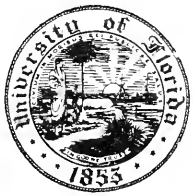
AND RURAL COMMUNITY LIVING IN THE SOUTH

THE SOUTHERN RURAL LIFE COUNCIL
GEORGE PEABODY COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



The Church and Rural Community Living in the South

Report of the Church Committee
Second Southern Rural Life Conference

Issued by
THE SOUTHERN RURAL LIFE COUNCIL
GEORGE PEABODY COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS
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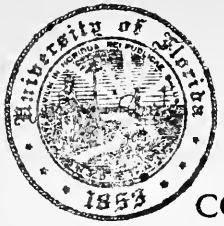

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Foreword

The Southern Rural Life Council is an organization representing various groups and interests concerned with the improvement of rural community living. The Council is composed of seventy-five members representing thirteen southern states—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. It is sponsored by four Nashville, Tennessee, institutions—Peabody College, Scarritt College, Vanderbilt University, and Fisk University. Its purpose is to utilize available resources—human, institutional, and natural—in developing a comprehensive continuing program of community development. Within the Council are five working committees; namely, (1) Committee on Education, (2) Committee on Agriculture and Industry, (3) Committee on Health, (4) Committee on the Rural Church, and (5) Committee on Public Relations. The Council, through its director, staff, and committees, cooperates and collaborates with institutions, agencies, and individuals working to improve the quality of rural life in the South.

The first general work conference of the *Southern Rural Life Council* was held in 1943. The report of the conference was published under the title: *The School and the Changing Pattern of Country Life.* The second general work conference of the Council was held in 1946. Instead of publishing all of the committee reports of 1946 in a single volume as was done after the first conference, each committee report is being published separately. Separate publications should aid wide circulation and usability of the reports. It is to be hoped, however, that separate publications will not hinder the use of all the reports since one of the chief needs of com-

munity development is an integration of efforts of all interests and groups.

It is fitting that the first of the five committee reports to be published deals with the church and rural community living in the South. The church, the institution most common to rural neighborhoods and communities, has great responsibility and potential influence. The quality of the influence of the rural church, be it positive or negative, unifying or divisive, is a force to be reckoned with. The quality of living to be found in rural communities depends in no small degree upon the quality of the ministry and the program of the local church. This report attempts to present the need for a philosophy of rural life; the responsibility of the rural church in a world of secular materialism; the function of the church; what the church is doing to improve the quality of living; barriers experienced by church leadership; what church leadership can do to improve community living; and outstanding illustrations of community cooperation.

The interest and financial assistance of the General Education Board made possible the establishment of the *Southern Rural Life Council* and the publication of this report.

John E. Brewton

June 15, 1947 *Director*

The Church and Rural Community Living in the South

Any consideration of rural life in the South must take the church into account, for the church plays an important role in the rural community. Its influence is a force to be reckoned with, whatever the quality of the influence, whether it be positive or negative, unifying or divisive.

The church is the institution most common to rural neighborhoods and communities. In many communities it is the one remaining voluntary, people's institution, the one local agency which has the possibility of utilizing and integrating the proffered services of outside organizations and agencies. With the removal of schools from neighborhoods through consolidation, the church as the remaining local institution assumes greater responsibility potential and influence. The church that is true to the basic insights and convictions of its faith is the custodian of a world view and of a philosophy of human welfare which enables it to integrate rural community life around the total well-being of its citizens. The church should be the one institution concerned with the whole man at each age level, the totality of his interests and needs. For these reasons the quality of living to be found in rural communities depends in no small degree upon the quality of the ministry and the program of the local church.

A Philosophy of Rural Life

Any serious attempt to improve ways of meeting the basic needs and problems of man and his community must stem from a definite philosophy. In particular, the rural church must base its efforts upon a clear, comprehensive statement of a philosophy of rural life. This committee

heartily endorses the following statement of principles recently prepared and released by seventy-four prominent leaders in Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious life:

We hold:

God created the world, of which the earth is a portion, with a purpose, and through his loving Providence He maintains the world for the good of human beings. Therefore, all human beings possess a direct natural right to have access to created natural resources.

God's intention in creation is to enable man to live with dignity in accord with his noble nature and destiny, to develop his personality, to establish and maintain a family and to be a useful member of society. Society exists to fulfill these aims.

The Good Earth

The land is God's greatest material gift to mankind. It is a fundamental source of food, fiber and fuel. The right to use such elemental source of life and development is essential for human welfare. No law or contract is superior to natural law. A fundamental human right is not to be denied or rendered ineffective by any legal ordinances, apparent previous rights or obligations.

Stewardship

Land is a very special kind of property. Ownership of land does not give an absolute right to use or abuse, nor is it devoid of social responsibilities. It is in fact a stewardship. It implies such land tenure and use as to enable the possessor to develop his personality, maintain a decent standard of living for his family and fulfill social obligations. At the same time, the land steward has a duty to enrich the soil he tills and to hand it down to future generations as a thank offering to God, the Giver, and as a loving inheritance to his children's children.

The Family and Land

Since the family is the primary institution, access to land and stewardship of land must be planned with the family unit in view. The special adaptability of the farm home for nurturing strong and wholesome family life is the reason for the universal interest in land use and rural welfare. A unique relationship exists between the family and the vocation of agriculture. The farm is the native habitat of the family. The family's welfare must therefore have the first consideration in economic and social planning. Throughout the history of the United States these fundamental

principles have been worked out through national and state legislation, and they have been upheld by court decisions and popular acclaim.

Land Use and Human Welfare

Efficiency in land use is not to be judged merely by material production but by a balanced consideration of the spiritual, social and material values that rebound therefrom to person, family and society. The land is not to be a source of benefit to a favored few and a means of servile labor to the many.

Second only to making land available to the family is the responsibility of society to encourage and to educate the land stewards in the proper and most efficient use of the land and in such techniques as will make them masters of their own economic destiny.

The Tiller's Rights and Duties

The worker on the land and his family possess the first right to the fruits of their toil for a decent standard of living. Second to such a right come the rights of any non-operating owner and of the state. Rural people have the right to receive directly their just share of the economic, social and religious benefits in organized society.

The stewards of the land owe sacred duties and obligations to God, the community and humanity. A faithful and honest fulfillment of their responsibilities goes hand in hand with their rights and privileges.

Secular Materialism

The town and country church has been struggling amidst the confusion of an agricultural revolution. New machines, new methods and techniques, and new policies of government are transforming the very nature of living in the rural community. Indeed, we are living, in the language of the English schoolmaster, "between two worlds, the one dead and the other struggling to be born."

