

PROFILE OF A DOWNTOWN CHURCH

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The City and Church Conference of the Episcopal Church sent to its constituent members a questionnaire of some five pages. This questionnaire asked for answers to questions out of which might be extracted a profile of a city parish. Eighteen of these questionnaires were returned. It was obvious by attempting to extract this picture that the questionnaire itself needed refinement and that in many instances the scope of the questionnaire did not fit local conditions. Were local conditions to have full play in this type of questionnaire, it would be obvious that there is no such thing as a profile of a downtown church. Each one of the eighteen parishes reporting seemed to emphasize its own uniqueness. It, therefore, is quite obvious that statistical analysis alone will not bear much reference nor record of what an Episcopal Church in a downtown area known as a "Grand Old Parish" looks like across this land. Were we, however, to take this statistical data this is what it should look like.

Numerically, the strength of such a church varies all the way from 500 members to some 2,496. The median size of our profile parish would therefore be 1,350 members. It is interesting to note the heavy preponderance of churches with well over 1000 members in the grand total. While the size spread varies, the median gives a true picture of the size of such a parish as it is reported by the eighteen parishes in this study.

Broken down in age groups into five categories this is what the parish would look like in terms of a percentage of its total communicant strength. Of those still in school and pre-school the percentage of a given parish's communicants varied from 32% in this lowest of the age brackets to 5%. The median would be some 17.5% of the communicant strength in the category "Still in School".

In the next age bracket again we have a tremendous spread. For those between the age bracket 18-35, we find the low is 4% and the high is 26% or a median of 16% of the communicant strength.

Of those 36-50 we found one parish reporting none in this age bracket up to one which reported the high of 50% speaking certainly of a young congregation. The average, however, would be some 20%.

Again in the percentage bracket of ages 51-65 the low was 10% and the high again was 50%. The median of all parishes reporting was 22%.

Of those over 65 the low figure was 5% of a given congregation to a high of 40% of another congregation. The median in this classification became 16%.

You will notice that this figure totals only 91% rather than 100%. This error is explainable by the fact that the other two categories covering "Members of other Episcopal Churches", and "Members of other Communions" were in some instances used to bring this total to 100% in the figures submitted. This accounts for the 9% discrepancy.

Again looking at these figures that revolve around "Members of other

Episcopal Churches" and "other communions" one of the most staggering results of this survey is the fact that there are so few people in these categories in these downtown churches who have established a membership. As will be seen presently the activities of some of these parishes certainly are tremendous in their own given communities and in their own neighborhood setting. However, the numbers of people affiliating formally with some churches is pathetically small. This statistic would raise in the mind of the writer a grave question as to the potential of evangelism ipso facto by the downtown church despite its many and sundry means of attempting to communicate the value of membership in the "Body of Christ". Again and again the words "very few" or "negligible" appeared in answer to the amount of members of these Episcopal Churches or of other Communions. In some instances, however, very isolated, there were high numbers in these categories. The bulk of the statistics in this area showed little or no members outside the given parochial communicant status who were members of the Church.

Let it be said that only one-third reported in this category of the total number of eighteen churches. With the high of Members of Other Churches at 25%, a low of 5%; and a high of 15% as Members of Other Communions, and a low of 0% as against the total numerical strength. In other words, 67% of the numerical strength are communicants of the Episcopal Church on an average. The figures in the questionnaire ranged all the way from 55 - 100% of the numerical strength.

