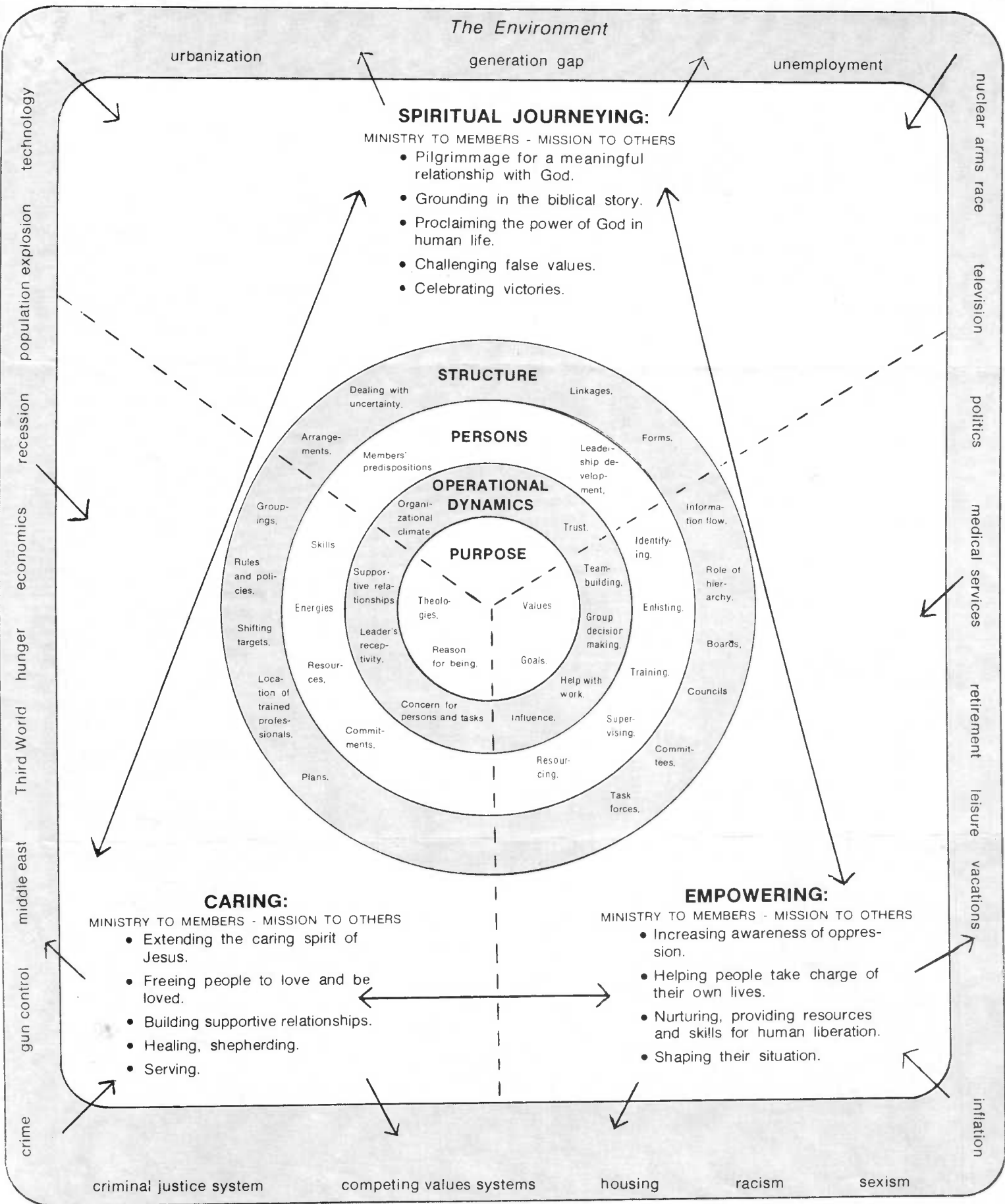


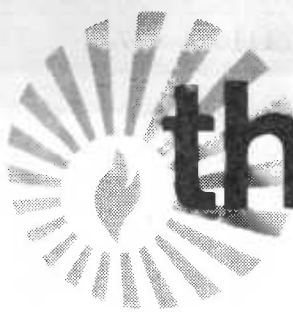
A MODEL OF THE CHURCH IN MINISTRY AND MISSION



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Feb/76 "The Center Letter"