As the trend of migration from farms and villages to the city continues, there is a diminishing proportion of our people living on farms. To a great extent security depends upon artificial wealth produced and concentrated in urban centers. The application of technology to agriculture and

the constant development of better methods of farming have made it possible for fewer people to produce more of the food, feed, oils, and fiber needed to sustain our population and industry. In the process of the rapid growth of our cities, it has been the youth who have left the farms.

Concomitant with the migration of youth to the city there is a slowly developing movement to decentralize industry. This makes it possible for industrial workers to live on the soil and produce much of the family's food supply while securing a cash income from industrial labor. One certain result of this industrial decentralization will be the increasing complexity of rural community life, with the intermingling of agriculture and other occupations. Already this is happening in many southern communities. This means that rural church leaders must cease defining "rural" wholly in terms of agriculture. Added to the existing problems of the town and country church will be the fruits of its relative ineffectiveness in reaching the industrial worker. And there is danger of the further dominance of the mechanical and impersonal over the organic and personal.

One of the most disconcerting present-day trends is the commercialization of agriculture, with land ownership concentrated into fewer hands. Corporations and banks operate farms obtained through mortgage foreclosure. Food processing companies operate farms with hired labor to increase their margin of profit. Urban dwellers operate farms as a means of investment, for the avoidance of income tax, as a hobby, or for security which their urban employment does not afford. Such absentee farming tends to uproot the family as the unit of life; it discourages the ownership of property by those who till the soil; it wastes the land when mined for profit rather than tilled for a livelihood; it drives from the land many families who join the parade of social and economic problem-makers; and most important of all, it dis-

courages farming as a way of life. One of the important results of this concentration of land ownership and commercialized agriculture, when combined with the technological change in agriculture, is a decline in the operation of the agricultural ladder, whereby a young man begins as a laborer and eventually works up to ownership. It is increasingly difficult for young people to secure the necessary capital to begin farming.

The contrast between the type of rural community life to be found where the farms are family owned and operated and where they are "factories in the field" is strikingly revealed in the hearings of the Senate Commerce Committee during the summer of 1946. Two towns in California are contrasted. Town A is in the midst of huge "factories in the field." Town B is in the midst of family farms. Here is the difference:

	Town A	Town B
Population	6,300	7,800
Banks	0	2
Newspapers	1	2
Business Places	60	156
Schools	One grade, no high	Four grade, one high
Local Government	Unincorporated—run by county	Incorporated
Women's Clubs	0	7
Commercial Clubs	2	5
Veteran's Associations	0	2
Churches	6	14
Housing	Very poor, shacks crowded, few brick buildings	Substantial, clean, bright homes
Youth and Juvenile Problems	Fairly serious, very few or no opportunities for wholesome recreation	Practically none—its children have many recreational opportunities

These materialistic trends in modern agriculture, placing

profit above human and social well-being, radically alter the pattern of rural community life. The magnitude and complexity of these changes make it difficult for a rural church to meet the spiritual and moral needs of people whose interests and loyalties have been weakened by secular and urbanized standards.

Yet the town and country churches have great opportunities for curbing the trend toward complete secularization of rural community life. The population of our cities would be decreasing were it not for the steady stream of young people migrating from country to city communities. The influence of these churches upon boys and girls has a direct bearing upon the religious and moral destiny of the nation.

This means, of course, that the rural churches work under a tremendously heavy load. In a recent study of its membership roll for the past one hundred years, one of the outstanding rural churches of the South discovered that it had contributed as many members by transfer to churches in the cities during this period as it has had on its resident roll at its peak of membership. For this reason the membership of many rural churches remains static. But if the smaller churches out of which this stream of young people comes do their job well, then the city churches and communities benefit from their labors. If the rural churches fail, then the moral and religious life of the city communities and the work of the city churches suffer because of this failure. A large percentage of the southern rural population is growing up in complete religious ignorance. More than 50 per cent of our people are without church affiliation. Our cities have an urgent responsibility for helping develop the religious opportunities of rural communities which constitute the major source of their future citizenship. The contributions which rural people and their descendants make or fail to

make determine whether we are to develop a materialistic secularium or a Christian democracy.

The Function of the Church

The inclusive function of the rural church is that of building Christian rural communities, developing a "community co-extensive with a neighborhood." The goal of its program should be the transformation of a group of individuals and families, interrelated and interdependent by necessity, into a community that is consciously and voluntarily united and cooperating for its mutual welfare and for the welfare of the world. This goal has been given classic expression by the Apostle Paul in the sixteenth verse of the fourth chapter of his Letter to the Ephesians. The "sociological" community is to become a "Christian" community, a group of people sharing common loyalties to Christ and His Way of Life and seeking to work out the implications of these loyalties in every phase of life.

The rural church that is to be an effective channel for developing a Christian community must seek to build its program upon the spiritual values inherent in rural life: man's moral relationship to the earth as the steward of the Eternal; the dignity of labor as a means of becoming a co-worker with God in the continuous processes of creation and in the sustenance of the human family; the primacy of the family; the significance of mutual helpfulness, neighborliness, and cooperative effort as the practical expression of the law of love; the recognition of the worth and dignity of the individual; and the possibility of simple and integral living.

There must also be the recognition that human life is one—a whole, a body-spirit unity—and that we can analyze its constituent parts only by abstraction. In the wholeness of actual life, the physical, mental, social, and spiritual life cannot be separated; they are intimately interrelated and

interdependent. This is illustrated in the science of medicine, which recognizes that this or that part cannot be treated adequately in isolation; rather the patient as an organic unity must receive treatment. If this is true in regard to physical health, it is equally true for man's spiritual development. Religion, to be real, must permeate all of life.

Human life is not only a unity within itself, but it is also a part of the totality of life, inextricably bound in the whole stream of organic life, from the simplest soil organism to the most complicated creature.

These two facts must be recognized by the church, if it is to be effective in its task of developing a Christian community. Man is a unity, and man is a part of his physical and cultural environment. Souls cannot be saved in abstraction; soils, society, and souls belong together. To sin against the earth, through abuse and wastage, or to sin against our brothers through selfish hoarding of the earth and its life-giving resources—resources for both body and spirit—is a denial of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Rockwell C. Smith, in his excellent book, *The Church in Our Town,* describes the role of the church in the rural community as sevenfold:

1. To serve as the champion of cooperation, with other churches and with other agencies
2. To be the moral conscience of the community, praising the good, condemning and seeking to eliminate the evil, and developing an awareness of the unmet needs of the community
3. To be a supplemental agency, meeting needs not otherwise being met
4. To be an experimenter
5. To train leaders for positions of community responsibility
6. To be a colony of the Kingdom, conducting its internal affairs accordingly
7. To be a sanctuary for all within the community, affording them a listening ear and an understanding spirit.[1]

[1]Rockwell C. Smith, *The Church in Our Town* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), Chapter XV, pp. 167f.