Now let us turn our attention to where these people live who are served by the parishes. The question was asked, "What percentage of the group served by your parish live in one of three given geographical designations?" Either Metropolitan, that is, people living all over the total area; Urban Industrial, i.e., downtown dwellings; or Central City, working near the parish. In this area we have a clear profile picture. Of the parishes reporting 70% is the average figure of those living in the metropolitan area, 20% are listed as those living in the urban category, and 13% for those living in the central city area. These figures will show a +3%, and this again needs a word of explanation. The explanation comes from the use of fractions and these fractions in some way had to be broken down. The clear picture, however, rests with the 70-20-13%. Inherently this statistic would reveal the outreach of the downtown church to the metropolitan area. If you were once a neighborhood church you certainly no longer have this characteristic. The figure 70% is such a high figure that the activities, the worship, the preaching and the potential of such a large numerical structure certainly has great attractive and sustaining power in its given metropolitan area. The writer is convinced that lying behind this simple figure is the appeal of anonymity in the larger parish downtown, the appeal of service, and the very economic base of being able to provide a greater variety of service as well as a greater appeal by providing perhaps better services in the fields of Christian education, of music and of parochial activities. The appeal to tradition must be heavy in these parishes, too.

One salient fact on every questionnaire was the answer to the very simple question of those who come to the weekday ministry because of the availability of transport. There was unanimous agreement in this area. The location, therefore, of the central city church would logically be one which, because of its proximity to public transportation, or to parking facilities, or to the center city business community where these problems bring people of necessity would be a strong focus on the natural setting of the parishes reporting. Transport plus location is a very lively asset at this point. The question that was correlated with this one had to do with the weekday ministry serving those who work nearby. It is

interesting to note that not all these questionnaires were answered in this area, and that the answers ranged from such words as "Yes", to "somewhat", "some", "not much", "little", and "none". All these words are descriptive at this point of the variety within this question as well as within the churches answering the questionnaire. This would also mean that the weekday operation of these churches extends in a different direction than those who merely work nearby and yet those who work nearby seem to cast the die on the next two questions.

"What kind of people are in the neighborhood of those who work nearby?" Our profile parish reveals a very interesting face at this point. Those who fall within the category of management and the professional classes number 33% of those nearby; those who are office and clerical workers number some 36%; and those who represent the retail trades and industrial occupations number some 26%. The 5% shrinkage allowed, and allowable in the questionnaires, must surely be concerned with those that do not fit into the three categories chosen, but the predominant group certainly is those of the office and clerical forces who work around us and nearby our parishes.

Again the mobility of our congregations is shown 100% in the weekday worship programs of the churches. One statement can be made unequivocally. The weekday worship services in the downtown Episcopal Churches are set time-wise to meet the needs of a commuting population. The great majority of those answering the questionnaire listed celebrations of the Holy Communion at early hours as people went to work, at noontime when they were available on lunch hours, and after work in the evening or late afternoon. The services of Matins and Morning Prayer appeared often. The use of the organ recital at the noonday hour also appeared as part of the profile parish although not as often as might have been suspected. Barely more than four of the parishes reporting listed such a use of these hours for the organ recital or music in the late afternoon. It is an interesting sidelight that some of the metropolitan parishes find that their greatest use in their neighborhoods is within the context of a Lenten program. This is predominantly a Lenten preaching program and in this way the noonday hour is used at least at this season of the year where it might not be used at other times. The people who attend the noonday service hour or the morning and evening hours comprise anywhere from 100% members of the parish church to some 10%. One example alone would lay the heavy emphasis on Members of Other Episcopal Churches in the city who are in the vicinity of the given church and therefore attend its services. However, the great preponderance of those attending the services would seem to be members of the given parish who are in the vicinity.

As a footnote to the question on special services which are held, it should be noted that five of the reporting eighteen churches are Cathedral churches and therefore list heavily diocesan services such as conventions, noonday Lenten services and frequent meetings of other diocesan groups. Fourteen of the eighteen churches reporting hold frequent or infrequent services for community organizations ranging from Nursing Associations and secular conventions to Masonic bodies, Councils of Churches and a great variety of civic organizations. Everyone of those reporting is responsible for diocesan groups at various times. This seems to be a need which is well met by these churches for they were unanimous in their service in this area. When it comes to special interests and needs all but one of the parishes reporting have special music events during the year ranging from scheduled organ recitals and oratorios on a regular basis to occasional services, but they are there. In the field of chancel drama there are only two of the

eighteen reporting parishes that do not have some regular or occasional order here. There is almost a unanimous blank in the fields of the other arts. This can be evaluated any way you like.

