deep commitment. Ideal communities live with fear, trust is freely given and received, there is unity and connectedness and a foundation for life sustaining and enhancing interactions. This is substantially different from what we have naturally inherited. In community we can celebrate, appreciate and resource our differences. It is not acceptable to ask people to deny parts of their beliefs, history or selves in order in order to fit into a framework which excludes them.³⁴ When we grow as individuals we have to give up a sense of childhood in order to meet the challenges of adulthood. If we avoid the pain of growth the learning process stops.³⁵ Life is difficult, but once we accept that fact, it is no longer as difficult. Because once we gain acceptance, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters. Disciplined people then move toward their desired goal.

Community building requires delayed gratification—the tyranny of the urgent to solve a particular problem. We must be dedicated to the truth, embracing unpleasantness and making barrier-removal possible. As learners each member of the community needs to be responsible to change.³⁶ Once a learning organization has embraced a paradigm of wholeness it will find itself called to a responsibility to a larger society.

A favorite quote of mine tells a story about responsibility.

An elderly rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had begun. "Could it be", asked one of the students, "when you see an animal in the distance and can tell whether it's a sheep or a dog?" "No," answered the rabbi. Another asked, "Is it when you can look at a tree in the distance and tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree?" "No," said the rabbi. "Then when is it?" the pupils demanded. "It is when you can look on the face of a man or woman and see that it is your sister or brother. Because if you cannot see this, it is still night."³⁷

32. Peck, *op. cit.*, 62.

33. Jarman and Land, *op. cit.*, 21.

34. *Ibid.*, 23.

35. Gozdz, *ibid.*, 63.

36. *Ibid.*, 66.

37. ACTS Ministries archives, source unknown.

Understanding the stages of spiritual growth is important for community building. In *A Different Drummer* Peck says that the community-building experience is the practice of following Christ: becoming transformed, giving up former patterns of attitude and behavior. It is translating my passion, the poetry of my soul into words that other people can understand.³⁸

History of Our Community Building Process

In 1995 a committee of Tenth Presbyterian Church met over several months to discuss the idea of building up the church through a commitment to racial reconciliation. The result of these meetings was our annual Urban Missions Conference featuring Dr. John Perkins (founder of Voice of Calvary Ministry, Reconcilers Fellowship and Christian Community Development Association), Dr. Manny Ortiz (faculty, Westminster Theological Seminary) and others.

We envisioned the conference as a bridge—the beginning of a process to transform individual attitudes and behavior. The immediate response was the desire for continued teaching on the subject. This was the initial adult Bible class entitled “Racial Reconciliation”. The goal of this class was fourfold: 1) to expose in members and others the need for radical life changes in terms of loving one another, 2) the need to go beyond cultural norms, 3) the need to be willing to grow toward reconciliation one with another and one with the Lord, and 4) the need to be willing to commit to racial reconciliation in order to strengthen the church. Also, we wanted to encourage more inter-cultural relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ and make both our church and our homes places for racial reconciliation. Our hope was to create a diverse community of believers (followers of Jesus Christ) and a safe place to dialogue on the topic of racism.

The members of the initial group were eager to grapple with the topic and prayer was made part of the class as a rule. Here were 12 in the original class: five African-American, six Anglo, and myself, of Jewish heritage. The establishment of personal relationships was paramount. How could God bring together—knit together—people from diverse backgrounds and cultures as brothers and sisters? How would he bridge the gap of racism? How would those who had tasted, and continue to taste the effects of racism, relate to those whose only contact with people of color, growing up, were as maids and other “hired help”?

There were lots of questions. There were lots of risks to this journey—risks of vulnerability, of rejection, of attack. There was also fear—fear of not being able to predict the

38. Peck, op. cit., 123.

outcome of our experimental journey, nor its length. All we knew was that the journey was necessary if the church grew healthier as we learned from one another. Peter M. Senge states, “Learners learn what they want to learn. They are people who have the power to take action, who are given a practice field where it is safe to experiment and reflect and dialogue.”³⁹ Rondalyn Varney Whitney reminded me that, “Failure is the opportunity to develop strength; [it] is not the birthplace of regret.”⁴⁰

The plan was to create an atmosphere at Tenth Presbyterian Church where transformation and change could occur. Our goal was to build a small ethnically and culturally diverse community where all people are recognized as having the same dignity and equality in adherence to the Word of God. This community hoped to impact the church as a whole in moving from an integrated church to a church where reconciliation and transformation are possible and indeed are occurring.