David E. Lindstrom recently suggested an additional list of country church obligations:

1. To serve the spiritual needs of all country folk
2. To help save the soil and build up its fertility
3. To preserve our democratic way of life
4. To develop better rural schools
5. To foster family-owned and family-operated farms
6. To work for a better system of farm tenancy
7. To advocate and support a rural health program.[2]

Certainly these are obligations of the church in the rural communities of the South.

What the Church Is Doing to Improve the Quality of Living

One of the best criteria of what the rural church can do to improve the quality of living in its community is a survey of what is actually being done. The survey of this committee is incomplete because reports could not be secured from all of the states included in the southern region. However, sufficient information is available to indicate the potential contributions which the rural church can make to improve community living. New patterns of rural church action are emerging throughout the South. This is due in part to a growing awareness among church leaders of the responsibility of the church to its community, and in part to the pressure of human need. True to the paradox of the Christian faith that "the things that are despised, hath God chosen," the Negro rural church is making the most rapid strides in harnessing the power of the Christian faith to practical community problems. Scattered throughout the South are small and large town and country churches which have stepped outside the walls of the traditional church program and have made significant contributions to the im-

[2] *Capper's Farmer*, January 1947, pp. 23f.

provement of life in their communities. The challenge is to multiply this number many fold, until the total resources of the church may be harnessed to the common task of achieving an abundant life for every citizen of every rural community. Some generalizations of what the church is doing are presented in the following pages.

Improvement of Economic Conditions

There is a slowly developing awareness that the church has a stake in and a responsibility for the improved economic conditions of its community, especially if that community be underprivileged as is true of many rural communities. Church leaders are beginning to see that enforced and needless poverty is no aid to Godliness and that without a decent standard of living it is futile to expect people to endeavor to live by Christian standards. Man does not live by bread alone, but he must have bread if he is to have that which is beyond bread. More and more church leaders see that poor land makes poor people, and that poor people make poor churches and communities. They are beginning to realize that the church which has been taught to pray for "our daily bread" cannot pass by on the other side of economic need; also that this need cannot be met satisfactorily by charity and paternalism, but only as the church and other agencies are able to inspire and guide people to help themselves.

The area of economic improvement is a new field for local church action, especially in the South. The awakened leaders are feeling their way along, using largely a "trial-and-error" method, and are often too fearful of the economic overlords, as they seek to determine ways by which the church can fulfill its obligation in this area of life.

A widespread effort on behalf of economic improvement

has arisen out of a new appreciation of the meaning of the principle of Christian stewardship as it applies to the care and use of the soil—that man's relationship to the soil is a moral one which affects the economic well-being of the community. Through worship, preaching, Sunday school classes, young people's groups, adult study groups, and general community meetings, many churches are proclaiming the principle and practice of stewardship of the soil and its resources, and are seeking fruitful means of cooperation with the public agencies which have definite responsibilities for the conservation and enrichment of the soil. Since land is the foundation upon which the southern economic structure rests, and soil erosion and depletion have wrought the greatest havoc in the South, an effective land stewardship is invaluable as a means for economic improvement. Technicians working in the field of soil conservation admit that utilitarian motives are not enough to save our soil. There is great need for a moral force such as the church is seeking to provide.

Closely allied with stewardship is the effort to improve tenure conditions by encouraging and assisting families, especially young families, to become land owners, by improving rental contracts and conditions, and by cooperating with other agencies concerned with tenure improvement. There are examples of church leadership which has canvassed the landlords of its community on behalf of better contracts and improved living conditions for tenant and sharecropper members, and with some success. Although not always implemented, there is a growing conviction in southern churches that good church and community life cannot be built upon the present tenure pattern. In a few instances church-sponsored and church-directed land settlement plans are to be found.

An increasing number of rural church leaders are working with other agencies and organizations and are seeking

better ways of cooperating with these allies at the local level, providing facilities for meetings, interpreting the purposes and services of these agencies, and encouraging members to make use of services offered. The Roman Catholic Church has the best record in this respect, utilizing to the fullest the resources of public agencies for the development of local parish and community life. Through such intelligent cooperation churches can become the integrating organization at the local level. Many churches cooperate with the 4-H Club program, the adult education program of Agricultural Extension, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Farm Security Administration, the Soil Conservation Service, and other agencies.

In some communities the church has sponsored or encouraged the organization of credit unions and cooperatives, both as means for economic improvement in the local community and as practical methods of implementing the Christian law of love. Church-sponsored cooperatives are of various forms: farm machinery cooperatives, buying clubs, stores, canneries, community shops, processing and marketing, and cooperative sawmills. Through study clubs and community organizations sponsored by the church, communities are enabled to make the best use of local resources and facilities for better living and to develop local enterprises and industries.

Health

While the church has long been aware of its responsibility for sending medical missionaries to faraway lands, it has been slow to develop an awareness of its responsibility for the health of its local community or nearby communities. Some of the major denominations have done much toward providing hospitals, but almost without exception these hospitals have been placed in urban centers rather than in rural

hinterlands. Many churches aid in the development of a community approach to the problem of health, sponsor health education, clinics, and the general extension of health and medical facilities to remote and underprivileged areas. Churches have encouraged or sponsored the establishment of local medical clinics, pre-payment medical care programs, and have provided financial and other assistance to needy persons. In a few instances physicians and nurses are serving rural communities by means of church subsidies. Health education is being given a place in conferences for ministers and lay workers. Occasionally we find the church taking the lead in providing some sound, realistic education in the field of nutrition, child welfare, parenthood and maternal welfare, sex, and alcohol.

An outstanding example of a church-sponsored rural health program is that of the Seventh Day Adventist Church which has a series of rural sanatoriums throughout the South, and which recruits and trains rural medical evangelists. Of course it must not be overlooked that through the fulfillment of its peculiar functions the church contributes to the mental and spiritual basis of health. Since many of our ills can be traced to a depleted and eroded soil, another contribution to the basic health of the community is being made through the Christian doctrine of stewardship of the land, which results in an increased soil fertility.

