

# *Interstitial Campus Ministry*

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The discussion focusing around the identity and role of the campus minister continues, and well it should. Kenneth Underwood's study of campus ministry (*The Church, The University, and Social Policy*) determined that the great ferment in the profession is its lack of a clear and generally accepted statement as to who we are as campus ministers, what are our theologically founded aims and how these aims can be achieved.

This article is the sharing of some new learnings and growings in my own identity journey. For I am trying to develop and live out of an identity and philosophy of campus ministry that is biblical and with which I can be intellectually honest.

Presupposed in what follows are some questions with which I am also trying to deal: "What theological self-understandings of myself as campus minister enable me to relate and minister to the church and the university communities? What understandings of God and man and the church provide me with a sense of mission as a minister on a campus? What theological perspective can I own that enables me to evaluate the new fadistic and partial 'salvations' such as the human potential movement, Jesus movement, TA or counter-culture consciousness?"

A theological identity as campus minister that can respond to these questions is the goal of my journey.

## I

Campus ministry, its program and personnel, experiences some built-in distance from both the university and the church, but it must make itself accountable to both. The university has little or no direct power in determining program, policy, staff, budget, and facilities of campus ministry. The base for this ministry is usually an office or building independent of university control.

The distance from the institutional church is not as clearly defined, but in most cases the campus minister has a great deal of autonomy in determining structures and forms of ministry as it

relates to a specific campus. The campus minister is usually not directly accountable to one church or pastor. The lines of responsibility are to a state or regional supervisor. Local laymen and pastors usually serve in an advisory and supportive capacity.

While this distance from university and church often results in the campus minister's being misunderstood and isolated from both institutions, I want to accentuate some of the positive and constructive potentials this distance opens to campus ministry. I will be describing this distance or space in which campus ministry finds itself as interstitial (int-er-stish'al) space. Using the medical analogy, interstitial tissue in human body is *related to* but *not controlled by* adjacent organs or tissues. An interstice is a fibrous tissue having the necessary and vital function of binding together or relating to nearby tissues and organs. The health and wholeness of the body and life itself depend on its interstitial tissue.

Campus ministry—between the church and the university, related to but not controlled by either—is in the strategic position of creatively and positively contributing to the life and wholeness of both communities and their constituents.

If that space is to take on significant form, campus ministry must accept its role as the potential formulator, shaper, and enabler of new life in the church and in the university. This interstice affords campus ministry the opportunity of enabling a creative relationship between church and university to be born. This interstice offers campus ministry the challenge of being prophetic as it dialogues with church and university, enabling the best thinking and action of both to emerge.

Describing campus ministry interstitially does not imply it will automatically or even *ever* become the agent by which the kingdom of God will be fulfilled in the church or in the university. But it does offer new and exciting possibilities for making the promises of God become a living reality in our time. The distance campus ministry experiences between church and university has always been present though not similarly recognized. It can and has been viewed as empty space or negative, which is the common definition of interstice, or this distance has been used by some as the place for creating tension and conflict between church and university. From a position of freedom and immunity, the campus minister has laid down musts, shoulds, don'ts, and conclusions on the church or the university as to what they are to be and become. Or thirdly, this dis-

tance can be the exciting and "proactive" (as opposed to "reactive") context in which campus ministry offers both church and university new possibilities and opportunities for the birthing of the new and creative life in man and his institutions; it can enable man and his institutions to get in touch with their potentials for wholeness and enable the actualization of those potentials (salvation).

## II

Studying with Ross Snyder has enabled me to see in a totally new way some of the shifts in possibilities available to man. These can enable him to get in touch with his basic God-given nature and provide him with direction in the birthing of the creative life. These new possibilities are the promises of God for man—his potentials for wholeness and salvation.

These are the religious hungers in each of us that God is desiring to fulfill and did fulfill in Jesus as the Christ. And these religious hungers are some of man's unsatisfied potentials for wholeness crying out and demanding to be satisfied. (1) God creates each of us to be 'somebody'—a person who is an integrity and who has worth in his own right. (2) We are created to live as free persons in expressive spontaneity so that the creative and new Christlikeness in us might be born. (3) We are created in and for community so we can care deeply for other persons and be similarly cared for. (4) We are able to live proactively so as to create new possibilities from past experiences and future hopes and so put together a meaningful life world. (5) So created, we work for a humane culture, struggling against the injustices of our society and world. We are created with this kind of awareness of our own being as to who we are. This is God's image embedded within us that can never be lost; these are the promises of God revealed to us in Jesus of Nazareth desiring to be fulfilled in each of us and in our world.

