

1. AIMS OF AND REASONS FOR A COMMUNITY.

REASONS. 1. Response to Christ's assertion "ye are members, one of another" - Christianity demands the brotherhood of all believers and all down the centuries this brotherhood has never been achieved.

The Church of to-day is not a Community and its "death" is witnessed by the fact that there is not strong reaction at all to it - either of agreement or of censure. +

2. It is easier to follow a rule of life if a group of people are striving to follow it together. The rule of a community becomes a rule of life for each member.
3. Projects can be more effectively carried out by a group than by individuals.
4. During the "dark ages" it is asserted that Christianity survived through the closed communities of the monasteries. It seems that another "dark age" + is coming, and it may be that again the communities will be necessary to maintain the viability of Christianity.

AIMS. 1. Social work - must be done professionally as much harm is done by "dabblers". It is not enough to fill in gaps at the periphery of the "Welfare State", but we must hit at the centre by becoming politically involved.

2. Political involvement in other ways.

3. Ultimate aim is mission:

a) At home by educating Church members for aldership, Sunday School teaching etc.

b) Abroad by sending forth missionaries

4. Provision of a Retreat Centre for all who need it.

5. Intercessory prayer including the ministry of healing and investigation of healing by Divine intervention.

6. Ecumenical work - interdenominational conferences. The door of the Community must be open to Roman Catholics. We must take care not to evolve into another denomination.

7. Involvement with the people in the area adopted.

8. The building up of a satisfying devotional life; the main aim is to search for and execute the will of God.

All members must be fully committed to a common discipline of:

1. finance.
2. devotion
3. time - including social and political involvement
4. health
5. obedience to the will of the group
6. work
7. complete honesty and frankness with one another
8. service to one another without asking for reward
9. prayer for one another
10. hospitality to all who ask for it.

The Community will be limited in size and when it becomes too large a group will move on to form a daughter Community.

The Community adopts the responsibilities of the individual, for example, the financial responsibility towards one's family.

There may be advantages in having a celibate Community; this would remove the difficulties arising with unmarried members. On the other hand, must reflect as closely as possible the features of society, and the Church looks on the family as the basic unit of society. There can be a celibate case.

In order to avoid insularity and "aliqunishness" each member should retain full membership of his own congregation.

The members should live geographically as close as possible .

They should worship together at least once a day and eat together occasionally.

Individual privacy must be respected but they should spend some time each day talking together.

There must be members from all social spheres.

When a person wishes to become a member he must spend a minimum of one year living as a part of the Community without being fully committed.

There must be possible some disciplinary measures and if it is proven that a member has joined for selfish or otherwise undesirable reasons he may be asked to ~~secede~~.

3) TYPES OF COMMUNITY POSSIBLE.

Classification I - Agape type.

Taize - celibate monastic

Iona - diffuse

Resident non-celibate

(Legion of Mary - not really a Community)

(Community at Riesi - self limiting by having a definite aim)

Classification II - Community in town.

" in secluded area

1. Residential Community must be close to members' jobs
2. Relationship with Church in district - each member must retain membership of his own Congregation.
3. Ministers should be attached to the Community to care for the spiritual life of the members and to administer Sacraments etc.
- + 4. Financial commitment is important. Full community of goods is desirable but difficult with families.
- + 5. The problem arises that we cannot by any means guarantee to be in the same place after we graduate.

4) PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We must do something to aid the most important local problems:

1. Unemployment.
2. Catholic / Protestant relationships.

In the unemployment problem a group could be much more effective than individuals.

Sociological research is necessary; nothing of this sort is done by the Church.

Members should be expert in their own fields or as nearly expert as ability permits

Perhaps the need is for a group not in Belfast but in India or elsewhere.

We should bring in other folk whom we know to be interested.

Perhaps interested Ministers could start discussion groups in their Congregations.

Community Action Group, 16th-17th February, 1963.