Leadership

Probably the field of leadership training is receiving more emphasis than any other activity of the church. This is as it should be, for without intelligent, responsible, efficient, and consecrated leadership, both professional and lay, the church cannot fulfill its task of Christian community building. The church in the South is making rapid strides in this field. There is a growing awareness of the vital importance

of lay leadership, and this is being implemented by local study groups, leadership training classes and conferences, young people's conferences, youth caravans and week-end missions, and church women's conferences and institutes. The latter has a place of major importance in the rural church extension program of the Home Missions Council and the Phelps-Stokes Fund, centering in the Negro colleges of the South.

Among the most significant contributions toward the development of a Christian lay leadership for the rural community are those of the Catholic Action Farmers and the Grail Movement in the Roman Catholic Church. The Grail Movement has as its purpose the training of young women to be rural mothers and homemakers. While much is being done in all branches of the church in an effort to recruit and train local lay leadership, too often this training is entirely institutional-centered and does not prepare Christian leadership for the various community responsibilities.

Even greater advancement is being made in the field of professional leadership training, both pre-service and in-service training. A study made by C. Morton Hanna in 1942 revealed that of 116 seminaries and divinity schools, seventy-six made no specific effort toward instruction in the rural church. Only nine institutions seemed to be putting forth a major effort to train men for the rural ministry. Some progress has been made in this area since 1942. The majority of southern seminaries and theological schools now have, or are making plans to add, departments of rural church work. Some of these schools have developed significant training parishes or fields, in which their students can secure practical experience on the job. According to present information, the following theological schools and church colleges have rural church departments: Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, Emory University, Southern Methodist University, Duke University, Vanderbilt

School of Religion, Fisk University, Johnson C. Smith University, Shaw University, American Baptist Seminary, Phillips School of Theology, Virginia Union Theological Seminary, Bishop College, Morris Brown College, Lane College, Jarvis Christian College, Columbia Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Seminary, Scarritt College, Southern Christian Institute, and Union Theological Seminary (Richmond). Other schools which have rural church extension services are Tuskegee Institute and Hiwassee College.

Several new training centers are in process of development, notably the Scarritt College Rural Center, the Warren Wilson Institute of Rural Church Work, the Valle Crucis Institute, and Bricks Rural Life School. The program of rural church extension and of rural pastors' institutes and schools sponsored by the Home Missions Council and the Council of Southern Mountain Workers, is one of the most significant leadership training enterprises in the South. Most of the major denominations now have regular conferences and summer schools for rural pastors. Several interdenominational summer schools are being developed. The John Louis Kesler Circulating Library of the Vanderbilt School of Religion is making a significant contribution to the development of church leadership in the South. State councils of churches, denominational rural fellowships, rural church commissions of conventions, conferences, synods, and dioceses are all making a contribution in this field. The practice of having theological students who plan to enter the rural ministry spend a year's internship in a rural parish under the supervision of an experienced pastor offers great promise.

Recreation

Increased opportunity and improved facilities for wholesome recreation for children, youth, and adults are greatly needed in the average community. The contribution of the

church to an adequate community program of recreation is very limited. Here and there, inspiring exceptions are found; but on the whole the rural church not only does not seek to supplement deficiencies in this area of life, but it also hinders other groups or agencies which are trying to do something. The place of play in the development of children and the need of youth for social opportunity are not yet recognized by the typical rural church. But again, exceptions show that the church can be aroused to this need and can contribute toward its fulfillment.

Institutes for the training of local recreational leaders have been sponsored by church groups and agencies. Young people's caravans and week-end deputation teams emphasize recreation as a part of their program. Young people's conferences and camps give recreation an important place. The participants in these activities gain leadership ability which is carried back to the local church and community. Local churches have sponsored community playgrounds for children, usually seeking the cooperation of other community organizations. A few of the denominational headquarters provide the services of a recreational expert who conducts leadership conferences, and prepares and publishes materials and aids for local church and community recreational programs. Churches have cooperated in community fairs, folk festivals, and a few churches have developed programs of considerable scope, including folk music and folk dancing, dramatics, movies and slides, crafts, and athletics. Some of the churches in the larger towns have sponsored church athletic leagues. The summer vacation church school usually provides some play opportunity for the children. Church-related schools and colleges have sponsored recreational programs for their students. The Council of Southern Mountain Workers has made a distinctive contribution in the field

of recreation through its itinerant recreation leaders, its folk festivals, and its country dance school.

General Quality of Living

The rural church contributes to the improvement of the general quality of community living in many intangible ways, such as: developing a sense of community and civic responsibility; motivating and training leadership, usually for itself, but also for community projects and enterprises; serving as a moral traffic light in the community, perhaps too often dealing with trivial matters, but also pointing to some of the most important dangers. The degree to which the program of the church is effective in developing Christian character is reflected in its contribution to the general quality of community life.

The Program of the Church

The distinctive contribution of the church to community living is a contribution which only a vital church program of worship, teaching, and nurture of Christian personality can make. Therefore, it must not be forgotten that the church whose internal program is weak is not going to make much contribution in the areas of community life discussed in this report. While it is not possible to give a detailed account of the development being made within the institutional life of the church, a few significant programs are mentioned.

There is a fairly concerted effort to improve the general quality of the services of worship in town and country churches. A number of rural churches are making an effort to more closely relate worship to the common life of the community. There is an increasing celebration and observance of Rogation Days, Rural Life Sunday, Christian Home Sunday (Mother's Day), and Harvest Festivals. Some significant services of worship centering around the great themes

of rural community life have been prepared by southern churchmen, and are being used rather widely. Services of dedication for new homes are also in use.

In the field of religious education much is being done in an effort to provide better trained teachers and better facilities, and some effort is being made to produce materials particularly adapted to rural churches. The latter has long been a felt need on the part of rural church leaders, for it is difficult to apply Christian teaching to rural life when all the religious education materials are urban in point of view. Most of the denominations are recognizing the place of youth in the church and are giving them an opportunity to serve on church boards and committees. Yet many rural churches do not have any kind of young people's program. Although most of the denominations have definite programs in the realm of family life, these programs have not reached many of the smaller churches. The Lord's Acre movement is making a significant contribution to stewardship enlistment and church support in many rural churches. This movement is also being used to relate worship to everyday life and to train children and youth in Christian giving. A number of town and country churches are providing bus service as a means of improving church and Sunday school attendance. A few churches have established church farms as a contribution toward the stability and support of the pastor and his family. These farms are sometimes used for Lord's Acre projects and as unpretentious demonstrations of good farming practices.