What special ministries are provided by the downtown church? Under the heading Counseling the profile parish would answer that approximately 49% of those who avail themselves of the clergyman's time for the services of counseling are not communicants. The figure again of those who are not Episcopalians would be 33-1/3%. These seem to be rather high figures in terms of the overall load of the clergyman in this capacity considering the high number of communicants these parishes list and the time involved in this cross-section of the population as to their needs in this area. The overwhelming majority of those who use this service simply come in. There are very few clergy referrals except to a clergyman who obviously has a special talent in this capacity. Also in terms of the referral prospects the liaison with social agencies varies with the given locality. 78% of those reporting, however, do not receive referrals for counseling services from social agencies. There is one outstanding exception to this in that one of those questioned sent material outlining the program of a downtown parish counseling center as a service for all people, sponsored jointly by the parish and the diocese in which this parish is located. This is surely the exception from the questionnaires. The geographical location as well as the pattern of the city in which the parishes are located as well as their attempt to serve the needs of this neighborhood are illustrated by the fact that only six of the questionnaires listed a foreign-born population resident in the parish neighborhood. The figures varied from 1% to 75%, but in between the bulk of the figures were 4 and 5% of the given neighborhood. Only one parish in the eighteen reported services in any other language than English or any special services for any other group of foreign-born in their neighborhood. The only other special ministry was that to the deaf and this was listed again only in one parish.

Under special ministries to educational institutions again the locale makes a great difference. However, one of these questions stands out very emphatically. Two out of eighteen parishes are in locations where they are privileged to attempt to serve those going to school at night while employed. This either means that business colleges are not near the other sixteen churches or that this is a field in which we have not yet ventured from the downtown standpoint. Over all the specialized ministries in the area of college institutions with discussion groups, monthly suppers, etc., seemed to depend wholly on the locality in which these institutions and churches are in reasonable proximity. The sixteen parishes seem to take the college ministry and make no exclusion of the college-age person but integrate them into their parishes in the normal parochial life without any special emphasis.

As might be expected, and I think this category fits primarily the ministry of the ordained clergy, 100% were called upon to serve people having no connection with their parish in hospitals in the downtown area or as it might be phrased "in hospitals". The figure arrived at for the profile of the parish would therefore be that 26% of all hospital calls would fit this category.

It has been said that Episcopalians like to eat. Surely this was born out in the first question under Activities other than Worship. It was discovered that of the parishes reporting the figures showed an average of two luncheons per week and one dinner per week in practically every one of the questionnaires. Where

there were no luncheons or no dinners shown, the abundance of them in other questionnaires made for the average of two and one. However, at this figure there are but two parishes exonerated from the feeding program of the activities within the parish structure.

Question B in these activities, all designed to give us a picture, show that the Episcopal Church is surely well organized in this capacity. The pattern here is the same pattern as that displayed by the worship services. Namely, the number of clubs and guilds meeting in morning, noon, afternoon or evening was in roughly the same proportion as the services held at those hours. This is only to suggest that the needs of people as they are met within the congregation basically fall into the same time areas where they are available for participation and activities other than worship or correlated with worship. There was in this area an amazing similarity between the two sets of statistics. Needless to say, we are well organized and there is no questionnaire of the eighteen which lacks for a showing under the heading of Clubs or Guilds.

A comment from one questionnaire will sum up all of them. "In each case it is the time best suited to the group served. They chose their time."

The figures for educational programs and adult recreational programs are very interesting for what they say and do not say. Under the heading Educational Groups thirteen reported morning groups, six had noon groups, nine afternoon groups, and thirteen evening groups. One of the questionnaires may here have contained a clue to the morning groups when it was listed quite boldly that these groups were meant for housewives, the evening groups basically for business groups. Suffice it to say that morning education and evening education seem to meet the needs best time-wise of those seeking to be educated by the churches.

