

## **Ohio's Major Cities: An Interim of Ongoing Field Research Project**

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The Church of the Nazarene has set a goal and program for the next ten years that is called Thrust to the Cities. It is planned as an international effort. However, the practical application will need to be worked out in each urban area in which work is targeted. A major focus is now on Chicago as resources are mobilized from the International Church. Urban areas, then become a special interest wherever these may be.

In Ohio, there are many urban areas and several cities, although none are of size of Chicago. Four members of a class in urban sociology and myself are gathering information about the work for the Church of the Nazarene in four of these cities, namely, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo. These are the four largest cities of the state.

The Church of the Nazarene has had local churches in all these cities for many years. It now has urban programs in all these cities as well. The research project is focused on one central question which is:

How do local churches as social organizations adapt to changing environments?

The rationale for making this the central purpose of this exploratory research is that little is available to us on how this process of adaptation occurs and that the question encompasses some of the major issues involved in carrying out a thrust to the cities.

The plan of research involves gathering data on social and economic variables which give general characteristics of the various cities as a type of control variable. A second step involves gathering information of how each District is approaching the major city in its geographic area. A third step involves the development of four case studies of local churches. This step is uneven in reference to the overall plan for the students are choosing local churches in their home areas and these do not correspond to the four cities involved. The final step is to describe the various urban programs, relate them to the information gained, and draw such conclusions as are warranted.

This interim report will relate primarily to step two, the District programs, and to some extent include incomplete descriptions of the urban programs in the four cities. In order to get information about the District approach to the cities, interviews were conducted with each District Superintendent. There were unstructured interviews conducted by myself and assisted in some instances by the students working on the project. Each lasted from 40 to 60 minutes.

Certain procedural decisions have been made to limit and define the study. As a convenience, the county containing the major city of each urban area is taken as the geographic unit for analysis. This allows an easier match of local church data with an urban unit. Other data are available on the county level which can be made for comparisons. Although each county is larger than the political limits of each city, it is smaller than the Metropolitan Statistical Areas in each case. Each county then represents a unit with the highest urban development around each core city.

## Central Ohio District

The Central Ohio District includes the city of Columbus, Ohio's capital city. Other than Zanesville and Newark, which are included in the Metropolitan area with Columbus, there are no other large urban centers on the Central Ohio District. The District Superintendent is Reverend J. Wilmar Lambert. The general policy regarding local churches presently located in the city is to retain each of them at their location if at all possible. This means assisting them in many cases to develop new and different ministries to reach changing populations within their section of the city. This is a firm conviction and commitment of Reverend Lambert. How this is to be accomplished is a matter of concern. He communicated a request for help in reference to this policy and its implementation.

In addition to this general policy regarding keeping each location viable, there is the goal of establishing new local churches within the city. Part of this program includes a specific urban program and other supportive ministries, such as compassionate ministries. Both aspects of this program are directed by two District Committees, the Home Missions Committee which is composed of the District Advisory Board, and the Evangelism, Church Growth, and Continuing Education Committee. A special committee operates in Columbus also to direct the Columbus Inner City Ministries and to help coordinate compassionate ministries within the city and the District.

Funding for the urban program on the District comes in various ways. For church planting, the Home Missions Committee helps to secure property and loans for construction and expansion. A black church has recently been able to move into a new building through help from the district in the purchase of land, help to secure a loan, and additional money to complete the project. A second major source of financial help is from inspirational giving. This is the method of funding the compassionate ministries and the Columbus Urban Ministries. The compassionate ministries uses many volunteer workers and relies on voluntary donations of food, clothing, and home furnishing items. Persons active in this program make the appeals. These offerings taken when the Urban Ministries workers make visits to local churches to speak of their work. They also take pledges and solicit other sources as opportunity arises. This program has suffered because the workers have not been successful in gaining sufficient funds.

Part of the compassionate ministries program is expressed in the Columbus Urban Mission. Efforts here have resulted in a number of local churches becoming involved in clothing ministries, food pantries, and other means to meet temporal needs. The Urban Mission has been involved in a feeding ministry. It is conducted through a free meal on Sunday which is preceded by a short service. The persons reached by this program are the street people and those most deprived in the area. Many of these people utilize a feeding program through the week which does not function on weekends.

In addition to the black churches, a Cambodian congregation is forming at the Wilson Avenue church and will be organized on April 6. A second cluster of Cambodian people has been located on the east side and the Whitehall Church is investigating the prospect of sponsoring a mission to these people.