Barriers Experienced by Church Leadership

Even a limited survey of what the church is doing to aid in the improvement of rural community living takes on greater significance when viewed from the perspective of the barriers experienced by the church—barriers both from

within and without. Yet only by a realistic appraisal of the actual situation can leadership expect to make the church more effective in the fulfillment of its basic mission and in its contribution to the total life of society. No matter how high an opinion we have of the church as a divine creation, it is also a human society, an heir to all the ills that beset man and his civilization. As a divine institution the church has a transcendent perspective. It must ever strive to give expression to this perspective within its own organizational life and within the life of its community. It cannot do this by hiding its head in the sand. As an instrument of the God of truth, the church must "see life clearly and see it whole." It must be capable of sane, honest self-criticism, as well as be a constructive critic of its social environment.

Because the church is the victim of those problems which confront the southern region as a whole, this cursory survey of some of the barriers which church leadership is experiencing will begin with those which are to be found outside of the church—barriers that arise from the economic, social, political, and intellectual environment. Some of these are: soil erosion and depletion, one-crop farming, poor housing, poor health, inadequate educational opportunities, low level of literacy, and general culture.

These barriers, coupled with the commercialization and mechanization of agriculture and concentration of land ownership, result in a lack of stability in the rural population, insecure tenure, and migration to the cities. People without roots do not build communities or community institutions. This whole complex problem is intensified by the continual drain of human and material resources out of the South to feed the concentration in cities outside of the region.

Another series of formidable barriers is the result of the pattern of racial segregation which makes community life in its strictest sense an impossibility, for in each so-called

community there are in reality two communities which have a minimum of communication and fellowship. Added to the racial conflict are other conflicts prevalent in the average southern community: the conflict between town and country, the conflict between farmer and industrial worker, and the aggravation of all these by the rise of "hate-groups" which seek to win their objectives by appeals to prejudice and misunderstanding. Controlled channels of communication and domination of agencies of public opinion by "vested interests," often of the church itself, create difficulties in the march of progress. The farm press of the South, with some notable exceptions, is too largely in the hands of those "interests." The lack of farmer organization is also a handicap to economic and social development in rural communities.

Another set of barriers of utmost concern to the church grows out of the increasing urbanization, depersonalization, and secularization of modern life. These are reflected in even the most remote rural community. Urban culture has real values, but too often it is not the higher contributions which come to rural communities; rather it is those which break down traditional rural values without putting anything better in their place. The spread of commercialized recreation into rural areas is one example of this process, and the commercialism engendered by the radio is another.

If these barriers were the only ones that existed it would not be too crucial, for the church has always thrived on opposition and difficulty; but when barriers which arise from within the life of the church are added to those outside the church, the situation becomes serious. The remainder of this section will be devoted to a discussion of the limitations within the church which are felt to be of utmost importance in any consideration of the actual or potential contribution of the church to rural community life.

For an institution with a transcendent perspective, the

church too greatly reflects its social environment, "conforming" to the world rather than "transforming" the world through a living application of the faith. This fact is shouted from the housetops by the reflection within the church of the pattern of segregation, making it possible to say, with too much truth, that the church is the most segregated institution in the South, despite its profession of faith in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This is not only true in regard to race but also in the whole gamut of social and economic life. Economic and social stratification are reflected along denominational lines as well as within churches of the same denomination. The church has adapted itself to the caste system prevalent in its community. Thus we find two kinds of religions which draw their members from different social levels and each of these is a perversion of real Christianity. The religion of the poor, of the outcast, and the oppressed tends to become an other-worldly escape from the difficulties of daily life, and the religion of the respectable, the well-to-do middle class, tends to become a benediction upon the status quo. One type of church does not disturb the satisfaction of its members, while the other type provides no understanding of the underlying causes of their situation. Without a representation of a cross-section of the people of the community either as members or participants in its program, the church is severely handicapped in acting as a mediator or integrator in community conflicts, and fails in its "ministry of reconciliation."

Other barriers arise from the dominance of certain "traditional" religious ideas and practices. There is an extreme individualism in southern religion which is blind to the social nature of man and to the social implications of the Gospel. Too often religion, especially in rural areas, is too other-worldly, having little relation to daily life. There is overemphasis upon minor sins, the promulgation of a "petty"

moralism, which sometimes becomes a sort of "scapegoating" to avoid attention to more important personal and social ills. The liquor traffic is a very common scapegoat, bearing sole responsibility for all the problems of man, thus easily becoming the cloak to hide the failure of condemnation of equally serious evils. There is an extreme pre-millennialism which opposes all progressive effort.

The program of the typical town and country church tends to follow a stereotyped pattern, with an almost total emphasis upon preaching and annual revivals. While there is truth in the statement that the church must "meet change with permanence," the permanent truth of its faith, yet there is also necessity for the church in the application of its faith "to meet change with change." This the typical rural church has not done. Other institutions, notably the public schools, have made adjustments to a changing world, while the program of the church remains much as it was in pioneer days.

Another set of barriers is created by the exercise of an almost total denominational sovereignty which results in over-churching in some communities and religious neglect in others. The former case makes the local church a divisive influence in the life of its community rather than a unifying force. The struggle to keep churches alive for the sake of denominational prestige creates a situation in which the energies of the church, which should be directed outward toward personal and community redemption, are expended in keeping the machinery grinding. Many a rural pastor has had his spirit beaten down by the struggle to keep the wheels turning when the whole intention of his ministry was to contribute to a Christian community. This denominational competition also results in local churches which are too small to carry on an effective program, or it results in a grouping of churches without any consideration of com-

munity boundaries. All of this has tended to make the church the victim of a sort of institutional self-centeredness, of localism, of a "constituent-mindedness," with no sense of "parish."

Some of the most crucial barriers cluster around the matter of leadership. As a well known leader in southern rural thought has pointed out, there was a time when rural sociologists and other students of rural life thought that the united community church was the solution to the problem of the rural church, but they soon discovered that such was not the case. Later they decided that the solution was to be found in the proper grouping of churches within the denominational framework; this also proved to be false. Now they believe that the real answer is to be found in the *leader*, the rural minister. The results of this survey agree with the latter opinion.

Due to the economic conditions of the average rural church and community, and the attitude which church "powers-that-be" have toward the rural ministry, the better trained half of the clergy has been drawn to the cities or to the "upper class" churches in the larger towns and better communities. This has left the average rural church to young men just beginning to use their wings, to those whose wings are worn out with over-use, or to misfits. Thus there has been a sort of stratification in the ministry.

Another problem is that of tenure. There is a rapid turnover of ministers in the average rural church. When a leader does not remain in a community long enough to know something of its problems, needs, and resources, or when he is expecting to make an early departure, he cannot help his church to make a contribution to an improved community life. Many rural ministers are also absentees, often serving

two or more widely separated churches.[3] "Suitcase" preachers may make a modicum of contribution to the church as a self-contained institution but not to the church as an agency of community development and redemption. These two problems are in large measure the result of another problem—that of inadequate salaries of rural ministers. In 1940 more than 50 per cent of rural and urban ministers received an annual salary of $1,199 or less.[4] The percentage doubtless would have been much higher for southern rural ministers alone. Very little progress has been made toward increased salaries since 1940.