Under the heading Recreation it seems that either facilities are wanting in this area or other agencies are meeting this need. There are six evening groups, three in the afternoon and three in the morning. This out of a total of the eighteen questionnaires. This certainly is an area in which we leave it to others.

How does the downtown church fare in the field of community cooperation and what areas does it most embrace? The questions under the heading Community Cooperation reveal a very interesting pattern and one that is indicative of again geography within given cities and the given plants of the various parishes reporting. Age-wise there are weekday neighborhood programs for teenagers in twelve of the eighteen parishes. Of these activities six are done on a cooperative basis with another agency or group. Two-thirds, therefore, of this sample are engaged in teenage activities. When it comes to facilities used by another agency, thirteen of the eighteen parishes report that their facilities are used by other agencies. Seven of the thirteen reporting state that the age bracket most used is the older or adult population while there are six other agencies that could be considered young in their use of our facilities. The age bracket of the "young" being something like 6-16 years of age. This agency use runs the gamut of Scouting and the meeting of boards of other agencies in parish house facilities. Looking at the field of specialized education, it is interesting to note that one of the reporting parishes runs a parochial school. Three are involved in released time activities. This is a distinct minority of the number of parishes reporting and certainly does not form an integral part of the profile downtown parish.

When we look at the outreach in community cooperation, five parishes are

centers for work with the aged in their neighborhoods, while two conduct kindergartens for working parents or as a community service. The two extreme age groups seem to receive more attention, and the older age brackets more than the younger. Seven of the parishes are members of and participate in neighborhood councils. This again represents a minority of the downtown churches and, where feasible, could be deduced to indicate a sense of isolation where such councils exist and the church is not a participant. The last question asked in this general area was one which dealt with the use of clinics. Four of the eighteen churches participate in clinics in their parish neighborhoods. These operate in areas ranging from well baby and mental hygiene clinics to planned parenthood and pre-school children. Certainly these must have been established on the criteria of need and no standards are involved in interpreting this figure.

The younger married group in the parish we are examining receives a variety of treatment within the framework of the parish. Eleven of the clergymen felt that their primary contact with this age group was in the field of consultation. Nine felt that the worship service and the worship contact was one of their primary contacts with this age bracket, of which six fall within the study-social framework and one in the field of training for a lay ministry within neighborhood groups. This might also be placed in the study category. It seems obvious from this statistic that the primary function of the clergy in this area is in the field of consultation. Many of the questionnaires spoke of worship as a normal part of adult education and adult participation in the life of the church. Hence, this became something which was not specialized but was geared to the over-all program. When there are but seven parishes carrying on separate programs for this age bracket, it refers us back to the age breakdown that we saw in the beginning of the survey. You will recall that this group and those over 65 comprised the smallest numerical group in our profile parish. The question could well be asked if the seven parishes conducting an intensive separate program for this group were not the very ones who showed a high preponderance of this age group in their parish structures.

What is the primary contact of your parish with your neighborhood? This question brought forth a variety of avenues of approach, both on the part of the parish and on the part of the neighborhood. Eleven of those reporting listed worship, with a heavy play of Lenten preaching as the primary contact with the neighborhood. Seven would fall within the category of consultation. Three would list financial aid, food and a ministry of social service as the primary contact. One each in the following categories bear mention primarily because they are unique. One listed the Council of Churches' program with the Indians as the opening wedge into the neighborhood, another listed the parochial school as the primary neighborhood contact, and a third listed the recreational programs as the primary contact. Those having evening programs, and there were not many, showed that, set in the neighborhood context, the recreational and educational type program had four separately designed, three had programs involving Scouting, one had a program of lay therapy, and three used the lecture-study approach. One listed a program which sounds rather unique, with a very attractive heading "Parents without Partners".