The process of these steps in community were a weekly focus group on racism and reconciliation, a monthly discussion group (focus group only) and a monthly “reconciliation” breakfast (open to all everyone) which feature guest speakers and group discussion.

Stage One

Our group initially came together as an adult Bible class entitled “Racial Reconciliation”. This followed Tenth Church’s Urban Missions Conference on the same topic. Two church members asked me to provide leadership for this new class. As this was a goal of my own and already had ownership of some members I went ahead—prayerfully—and prepared a curriculum for the class, a bibliography, and ground rules for discussion (see appendix). The goal for this class was to develop a diverse community of believers (followers of Jesus Christ) and a safe place to dialogue on the topic of racism in our nation, in our city, and in our church.

The first class began in June 1996 and confronted the task head on. Some expectations of members were: prayer for church and city, sensitivity training, learning to change, working on prejudices and stereotypes, listening to one another and learning from each other. The class was seen as a plant which needed nurture and constant care. Racism was compared to a root system of a tree planted long ago that had now grown into our homes. The roots needed to come out and

39. Senge, *op. cit.*, 51.

40. Whitney, *op. cit.*, 201.

only a tree surgeon could do the job. The problem was that doing so would shake the foundations of our homes.⁴¹

The first quarter year of class focused on history and realities of White racism and the enslavement of African people in this country from the fourteen hundreds to the present. Exploring the facts of racism brought out mixed emotions from our members. Some African-Americans expressed anger and hostility and some Whites denial. Others were frustrated that all we were doing was studying and “not doing anything”. Two Black and three White members did not return to the second quarter of study.

Stage Two

The class continued with the core group plus several others with the topic “Dismantling Racism”. The goal was to break down the walls that divide ethnic groups. The class sought to understand the process of biblical repentance and forgiveness as it effects racial reconciliation. We discussed racist stereotypes, perceptions, attitudes and behavior which are in sinful error and need correction. Above all we wanted to learn about each other and to build up one another in the love of Christ.

There was a new sense of belonging in the group. A safe place had been created to discuss tough issues and where masks could be removed and people become vulnerable. The group as a whole and as individuals were building and learning together (though sometimes agreeing to disagree in their arguing). We were becoming family—seeking to love and build up. As a family, then, we asked the question "can we make this pilgrimage together, and if so, at what price?"

We studied *More Than Equals* by Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice. In the book, the author’s quote evangelist and human rights advocate Tom Skinner:

Racial reconciliation is surgery, and surgery is never painless. Fear of this pain prompts many Christians to ignore their racial blinders. But the point where we feel pain is the beginning of the surgical process. A doctor can't do open-heart surgery on you unless you are willing to get onto the operating table, allow him to cut beneath the skin and expose your most sensitive and vital organs to his healing knife. You only do it when you trust the surgeon. Racial reconciliation is whites and blacks holding on to each other, not letting go, and doing surgery on each other. Reconciliation requires exposing our

41. Thom and Marsha Hopley, *Reaching the World Next Door*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1978), 188.

vital organs to the truth that we speak to each other. It's risky. If trust hasn't been built, the operation is destined to fail. But when we build trust and stay on the table to the end of the surgery, there is hope for healing in the most delicate and vital places of our racial residue.⁴²

It was at this time in our study that we began to gain and give the trust factor that is needed in the community building effort. We were maturing to the point of beginning to be “real” with one another.

More people joined the third quarter. The group viewed and discussed the tape series “What White and Black Christians Need to Know About by Each Other” by the Rev. Tony Evans. Our “agenda” was to develop biblical attitudes by White and Black Christians toward one another and to motivate us to take steps toward relational healing. We recognized that we cannot hope to resolve our problems with the philosophy and debate form of the world, but we can dissolve our differences beneath the cross of Christ. Interestingly, it was during this class that the “Shadow Effect” reared its ugly head. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, came a series of frustrated comments from two players, one White and one Black, about the process of reconciliation (“Let’s stop talking and do something!”) and the relationship of Tenth Church to Blacks (“It wasn’t until the mid-1960’s that this church allowed Blacks in!”). While I wanted to rush in and “rescue” this situation, I knew from *Community Building* not to.