Another aspect of the program involves the provision of the District Campground at a less-than-cost rent to urban and ethnic ministry groups. An Ethiopian group schedules its use each year and there are proposals to use the campground for other conferences, including one for Southeast Asian peoples.

Two other issues in urban mission were discussed. One was the issue of how to articulate compassionate ministries with evangelism. There are dangers to avoid. On one side is the danger that compassionate ministries function only as an arm of evangelism. That giving to serve human need be utilized only as a door by which one evangelizes. The other side is that compassion, while defensible as an aspect of Christian witness in itself, is not to substitute for evangelism. Reverend Lambert felt that compassion ministries represented a kind of social movement in the church and that it was not fully amendable to organizational direction. However, he does want this activity to profit the church and yield permanent gain.

The other issue refers to the need for balance between mission and church planting. Mission refers to the aroused sense of responsibility to give witness to God's grace and power. It is often expressed as vision, the perception of opportunity and the response to take advantage of the opportunity. Church planting can be fully consistent with vision but it can also provide as a predominate goal to the exclusion of other aspects of mission. An advantage of church planting is that it has a focus and is consistent with existing administrative structures. On the district, mission tends to be focused on each congregation and the prospects it envisions for additions to itself. These congregations do accept giving and support for missions especially overseas mission, as a normal part of church life. Some individuals and some local churches do catch a vision of urban ministries, and have become active in these concerns. However these effort have not been successful in mobilizing a wide-spread base for urban mission.

## **North Central Ohio**

North Central Ohio includes the Cleveland area in its borders. There are other cities in the District but none comparable to Cleveland in size. Previous to the formation of the district in 1974, the Cleveland area was divided into two parts one being on the Akron District, the other in the Central Ohio District. It is now within one district, and provides a focus within one district.

The present urban work in Cleveland stems largely from the vision of one pastor and congregation. Reverend Phil Batten and the local church at Willo-lake. They began to reach out to the inner city population and to develop a bus ministry, bringing adults and children to their church for Sunday services and beginning to serve their needs with gifts of food and clothing. This ministry grew rapidly and began to include bible studies and soon thereafter, church-type missions. The District then established an urban ministry and obtained an Urban Ministries Coordinator. At this time a Cleveland Project was established with the General Church providing support by designating the project as a mission special. Compassionate ministry and continued efforts to survey the city and determine needs and opportunity continue.

The efforts of the Willo-Lake congregation began to develop into three forms. One was the Church on Wheels program, a ministry to inner city people in the housing projects where they

live. The second was a formulation of a mostly black church in Euclid and, third the formation of North Church. This latter congregation is quite mixed racially and culturally.

The District purchased a church building on East 55th street for North Church to be housed in. North church is succeeding and becoming established as a point of ministry to the area. Euclid church is struggling, in large part because of the economic depression which forced many who were being won to the church to move away.

The Church on Wheels involves giving a meal in connection with services conducted in the converted bus in the summer and in the recreation facilities of the various housing projects during the winter. An extensive clothing ministry is carried on in relation to the ministry also. Such household articles are also made available.

Other ministries to special populations in Cleveland include a church type mission in a retirement center, a Spanish mission in Lorain, and two missions conducted in Parkside church. One is a mission to Southeast Asian refugees, under the direction of Kathy Kizzee, and a Spanish mission developing within the Parkside church. The refugee mission involves much compassionate activities such as aid in finding housing, home furnishings, emergency food, medical needs, jobs, and help to learn English. Although there is much mobility in this population, there continues to be both a strong nucleus of believers growing in commitment and changing groups of newcomers and marginally interested people who attend and are served.

The Cleveland Mission is well supported by the people of the district. Interest remains high and many congregations give to support the mission in money, volunteer time, and contributed items for the clothing and food ministries. The persons involved in the work make many presentations to report on progress and to secure funds. This work is also dependent heavily on inspirational giving which involves special offerings and pledges from local congregations and individuals. Other funding sources are sought as they are identified and prove compatible with the mission.

Through district funds two urban mission directors are supported full-time. The inner city ministry and the Southeast Asian ministries are those supported.

The structure of the district regarding urban mission involves the Home Missions Board which is the Advisory Board, and the Evangelism and Church Growth Committee. Funding is through a mix of sources, including help in securing loans from the General Church building fund, direct support from the district budget and an encouragement to inspiration giving. Pledges are taken from all local churches at assembly times and special offerings and pledges are encouraged during the year as workers present the needs in various local churches. Many local churches organize special teams or lend individuals to be involved in compassionate and evangelizing ministries. The district Impact Team is scheduled to work with the urban mission each summer. The total financial obligation is approximately \$40,000 this current year. There are two mission directors supported full time at present, one is the inner city director and the other directs the Asian refugee program.