Under the heading Promotion some interesting comments can be made. Seven teen of eighteen parishes use a parish mailing of some kind, primarily a printed bulletin, nine use direct-mail, eighteen or 100% use the newspapers, and thirteen of the eighteen pay for advertisements. Thirteen also use the newspapers as media for stories about their activities. Seven use the radio of whom some specify occasionally. Three use television. Two list "word of mouth" as the means of

communication. Seventeen out of eighteen advertise in hotels, six use office buildings, fourteen list bulletin boards, and one apartments. It might be commented that newspapers make out better in this area than parish leaflets but all seem to be at work in the area of promotion.

What then is the composite profile of the downtown church? This much can be said about such a profile. It is a church of 1,350 members. 17.5% of its members are still in school. 16% are between the ages of 18 and 35. 20% are in the age bracket of 36-50. 22% are in the age bracket of 51-65. Over 65 years of age are 16% of the congregation. 67% of its numerical strength are communicants of the Episcopal Church. Approximately 15% of its membership are members of other Episcopal Churches. And 7% are members of other communions.

The downtown church is a metropolitan church. 70% of its membership live in the metropolitan area. 20% are downtown dwellers. 13% live within the central city area. Our profile parish is at the hub of a transportation network. The availability of transport at this point in its history is one of its liveliest assets. The ministry of this church is a ministry both metropolitan in character as well as neighborhood in character. Of those who live in the neighborhood surrounding the church, 33% are in the professional class. Office and clerical workers number some 36%, and those who represent the retail trades and industrial occupations number some 26%. 5% are not covered in these categories. The weekday worship of the downtown church is patterned both upon its constituents and their time schedule. Morning hours are early to catch the person coming into the city to work. Noontimes are set apart for intercessions and other programs, musical and otherwise, which can profitably be used by those working in the area. Evenings, both early and late, are used for, first, the person leaving the center city to return to the suburbs, and, secondly, the person coming back to the city or from the neighborhood for specifically recreational reasons. Our profile parish stands ready on two counts to provide special ministries. It becomes a focus for diocesan groups, for community organizations, and it provides variety within the arts of music and chancel drama. In the field of special ministries it also provides a heavy ministry in the form of counseling; and its locale is such that rarely is it called upon to minister to the foreign-born population of the parish neighborhood. No special services are provided in this area. Where there are educational institutions nearby, these seem to center in the downtown church and its ministry to them. Business colleges with commuting students are not given special treatment. Hospitals call upon the ministry, both lay and clerical, of a downtown church. The downtown church is an eating church. An average of two luncheons and one dinner per week are on the agenda. It is parochial to the nth degree in its organization of clubs and guilds, with many meetings going on for these organizations serving both those employed and at home. Educational programs run the gamut.

The weekday neighborhood ministry of our profile parish covers the age gamut well. It provides activities for teenagers. Its facilities are available for other agencies dealing with older people primarily, and it finds itself a center for work among the aged. If there is a neighborhood council, this church stands as a member of such a body in its over-all deliberative efforts. Its parish house in this instance is as busy as Grand Central Station morning, noon, afternoon, an evening. The worship services, as well as consultation, become the twin areas of primary contact with the contiguous neighborhood. The evening recreational program as well as activities such as Scouting, bring others into contact with the church.

With such diverse activities within the unity of the Church, available promotion is most necessary. The use of the U.S. mail in carrying parish announcements to parishioners far-flung in the metropolitan area, as well as special direct-mailing lists, are used constantly. The newspaper is the primary medium with not only advertisements but stories which are newsworthy. Places where people gather and work, such as hotels and office buildings, become targets for bulletin-board material and are used heavily in the promotion of the activities of the downtown church.

Our profile parish is free of many gimmicks. It seems to struggle in the Twentieth Century by capitalizing on the assets it has and giving up or modifying some of the built-in structures of parochial life. It remains true to its calling for a full ministry in that it is divided between its ministry during the week to one segment of its communicant strength as well as its Sunday ministry to another segment of this strength. The wedding and welding of these two forces together speaks not only of its strength but of its realism in the Twentieth Century.

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January 8, 1963