One of the other leaders suggested we study the book *Free at Last?: The Gospel in the African-American Experience* by the Rev. Carl F. Ellis, Jr. (one of our 1997 Urban Missions Conference speakers). In his book, Mr. Ellis implores the church to develop a new urban paradigm—a biblical paradigm for the today’s needs. He criticizes both the liberal and conservative denominations for not being holistic and urges them to follow the centrality of scripture. He speaks about White *Christianity-ism*, a religion of human design which is not in keeping with the Christianity of Christ. Mr. Ellis also says that this *Christianity-ism* is a Christianity that has been polluted by the paganisms of our culture. It attempts to hold the gospel hostage. He calls for a biblical balance of word and deed—focusing not on just the body or just the soul, but on body, soul and mind. Mr. Ellis quotes Dr. Martin Luther King

“The Gospel at its best deals with the whole man, not only his soul but also his body, not only his spiritual well-being, but also his material well-being. A religion that professes a

42. Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice, *More Than Equals* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 190.

concern about the souls of men and is not equally concerned about the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion.”⁴³

In our continued pursuit of dialogue and understanding we have discussed several books: *The Disease of Racism* by Terry Stull, *Purging Racism from Christianity* by Jefferson Edwards, and *Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge, Our Only Hope* by Curtiss Paul DeYoung. We have become part of a national network of reconciliation ministries and are listed in four national directories, Center for Living Democracy, Christian Community Development Association, National Conference for Community and Justice, and the President’s Initiative on Race.

As the facilitator of this learning process in this new learning organization I am constantly seeking new capacities for loving others, of accepting others wholly, searching for opportunities to grow. As a servant-leader I have submitted myself entirely to the obedient service of God. I know that God is sovereign over the process and the time-table of this reconciliation venture and that I may never see the full fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work here. Nevertheless, we are seeking to model the teaching of Scripture in being reconciled to God and his human creatures. Reflecting on our own history, the history of Tenth Church, and the history of the United States we are seeking to place our perceptions about racism and reconciliation in proper perspective. We realize that transformation itself is a process of putting off the old sinful nature and putting on the new creation in Christ. We realize, also, that this has to do with honest appreciation of our own brokenness, spiritual bankruptcy and need for renewal. Thus our community building efforts are volitionally intentional as we seek to run the race set before us.

We believe that now is the time for reconciliation. In the sight of God there is no such thing as a "black" or "white" church. The thought of this kind of separation and alienation because of race, we believe, leaves a bitter taste in the mouth of a just and holy God. We, the Body of Christ, must be that reconciling agent in the world. We must sit down together, learn to trust one another, pray together, and move together in his service. God's call for service *for* our lives cannot be separated from God's intention to work *in* our lives. God's change agents are constantly in the process of being changed themselves. The quality of our service cannot be separated from the quality of our character. It is time for the church to prove that the purpose of the gospel is to reconcile alienated people to God and to each other, across racial, cultural, social, and economic barriers.

43. Ellis, op. cit., 80.

RECONCILERS FELLOWSHIP

Tenth Presbyterian Church, 1701 Delancey Pl., Philadelphia, PA 19103 215-735-7688, acts@tenth.org

GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION

1. This a safe place for everyone to be in. When we discuss personal issues we need to know that we can trust one another. Anyone who makes racist comments continually or acts like a bigot will be asked to leave.
2. Talk about *your* feelings. How do they relate to your present experiences? past experiences?
3. We are not here to “fix” anyone. Only Jesus can do that. Our goal is to receive understanding, gain knowledge, and to give compassion and encouragement. We should identify with one another's hurt, guilt, tears, etc. whether or not we have “been there.”
4. Use "I" statements if you disagree with someone in the group. We are part of a supportive community. (Say "I feel differently" instead of "You're wrong"—or better yet, say “I don’t understand, please explain”).
5. Give members of the group a chance to speak. Be careful not to interrupt. It's important for others to know you are listening and are interested.
6. Suspend judgment. You may not agree with what is said. Listen to learn and to understand.
7. Because this is a group activity, no one person may dominate the discussions. When necessary the group facilitator will state that it is time to move on. Anyone who continually disrupts the group will be asked, afterward, not to return.
8. There is to be no "interrogation". Questions and comments should be sensitive and caring, spoken in order to understand the group member better.
9. Members of this group are to be supported, loved, and appreciated.