Policy issues relate to the balance between compassionate ministry and evangelism. There seems to be little difficulty in this area. The need of the inner city is so great and the response is so strong that there is strong support for this ministry. Aid is given without strings but it does open doors to evangelism and these are being followed.

The issue of whether to organize separate ethnic churches or not is a present and lively issue. The Church on Wheels, although it ministers to hundreds, even thousands, of people has yet to develop into a local congregation level. The extreme poverty of the people it serves and the high cost of housing in those areas make the present program a viable one. In addition great organizational problems remain. When ghetto individuals receive help they are often able to move into a better community, the phenomenon known as redemption and lift. This means that the individuals who could form a committed nucleus in a local congregation move away at the time such a congregation could be formed. The other problem of extreme poverty means that the support base for an organized church is not there nor does the prospect for the development of one exist.

The Spanish congregation and missions are finding that the single identification of Hispanic covers some definite differences in the Spanish population. These relate both to the country of origin and the degree of, and motivation for, assimilation into American culture. The First Spanish church is committed to Spanish language and sufficient cultural differences that it will remain culturally separate from Anglo churches. Other Spanish groups now being cultivated (at Lorain and downtown) tend to be of somewhat different Spanish origins and/or different levels of assimilation into Anglo culture. These are problematic issues in reference to securing leadership for these groups and for defining the social basis for recruitment into a new local congregation.

The Spanish ministry in Parkside church appears to have reached a group whose origin and stage of assimilation does not give them a strong motivation to develop a separate and culturally distinct congregation. Efforts to develop a set of Spanish missions in Cleveland will need to consider these issues.

The Cambodian and Vietnamese people who have been reached present a similar issue. There does not seem to be the leadership among these Southeast peoples which is needed to establish a separate local congregation. Also the interest in assimilation to Anglo culture remains high and worshipping with Anglo persons with the addition of special separate bible studies seems to satisfy the needs at present.

Is compassionate ministries a means of evangelism? No, but evangelism remains as a motivation for compassionate mission activities. However, it is not a condition for giving food, clothing, and other help. Evangelism must not push its way into the acts of giving but remains alert to the opportunities afforded.

The North Central Ohio District appears to be involved in urban mission and lets church planting take a second place. There seems to be a patience and trust that the work of mission will lead eventually to incorporation of many into full organizational fellowship. However, the end result may be more multi-ethnic and multi-racial congregations than would an emphasis

on church planting. The fear of some, of course, is that the efforts to reach out will not gather in the harvest and the efforts will not come to proper fruition.

In Cleveland there remains an interest in establishing an Arab mission. There have been no workers but contacts are being cultivated and maintained so that when the opportunity arrives, such a work can be forwarded.

## **Northwestern Ohio**

Although the Northwest district includes two urban centers in addition to Toledo, namely Lima and Springfield, Toledo is the largest and the one upon which this report will be based. A young couple were supported by the district five years ago as they went to plant a church in the inner city section of Toledo. A second couple joined them in a few months. Today this work operates in an organized church with regular Sunday services, bible studies, and other ministries. This includes working with youth and children. There is a day-care operated through the week at the church location. The district has purchased an old church building and hopes to sustain it. Early in the life of this mission, a great deal of compassionate type activities were carried on, which included clothing and food distribution, help with household furnishings, etc. Today, although there is still some of this activity there is little emphasis on it. There is still a supply of materials coming in from other churches on the district but there is a lack of available help to distribute these materials. Other agencies cooperate with the mission to provide this kind of help when needed. The Mission workers are free to refer to other neighborhood agencies who are able to meet the temporal needs. This means that the mission workers spend more time in counseling and doing programs with the local residents.

The area in which this church operates is undergoing a rapid change in ethnic identity. White residents of lower socio-economic status and in-migrant from the south, especially Appalachia did predominate and were their major group which the church served until about 2 years ago. Now the major group who live in the area is black and the congregation is now predominately black. This change has brought community tensions high and the church has had to try to resolve these tensions within its constituency. The change had meant a change in style and substance of ministry. The church is doing well in spite of these great changes.

The issues of tensions between compassionate ministry and evangelism do not have a high salience in the Toledo mission. There is not a heavy flow of material to the church and most of the temporal needs can be met by referral to other agencies which are able to meet these needs. There continues to be much advising and support to individuals and families in dealing with daily problems and various problem situations.