Another barrier is the inadequate training of the average rural minister—both in general and vocational education. Often this tends to establish a barrier between the minister and other community leaders, especially professional leaders, which prevents a common understanding and hinders their cooperation in community development.

Even this hurried and incomplete survey reveals many difficulties which must be met if the church is to make its fullest contribution to improved community life. There is a growing "remnant" in the church which is not taking these barriers complacently. Examples have been cited to show some of the progress being made to overcome the environmental barriers. These efforts are not enough, nor a true measure of the potential possibilities of the church, but they are "straws in the wind." Efforts are also being made by this "remnant" to overcome barriers that arise from within the church. Three of the most serious barriers are: segregation within the church, denominational competition, and rural church leadership.

The most distinctive effort being made to transcend the barrier of race is that of the Fellowship of Southern Church-

[3] J. H. Kolb and Edmund de S. Brunner, *A Study of Rural Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1946), p. 524.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 527.

men, a fellowship composed of Christians of various racial and creedal backgrounds who are seeking to make a realistic application of their faith to the problems of the South. All of the meetings and activities of this organization are interracial. Its Commission on Christian Fellowship is constantly at work to develop a real brotherhood and to break down all false and artificial walls of segregation. The Fellowship has commissions on labor and rural reconstruction. It also sponsors interracial workshops on cooperatives and interracial work camps in rural communities.

Several of the larger denominations are making some effort to bring church leaders of the two races together for common counsel. For several years an interracial seminar of rural church leaders has met in connection with a rural pastors' school, resulting in Christian fellowship and in the improvement of rural church programs. The women's and young people's organizations of several denominations are taking the lead in an effort to break down the walls of segregation. Churches in some of the smaller towns have sponsored the formation of commissions on interracial relations. A number of local ministers' associations are interracial in character. The Race Relations Division of the American Missionary Association, with headquarters at Fisk University, is making a significant contribution in developing understanding and action in race relations. White rural ministers have participated in the many institutes and schools for Negro rural ministers with mutual benefit. At least one of the State Councils of Churches is representative of both races. In at least one local church in the South membership is open to persons of all races. The church cannot take pride in these belated efforts; and until race "ceases to have caste significance" in the church, the Christian conscience must be tragically ill at ease.

At a recent meeting of the Home Missions Council, the

problem of group relations was described as "one of the great social and ethical issues of our day." The church was warned that if it is to maintain "its traditional championship of human rights," it must abandon class and race distinctions. The following "considerations" were listed as imperative for the development of home missions enterprise in the United States and Canada:

1. The full influence of the church should be exerted to secure the eradication of racial segregation and discrimination, whether imposed by law or by social custom, and to fight whatever implies for any group a "ghetto pattern" of living.
2. All religious or other missionary enterprises now organized on a basis of segregation should be re-examined with a view to removing as rapidly as possible all barriers to free intercourse without reference to race.
3. The church at large should be summoned to accept the principle of ministry to all people on the basis of community, irrespective of race or social status.
4. Wherever possible, experiments in interracial activities and associations should be promoted.
5. Special study should be devoted to the strengthening of the ministry of the church among any groups or types of population now inadequately reached.
6. Home mission forces should join with other forces, both inside and outside the church, in positive measures to relieve tensions and to promote mutual understanding and good will among all races and groups.[5]

Here and there we find a healthy grass-roots rebellion against denominational competition, as illustrated in one small open country community where local members of three churches have come together on their own initiative to erect an attractive building and have a joint Sunday school. There are a few hopeful examples of interdenominational cooperation at the local level sponsored by over-head church leadership. The Dale Hollow Larger Parish, in Overton and Pickett Counties of Tennessee, sponsored by the Methodist,

[5]Associated Press, January 8, 1947.

Disciples of Christ, and Presbyterian U. S. A. Churches, is a notable example of a diversified ministry to serve a large, needy area. Two southern states, Virginia and North Carolina, have State Councils of Churches, both of which have rural departments, and both of which sponsor many interdenominational activities. All of the institutes and schools for Negro rural ministers, sponsored by the Home Missions Council, are interdenominational. Out of this fellowship and study of common problems there has come in at least one state, Georgia, a Council of Town and Country Pastors. Some of the summer schools and conferences for white rural ministers have been interdenominational, especially those sponsored by the state colleges.

This survey reveals that more is being done to overcome barriers created by inadequate rural church leadership than in almost any other area. Significant contributions are being made in this area by educational institutions, rural church commissions, committees, conferences, conventions, synods, and dioceses. Through these organizations the parent bodies are being awakened to the need of doing something about the salaries and tenure of rural ministers. Many church bodies are studying, and in some cases working on plans, for the maintenance of the ministry and for minimum salaries. The Roman Catholic Church is not faced with these problems, but it does have a common problem with other religious bodies in recruiting and training a specialized rural pastorate. The increasing concern regarding rural church leadership is having another effect; namely, it is adding a sense of dignity and worth to the Christian rural vocation.

What Church Leadership Can Do to Improve Community Living

Church leadership at the national, regional, state, and local levels, has made significant contributions toward im-

proving community living. The needs of communities challenge church leadership to do much more, however, than has yet been attempted. A discussion of what church leadership at all levels can and should do to improve the quality of life in communities follows:

At the National Level

Without an awareness of the significance of the problems confronting rural people and rural community living on the part of national church leadership, the local leader and church are seriously handicapped in making a contribution to the community. Fortunately, there is a growth of such an awareness, as illustrated by the activities of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the Town and Country Committee of the Protestant Churches, and other denominational organizations at the national level.

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference sponsors various programs for the development of realistic local parish programs in rural communities and for the awakening of the whole church to the importance of its rural program. It holds annual conferences, sponsors rural life schools for its clergy and other religious workers, develops patterns of cooperation with national agricultural agencies, and publishes an excellent magazine, *Land and Home*.

The Town and Country Committee, representing the Federal Council of Churches, the Home Missions Council, and the International Council of Religious Education, acts as a clearinghouse for the various denominational rural church executives, sponsors a national convocation of leaders of town and country churches, in-service training schools and conferences, and in cooperation with the Farm Foundation and the various state colleges of agriculture, has held a series of regional conferences on the church and land tenure, two of which were held in the South—one at Nashville in 1943 and

one for the Cumberland Plateau in 1945. The committee publishes a magazine, *The Town and Country Church,* prepares services of worship for Rural Life Sunday and Harvest Festival and other materials for the enrichment of the program of the rural church. National rural church agencies do much the same things within their respective bodies. The Committee on Town and Country has also arranged seminars of rural church leaders and officials of the Department of Agriculture at Washington.

