

V. THE IMPLEMENTIVE FUNCTION

A. The Local Units

1. The Religious House

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Religious House is the basic local missional unit of the Order: Ecumenical. It currently exists in 103 cities in 24 nations of the globe. The House is composed of at least five adults - couples and/or single families - who live in common residence in a building which also serves as office space for the Ecumenical Institute and the Institute of Cultural Affairs. Its size varies and depends upon missional need. A troika priorship is assigned and the House members are divided into teams to facilitate rotation of corporate care tasks.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Religious House experiment began in 1968 as there emerged in North America a substantial movement of colleagues engaged in the renewal effort. At first its task was to be a corporate catalytic presence among these colleagues providing the local movement access to the resources of the Order. In 1970 with the advent of the Local Church Experiment, the increased number of Houses became centers of training and planning for local galaxies. Two years later with the "turn to the world", the Houses began to demonstrate for the Church how to care for the local community. Thus began the Primal Community Experiment with direct catalytic action in the neighborhood surrounding the House. With the advent of Global Community Forum and Global Social Demonstration, the work of the Houses took another shift. In North America they became mobile on an areal basis in doing a series of "maneuvers" designed to awaken local communities systematically across the assigned geography. As missional emphasis shifted from spirit nurture to church renewal to local development to geographic awakenment, the practical tasks of the House have undergone alteration. Yet its general role of being the Order's local missional unit has remained unchanged.

CRITICAL FUNCTIONS

The paramount function of the House is to be the manifestation of radical presence. The House is a living demonstration of full, profound humanness in its contemporary form and so bears witness in its style to the realities of faith, hope and love. The basic functions of the Religious House are:

- a. To enable global reconstruction as a sign and catalyst of effective comprehensive social engagement on the local level. Whether the House is engaged in Global Community Forum or Global Social Demonstration, it is the catalyst of local man's participation in shaping his destiny.

- b. To provide a wayside inn for travelers on the journey of profound humanness. It provides structures for reflection, decision and celebration within the context of effective practical engagement and so allows the Order at large to wrestle through life issues in a setting of missional corporateness.
- c. To serve the established religious institutions. It grasps and manifests the intimate connection between human community and the profound consciousness held in formal religions, and it constantly works to enliven, reinforce and put form on that relationship.
- d. To rehearse religious practices through experimentation and regular rituals. It dramatically enacts the profound dramas of life's ultimate nature and destiny. In this sense, it is a post-modern monastery, a spot of the Other World in the midst of this World whose sole task is to bring the fullness of life to all.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The operating principles of the Religious House are: 1) that it employ the polity of consensus; 2) that it be fully responsible for the globe from within its location; 3) that each House is webbed to every other through both its missional priorities and its corporate practices including Daily Office, weekly House Church, 6 P.M. prayers, and weekly Ecclesiola; and 4) that it maintains its global perspective through weekly Global Order Reports, common study format and a common time design.

TENSIONAL POLARITIES

The tensions held in the operation of the House include: 1) honoring the needs of the mission from the perspective of the House in relation to the tasks defined from the perspective of the area; 2) developing local opportunity within the context of global priorities; 3) relating self-support efforts to comprehensive missional demands; and 4) holding in creative relation the establishment posture and the disestablishment life style.

FUNDAMENTAL ROLE

The House is an integral part of the polity dynamic. Although its primary task is implementation, for that very reason its input to corporate deliberation is invaluable. Periodic reports in councils, collegium insights forwarded to the appropriate centrum and occasional assignment shifts ensure that the wisdom of each local unit builds the context for corporate decisions.

2. The Metro Cadre

The Metro Cadre is the basic local missional unit of the Extended