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the center letter

THE CENTER FOR PARISH DEVELOPMENT
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A MODEL OF THE CHURCH IN MINISTRY AND MISSION No. 5 SUMMARY AND DIAGRAM

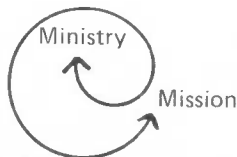
The fifth Center Letter in the series on the Center's Model of the Church in Ministry and Mission introduces in diagrammatic form the entire model (see reverse side).¹ The model is an outgrowth of the work of the Center for Parish Development and has been tested in a number of different settings over the past four years. Based on work originally done by H. Rhea Gray, Douglass Lewis and Robert Worley, the model identifies three interrelated and interdependent functions which give expression to the nature and purpose of the Church. The previous four letters have elaborated upon the need for theological reflection in the life of the Church, and the characteristics of the three functions of the Church listed below.

THREE MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH

- 1. SPIRITUAL JOURNEYING.** The Church is a pilgrim people on a spiritual journey. The objective of this function is to enable persons and groups to participate in a spiritual journey, intentionally proclaiming, celebrating, and deepening spiritual consciousness and meaningful relationships with God.
- 2. CARING.** The Church is a caring community. The objective of this function is to extend the caring spirit of Jesus by developing supportive, healing, open, trusting relationships with others, in which people are freed to love and be loved.
- 3. EMPOWERING.** The Church is an empowering community. The objective of this function is to enable persons and groups, in response to the call of Christ, to increase their awareness of the oppressive forces operating within and around them, to take charge of their own lives, to develop the resources and skills necessary for human liberation, and to shape their situation.

INNER (MINISTRY) AND OUTER (MISSION) THRUSTS

Each of these three functions has both an inner-directed ministry component, in which attention is given to the members of the congregation, and an outer-directed mission thrust in which attention is given to persons, groups, systems, and structures which are outside the church body. These inner-outer dual thrusts can be diagrammed as follows:



This two-pointed diagram represents the Church and its relation to the world. One arrow points inside the Church to remind us that God calls the Church to be set apart from the world. It is as if Christ the Good Shepherd has called the members like lambs into the fold for shelter, food, and refreshment.

In the safety of the fold, God's people may minister to each other, recall again their story and traditions, celebrate and sing, equip themselves with new insights and skills so that they might once again enter the world to do the work of Christ.

Then Christ the Sower goes out into the world and scatters his people like seed into every relationships of life in order that they may be helpful to others on their spiritual journeying, share with others the caring support that is part of the Christian experience, and join with others in the quest for empowerment. The goal is a world reconciled with God.

ENTRY POINTS FOR CHURCH VITALIZATION

Superimposed upon the Model of the Church are the four Entry Points for Church Vitalization, in circular form.² At the center is the Purpose of the Church with its emphasis upon helping the Church clarify its goals, theologies, and reason for being. In the next circle are the Operational Dynamics with emphasis upon decision-making, communication, supportive climate, team-building, conflict utilization, and other interpersonal and intergroup processes. In the third circle are Persons with emphasis upon the members' predispositions, skills, energies, resources, and commitments, and the need for equipping church leaders for their work. In the fourth circle is Structure with emphasis upon organizational arrangements, groupings, linkages, and forms. For the church to become more vital and faithful, change must take place in all four of these entry points. The focal point of the entire model is the vitalization of Purpose, the theological concern for clear objectives for the Church.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Church is located in a particular environment of space and time in which a multitude of forces are at work, continually impinging upon the Church and calling for a response from the Church. The arrows pointing from the Church into the environment indicate that the Church is engaged not only in ministry to its members but also in mission to persons, systems, and structures in the environment.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways does your congregation help people on their spiritual journeying?
2. What planned approaches does your congregation make to help the Church become a caring community, both to its own members and to people beyond its walls?
3. In what ways does your congregation enable people to become empowered?

1. The entire Model of the Church in Ministry and Mission is explained more fully in Reports #1 and #3 of AN EXPERIMENT IN DISTRICT REVITALIZATION, one of the model-building experiments of the Center for Parish Development: Report #1, TOWARD A FULLY FUNCTIONING DISTRICT (Revised), and Report #3, THE DISTRICT COUNCIL ON MINISTRIES, KEY TO DISTRICT REVITALIZATION. Both reports are available from the Center.

2. See "Four Entry Points for Church Vitalization," THE CENTER LETTER, Vol. 5, No. 7, July 1975.

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