Through the home mission boards of the various national church agencies much is being done to supplement and strengthen the program of local churches. In many cases this home mission support needs to be broadened, not only to maintain a local denominational church, but also to make possible a comprehensive religious ministry to the whole of community life. Other boards and agencies of the denominations are making contributions to rural churches through the preparation of materials and the provision of special services adapted to the rural situation. These services should be greatly extended.

National church leadership can contribute to the improvement of rural community life by promoting church cooperation at the local level, by helping local workers think in terms of "community" rather than "constituency," by providing materials and program aids adapted to the needs and experiences of rural people, by in-service training for professional and lay workers, by rendering financial assistance in the maintenance of the rural pastor and his family—guaranteeing a "living wage," old age security, educational security for the children of the manse, and providing scholarships for advanced study. National leadership can do much to improve the tenure situation among rural pastors, and can extend the use of demonstration parishes, interdenominational

larger parishes, group ministries, and denominational parishes with a community program.

There is no better method of rural improvement than demonstration, as attested by the experience of agricultural agencies. National church agencies can also make a contribution by assisting in the development of church-sponsored plans for improving land tenure, and in the development of public opinion favorable to constructive national policies regarding land conservation and use, rural health, housing, and education.

At the Regional Level

Regional church agencies are doing many of the things being done on the national level, but often more effectively because of common problems and resources. An increasing number of regional church colleges and other educational institutions are seeking to make a contribution through extension programs and other services. Church leadership can contribute to rural community life through regional studies, through experimentation with new types of church programs and methods adapted to the needs and resources of the region, and by working to eliminate discrimination in worship, employment, travel, and education.

A majority of the seminaries and many of the church colleges in the South have departments of rural church work, but there is no means by which the work of these various departments can be correlated for the mutual development and enrichment of their contribution to the total improvement of the rural church and its community. In other regions, notably in New England, the work of these departments is being correlated through the Interseminary Commission for Training for the Rural Ministry. It is the opinion of the Church Committee of the Southern Rural Life Council that a southern interseminary commission would add to the

effectiveness of the work being done in the several institutions of the South. It need not be a duplication of the Commission in New England, but could have many of the same items in its program, such as:

1. Each seminary or school should maintain at least a minimum of teaching in the rural church field and of supervision of the field work of students during the school year and during the summer.

2. The staff, composed of all the instructors in the various departments, should meet at least twice a year for two or three days for the discussion of common problems and for carrying on particular lines of study which are valuable to the members or are calculated to improve the work of the departments. This might include the working out of syllabi for particular courses—how to handle the problem of field work supervision, the integration of the entire seminary program in terms of professional preparation for the rural ministry, or other matters of common concern.

3. A particular student research project should be developed and executed. A general theme should be selected and a phase of it assigned to each of the cooperating departments. A group of students should be secured to work on the assignment of each particular school, and this might have the status of a one-hour course. Then in the spring the various student groups and their instructors should meet to receive reports of the work of the various institutions and to discuss the assigned theme as a whole. These research projects might well be the basis of a regional study, covering a wide range of subject matter.

Through such common counsel and endeavor there would result an integration of philosophy and method which would make the total impact of the rural church much more

effective, and it would also be a means of bridging denominational and racial barriers.

At the State Level

In many ways church leadership can be more effective at the state level than at either of those previously discussed. The in-service training program usually is more effective on the state level, although it should not be confined there. The contributions which the State Councils of Churches in Virginia and North Carolina are making lead this committee to believe that similar councils, with strong rural departments, should be formed in each of the remaining southern states. Interracial fellowship is also more feasible at the state level, as indicated by the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance in Alabama. Denominational stimulation of improved rural church programs has been more effective at state levels. Standards of excellence can be worked out and recognition be given to those churches which have developed outstanding programs in a given year. This might be done by denominations, but should also be done interdenominationally, probably through the rural department of a state council of churches. One national rural church leader, who is in the process of setting up the rural program of his denomination, plans to stress the opportunity presented in state meetings, with emphasis on:

1. Stewardship in regard to man's relationship to the land and other natural resources
2. Home and farm ownership as aids to personality development
3. Health as it relates to Christian living
4. Housing conditions as they relate to human welfare
5. Cooperatives as they have helped and are helping to improve living conditions in rural communities
6. Recreation and social welfare
7. Vacation Bible schools
8. Libraries
9. Education and public welfare

Church leadership at the state level can secure the cooperation of the college of agriculture and agricultural extension service in making studies of rural churches and other related phases of community life. Such studies would be especially valuable, if carried on interdenominationally and if a definite state-wide program is developed on the basis of the findings.

At the Local Level

It is in the local community that the ultimate test comes, for if the church is to make a contribution to improved living, that contribution must be made in some particular area, not just in general. Unless the Christian faith can be related to the everyday living in the community, it is irrelevant to the actualities of life. The contribution of church leadership at other levels is effective only to the degree to which it is mediated down to the grass-roots and helps people to improve their personal and community life. The church can play a significant role as the integrator of local community life. In its role of integrator the church should encourage the formation of community or county councils, representing all the interests and phases of community life, through which a united effort can be made for community development. Among the local churches cooperation and effectiveness can be enhanced by a county council of churches; or if this is impractical, a county ministers' association might be organized, and this should be interracial. Through such councils and associations local churches can work together on community projects, such as community vacation Bible schools, community young people's activities, recreational projects, community beautification, leadership training, and the like. Local church leadership can also improve community living in the following ways:

1. By helping to increase the income of farm families

by: providing assistance to beginning farmers; developing greater security of tenure and improving rental contracts; promoting soil conservation; developing more efficient production and marketing; encouraging various types of cooperatives; providing educational opportunities; using the church farm and Lord's Acre projects as demonstrations; encouraging the development of part-time and supplementary industries.

2. By sponsoring a program for the improvement of home and family life by: developing better family relations through family planning; sponsoring family projects in worship and recreation; encouraging improvement of housing and beautification of home grounds; offering courses for young people and for young parents in preparation for marriage and family life; providing family counseling services; promoting family health; helping provide educational and cultural opportunities; and continually insisting upon the Christian foundations for good family life.

3. By helping create a general desire for community improvement and implementing this desire by: encouraging farm organizations and cooperatives, and in semi-industrial communities, labor organizations; developing an awareness of the need for better educational and cultural opportunities for the entire community and for better health and recreation; stimulating a sense of civic responsibility and the practice of good citizenship; contributing to community understanding and cooperation.