In reference to mission versus church planting, the church planting mode of mission was determined from the start. This had required district funds to purchase a building and to provide support under home missions. The workers in this mission have been very active in appearing in other local churches of the district to solicit support and keep the sense of mission before the people. The response across the district has tended to be more favorable to the concept of helping to start a church which would serve a special population. The acceptance of mission to the cities has not been so readily accepted as a personal and local church obligation.

The district policy is one that supports compassionate ministry but is concerned that evangelism be at its heart of motivation. Making temporal needs conditional upon acceptance of evangelism is not approved. One must not be deceptive, help should be given as needed because it is a Christian duty, however, to develop compassionate ministries as a substitute for or to take precedence over evangelism is to miss the central mission of the church.

## **Southwestern Ohio**

Cincinnati is the largest city in this district. There are many churches of the Nazarene throughout the city. Some have moved to suburban locations over the years as the city changed and some in the city have moved but remain within the city. The policy of the District superintendent is to keep each location viable and serving the people of that area if possible.

The district is developing the urban work under the auspices of two committees, Urban Ministries Committee, and the Church Planning Committee. The current state of this work is largely that of planning and reaching out to various ethnic groups in the city. Clifton Avenue church is located near a major University which has a large foreign student population. To serve the need for low-cost housing this church is purchasing, with district help, two houses which will be operated as non-profit student housing for foreign students. Bible studies and other activities will be planned. Attendance at these or at the church will not determine admission to the housing. It is hoped that this facility will serve this need and be a vehicle not only to provide a Christian witness but also a means of creating a favorable attitude toward the Nazarenes in the countries to which these students return.

This church is also serving to reach Cambodians. At present there are no workers able to meet this need so the service to this community rests largely on meeting temporal needs.

Many churches of the Cincinnati area have compassionate ministries in the form of food pantries, clothing depositories, and resources to help in finding housing, and emergency help. However, in reference to taking a strong sense of mission to urban areas, the district churches tend to be very supportive in money and material gifts but there is a definite lack of committed personnel and a reluctance of many of the individual members to get personally involved.

In summary then, one finds that each district is actively involved in urban mission in its largest city. All the districts had other urban areas of smaller size to which they were directing attention also. However, in the large cities in Ohio there have been Nazarene churches established for many years. Many have moved away from the present inner cities which leaves a mission field for each district. Cleveland is an exception to the above generalization, because it is a very ethnic city and the Nazarene were never active in establishing churches in the city. Their efforts in the suburbs have been highly successful.

Each district represents a somewhat different model of urban mission. Central Ohio represents a district with churches already present in many parts of its major city. Directing the activities of these churches and helping them adapt to changing populations may be the most critical problem. There seems to be a strong resource base that is not at present fully mobilized to stir

response to the existing needs. Establishment of ethnic churches is a strong feature of this district.

North Central Ohio tends to focus on mission and has perhaps the most widely based participation in urban mission among its constituency. The mobile Church on Wheels represents a unique approach to urban mission. The issue of differences among ethnics which Anglos tend to lump together yet are important applies to efforts to reach Hispanics. Likewise, the degree of assimilation of an ethnic group and its strength of drive for assimilation to Anglo culture is at issue in Cleveland.

Northwestern Ohio has chosen to work through an organized church in Toledo. Helping that local church through a major change in its neighborhood had required many adjustments. The effort to reach ethnic groups is not a high priority among many in the district. However, some success is being made to stir a sense of urban mission in the district.

Southwestern Ohio also represents, in Cincinnati, a city where there are many Nazarene churches. Helping these adapt to new populations and new environments is now and will be in the future, a difficult task.

All the district superintendents were agreed that compassionate ministries are an obligation for the Christian and for the church. Some were more concerned than others that ministry to temporal needs could displace evangelism. None endorsed meeting temporal needs as a devious method to gain the opportunity to evangelize. Being able to direct compassionate ministries and order it within the church structure puzzles many superintendents. Another issue addressed referred to the relative emphasis placed on church planting versus mission in a broader sense. All were concerned about this issue and most wanted to see the program within the church planting approach. North Central Ohio appears to be more relaxed about this question. Eventual assimilation of varied elements will be affected by these decisions as well as does assimilation goals play a part in how one organizes to serve ethnic peoples.

In all the districts and in all urban missions there rests the call to help. This includes a number of issues which sociologists have some expertise to offer such as selecting means to approach an ethnic group, concepts and advisable programs to assist in adapting to changing neighborhoods, and organizational options, to name a few.