But his image of who we are and who we are to become has been so covered and hidden by ourselves and society that we have become blinded as to who and what we really are. Such hiddenness and blindness to our own being is one biblical understanding of sin. Evidence that we have covered and hidden our God-given nature is seen in our tendencies to be 'nobodies,' to remain shut up within ourselves, fearing that to become manifest would destroy us. Our hiddenness is seen in our choosing lonely isolation that keeps us away from caring and being cared for by others. It is seen in our

willingness to blindly obey and follow others and in our living out of an ought-to value system. Our sin is clear in our avoidance of struggle and conflict, no matter what the issue, and in our living out a life-style that is solely *reactive* to past experience.

### III

How these shifts in possibilities, religious hungers, or promises of God are actualized in persons and institutions with whom the campus minister works will largely depend on the life-style out of which he lives. It will depend on how he decides to place his life with intentionality in this interstitial space. The way I have found most exciting, and at the same time to be rich theologically, is the "proleptic" life-style. Prolepsis is the representation or the taking of something future as already done or existing.

A proleptic life-style is living as if anticipated future conditions were already in force. If one's future is simply based on and calculated from present or past conditions, one's vision of the future will probably be discouraging, dismal, and lead to cynicism and pessimism. But as a Christian, one's future is based on the promises of God as revealed in Jesus as the Christ. The proleptic life-style is built upon the controlling vision that God is the power of the future, and he is at work in the present now, overcoming the futurelessness, hopelessness, cynicism of the past and present. And he calls us to be involved with him in that work. It is an attitude of living in the assurance that the kingdom of God is already at work within us, revealing man and the world as God intends them—whole and redeemed. The proleptic life-style for the Christian is to take promises of God as revealed in Jesus, and in one's own life, and to live out of those promises that do not yet fully exist as if they did exist now!

The proleptic life-style attempts to inaugurate the future rather than be concerned with the risks of doing so; it is not simply concerned about the future but about one's vision of the future; it is not suffering under the present conditions, but suffering against them. Change in oneself, in systems and institutions is conditioned by one's own vision of the future rather than merely causing change for its own sake. The proleptic life-style gives intentionality and confidence to the way one exists in the world even though this life-style may, and often does, put him in conflict with present conditions.

The issue of critical importance is the authenticity and validity of one's vision of the future. For me, this vision must be based theo-

logically on the promises of God as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus as the Christ and the purpose for which God created man and the world. Christ came not to be served but to serve, to transform man and society. He promised abundant life and demonstrated with his own life the potential for wholeness that is a live possibility within all persons. The proleptic life-style is taking seriously the statement that to live by faith is to live in the "Assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen" (Heb. 11:1, RSV). Such a life-style stands on the belief that the kingdom of God is within us, waiting to be enlivened so that we might recognize our birthright as sons and daughters of God.

#### IV

A valid question in the mind of the reader would be: What would be an example of interstitial campus ministry that is proleptic? One of several examples I call 'a library and living room learning center.' In *Campus 1980* the author predicts that universities of the future will be comprised of two primary educative components—libraries and living rooms. The libraries will be utilized as a research and information center while the living rooms of professors, dorms, or campus ministry centers will be the setting where the library learning becomes operative in the student's mind and life. For information to eventuate into an intentional style of life (education), a community of learners is necessary who care about and are accountable to each other for their learning.

God promises that we exist and grow in a loving community so that we might learn how to live a proactive and meaningful life. The library and living room style of education looks upon the student wholistically and endeavors to integrate mind, body, soul, and emotion, past and future, into a meaningful present that results in an intentional life-style. Such a learning experience would involve ten to twelve students, one faculty member and one person from the community. Theoretical and practical issues of the research would be dealt with in the group. Feelings, interpersonal and personal, and all of one's sensibilities would also be a valid part of the group's experiences. While some training in group dynamics and process would be involved, the purposes of the group would be to educate the total person, enable a student to become responsible for his own education, and cause inert ideas to become incarnate so that one's way of existing in the world would have intentionality and meaning. Interstitial campus ministry would be strategic for

this process to occur. Since we advocate the "whole gospel for the whole man," modeling this style of education could show its validity for the church and university.

### Conclusion

In the interstice between the church and the university, campus ministry attempts to serve both through its proleptic life-style which enables persons to move toward the potential for wholeness (salvation) which God placed within man and Christ calls forth. It asks the questions of meaning, ministers to the religious hungers of people, proposes new models that attempt to bring the promises of God into present realities; it raises to public awareness where and how God is present, struggling with and urging persons and institutions toward the creative new of their future. In so doing, the interstitial space becomes filled with new possibilities and new hope for the church, the university, and the campus ministry which serves them both. As campus ministry enables this to develop and occur, its place and role becomes vital to both church and the university.

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