4. By helping develop a philosophy of rural life and an appreciation of the values of rural living.

5. By helping create a sense of the interdependence of the local community with its county, region, nation, and world.

Outstanding Illustrations of Community Cooperation

There are many notable illustrations in the South of cooperation between the various churches of the local community, between the local church and other community agencies, between church colleges and local churches and communities in their area, and between church leadership and state colleges and other public agencies. Then there is the inter-church cooperation on the state level through state councils of churches. The Virginia Council of Churches was organized in January, 1945, representing twelve denominations and more than 500,000 constituents. This council has departments of the rural church, evangelism and worship, religious education, youth work, family life, and interracial cooperation. The North Carolina Council is organized along similar lines.

Outstanding programs in local cooperation are: the Dale Hollow Larger Parish in Tennessee; the Owslee Larger Parish in Kentucky; the Austin Larger Parish (denominational) in Texas; the churches of Clemson, South Carolina, and Swannanoa Valley Association in North Carolina. There are no doubt many other notable programs about which this committee has not been able to secure information. And there are many more examples of effective cooperation between local churches and other community agencies, such as the Soil Conservation Service, the Agriculture Extension Service, Farm Security Administration, Tennessee Valley Authority, County Health Departments, and public elementary and high schools.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of cooperation between national church leaders and agencies, local pastors and churches, and schools and colleges, both public and private, is the program of institutes and schools and of rural church extension being sponsored by the Home Missions

Council and various southern schools. Hundreds of rural pastors have gathered, usually at the state colleges, for a period of intensive training and for an opportunity to become acquainted with the programs of the various state agencies working in their respective communities, and for mutual stimulation and fellowship. Many of these schools have a leader who gives most of his time to extension work among pastors and churches in the state. The Phelps-Stokes Fund is cooperating with this program by helping establish rural church departments in Negro theological schools. Those who have participated in any of the various phases of this cooperative undertaking have felt it to be one of the most creative efforts in southern rural community life.

A good example of church and community cooperation is found in the outline for a post-war program in Princess Anne County, Virginia:

1. Teach the dignity of man and the abiding value of the Scriptures in helping man to live up to his capacity.
2. Give more attention to the development and teaching of worthwhile Christian habits.
3. Exalt the rural home and family and their contribution to the general welfare.
4. Make a more effective use of the Bible, Bible study, and civic and moral studies as a foundation for a complete life program.
5. See that all persons and homes in the area of the church's responsibility share in the ministry of the church.
6. Provide opportunity and inspiration to encourage and promote friendliness and fellowship among all the people of the community.
7. Teach appreciation of the dignity and value of agriculture as a vocation and as a good way of life.
8. Teach appreciation of the rural heritage, environment and opportunities.
9. Interpret the advantage of the family-type farm.
10. Develop a more helpful and practical program of community and education.

11. Teach more lay people to do a wide range of church and community service.[6]

Among the church colleges which are developing programs of extension in their area, in cooperation with local churches and other agencies, are: Rabun Gap, Furman University, Hiwassee College, Fisk University, Johnson C. Smith University, Warren Wilson College, Hendricks College, College of the Ozarks, Scarritt College, and Maryville College. The program of Hiwassee is especially significant in that it has worked closely with leaders of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the University of Tennessee College of Agriculture in sponsoring community life conferences in communities in the area. These conferences follow this pattern: Worship, message on "The Kingdom of God in the Countryside"; brief history of the community; self-study of the community by use of a score card; message on relation of soil conservation and human development; Sunday morning worship; panel discussion on the contribution of the various agencies to the realization of the Kingdom of God in the community; community council elected and program for coming year developed and adopted. It is proposed to develop this program in about twenty-five communities. Scarritt College maintains a rural center which carries on an active program of general community improvement through a resident staff and the use of interns from the college and elsewhere. Warren Wilson Rural Church Institute is closely allied with four parishes in its vicinity and students in the institute work with the pastors and churches in these parishes.

The Community Church in Berea, Kentucky, has provided the services of an extension pastor and community worker to work in the various rural churches and communi-

[6] "The School Can Help, A Rural Church Institute Trains Local Leadership," *New Dominion Series,* No. 85, January, 1947, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

ties surrounding the town. For many years this college has conducted extension opportunity schools in churches in various sections of the mountains, as well as holding such a school on the campus for rural youth and community leaders. For many years the Rural Community Conference, representing the various agencies interested in community development on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee, has provided for the development of more effective cooperation of the various agencies at the community level, and has stimulated various local community self-studies which have resulted in community improvement.

Several of the state colleges of agriculture have taken definite steps toward closer cooperation with rural church leadership, especially through the sponsoring of conferences at the college or experiment station. Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Texas and Oklahoma A. &. M. Colleges have done good work along this line, as well as the various Negro state colleges which have been mentioned.

The following churches are carrying on significant demonstrations on improved community living:

Calvary Church (Presbyterian U. S. A.), Big Lick, Cumberland County, Tennessee

Community Church, Heathsville, Virginia

Dale Hollow Larger Parish (Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian U. S. A.), Overton County, Tennessee

Damascus Church (C. M. E.), Early County, Georgia

Disciples of Christ Church, Green Bay, Virginia

Evangelical Reformed Church, Kingfisher, Oklahoma

Henderson Settlement (Methodist), Frakes, Bell County, Kentucky

Hepzibah Baptist Church, Wendell, North Carolina

Ironsburg Methodist Church, Monroe County, Tennessee

Methodist Church, Barnesville-Liberty Hill Charge, Lamar County, Georgia

Morris Fork, Breathitt County, Kentucky

Olive Chapel Baptist Church, Apex, North Carolina

Pleasant Hill Community Church (Congregational), Cumberland County, Tennessee

Shiloh Baptist Church, Reedsville, Virginia

St. Joseph's Church (Roman Catholic), Rayne, Louisiana

Thanksgiving Baptist Church, Selma, North Carolina

Universalist Church, Outlaw's Bridge, North Carolina

Vardy Community Church (Presbyterian U. S. A.), Hancock County, Tennessee

Ware Episcopal Church, Gloucester, Virginia

Wooten Community Church (Presbyterian U. S. A.), Leslie County, Kentucky

Faced with many barriers, a few vigorous and courageous church leaders are doing much at the national, regional, state, and local levels to improve community living. Church leadership can and must do much more if we are to realize an improved quality of living in rural communities. The great need is for more church leaders in rural communities who have a philosophy of rural life and a broad concept of the function of the church in the community.

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