



The symbol for Operation Breakthrough seeks to picture the Word of God breaking through the walls of separation between man and his neighbor, and man and his God. It is an adaptation and combination of the symbol for "Breakthrough - 1968", a program of the Stewardship Council of the United Church of Christ, and of the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago where the pastor spent some time in intensive study of urban problems. The motto "The Servant Church Facing the 20th Century" is an attempt to tie in this program with the two-year emphasis of the United Church of Christ, "The Local Church in God's Mission".

INITIAL PROPOSAL

OPERATION BREAKTHROUGH

I

Operation Breakthrough is a proposed two (2) year program to enable the word of God to break through the barriers which now divide men from each other and from God. It is a program to place Plymouth Church in touch with the needs, desires and aspirations of mankind on five (5) levels: (1) the immediate community; (2) the membership of the church; (3) the Louisville area; (4) the world; (5) the individual wherever he may be.

Operation Breakthrough is limited to two years in order to allow for evaluation and for adequate goal settings. With such a limitation it is possible to set goals, provided incentive necessary to attain them, and evaluate the effectiveness of the program before a great deal of time is spent. It is advisable to phase in the program, beginning immediately with (2a & b) and definite plans for (1). By the beginning of 1968 the entire operation should be in full swing.

II

The Five Levels

I. The immediate Community

Plymouth Church has, in recent years, lost contact with those living in the immediate area of the church building. There is at present much hostility and misinformation among local residents as regards the church for many reasons. While these reasons in some cases are unfounded and in others unfortunate, we do exist in a society that demands especially of its Negro citizens that those who "have" do their utmost to aid those who do not have. Plymouth, as compared with the local residents, is composed of those who "have".

Operation Breakthrough seeks to undo those situations which have created the present rift in church-community relations whatever the reasons. It is based on the belief that a community of "have nots" is in way aided by handouts and charity. Power, political and economic, while not the only answer, is of the utmost importance. Dispersed, this community has no power. But properly organized and together with the Russell Area, could do much to correct the conditions that have been imposed upon it by society.

The role of Plymouth is as follows:

- A. With the church housing I.M.A.G.E., Inc. and working with other active groups in the community, we hope to present a co-ordinated program of community service that is both grounded in the Christian faith and productive. The two need not be mutually exclusive.
- B. To provide volunteers to work with the Agency already established in the area (Plymouth Settlement House) in a program of community organization.
- C. To provide the facilities for a central base of operation, either

in the church building itself or in any new structure that might result from plans now in the committee.

- D. To engage in an all recruiting program for members drawn from the Russell Area

Level 2

The Stewardship Program

Let there be established a semi-permanent "Stewardship Committee" whose responsibility and function will be:

- (1) planning and direction of the Christian Enlistment Campaign
- (2) education of the membership as to the true meaning of stewardship of time, talent and treasure
- (3) planning and direction of periodic visitations for the purpose of keeping the membership informed of the program of the church
- (4) aiding the Budget Committee of the Trustee Board in planning the yearly budget

The membership of this committee shall be five (5) persons appointed by the Church Council, and shall include one Trustee and one Deacon, plus the chairman who shall be appointed by the pastor subject to approval by the Council.

The Membership of the Church

Upon my arrival I learned that Plymouth was in some degree divided. After a year, I offer this proposal as a means of re-uniting the church. The proposal seeks to provide the avenues of communication between the membership, to avoid the formation of cliques, and to open the doors of Christian witness to all members of Plymouth, rather than just a select few.

A. Visitation

The program of visitation which is much needed and greatly desired, is as follows:

The pastor and deacons divide the general membership into zones according to residence. Visitation (except in the event of illness or death or request) would be on a systematic basis through these zones. It is hoped that this way each family in the church will receive a visit before the end of the calendar year. The deacons would then report to the pastor on those members who either need or desire a special call from him, and this call would be made. It is obvious that the burden of this program of visitation would fall on the shoulders of the Diaconate (Deacons and Deaconesses working together).

B. The House Church

This is a program of establishing in each of the zones a group or groups of members who would meet on a regular basis for discussion, prayer and study, seeking to relate the church and their faith to the vital issues confronting man in the mid-twentieth century. This would also be under the

guidance of the pastor and Diaconate, who would lead (at least at the outset) each group, with the pastor working as best he can with all groups. These groups would meet in the homes of members with special meetings at the church when the need arises (as in the event of an especially interesting speaker).

C. Object 200

For the two years of Operation Breakthrough, we set a goal for each Sunday morning worship an attendance of at least 200. In comparison to the membership of the church (300) this is a very high goal. Yet it is low. Our goal should be 300. At present our average is about 150-160 persons. This is better than one half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the membership, more than most churches can say. Yet it is obvious that the Word of God is not reaching many who have united with this church.

3. The Louisville Area

A. The West Louisville Cooperative Ministry

We would continue our membership in this new and highly creative form of the church.

B. The Louisville Area Council of Churches

We would not only continue our membership and our giving, but would increase our participation in the Council and its programs.

C. The Kentuckiana Association, United Church of Christ

We would continue and increase our participation in this body. There is much to be done here in creating an atmosphere conducive to working together with our sister churches. This Association has the potential of becoming one of the most creative bodies in the church in Louisville.

4. The World

The missionary activities of the United Church of Christ are not of the traditional nature. A great deal of the money spent is devoted to what is termed "homeland missions". We who are located in the city and working in the inner-city (central core) must support the missionary work of our denomination and bring pressure to bear on the powers that be in the UCC to devote even more money and effort to the work of the church in American cities.

5. The Individual Wherever He May Be.

This final area is in effect a summary of the goal of Operation Breakthrough. The Church has been married to the residential community. In "olden times" this was well and good. But with the advent of better means of trans-

portation, the central office district, the change from a "goods" economy to a money economy, relatively few waking hours are spent at the residence. The fact is that the majority of issues which confront the church in this latter half of the twentieth century are not connected with the home.

This aspect of Operation Breakthrough depends heavily upon a committed congregation. It depends heavily on men and women who will serve as ministers to the public sphere of life: the place of work, the social club -- places where people gather for reasons other than worship. It requires men and women who are willing to study, to read, to learn ways in which they can be ministers. Opportunities for such learning are offered by the Conference, The Cooperative Ministry, The Council of Churches, and the National office. We must avail ourselves of these opportunities in large numbers.

SUMMARY

Operation Breakthrough is a vast program to meet many of the needs of a church in a rapidly changing world. It will necessitate the cooperation of the entire membership of Plymouth if it is to be successful. We have failed to mention a program for the growth of the church. Yet, this is what Operation Breakthrough is all about: growth, in spirit as well as numbers. Operation Breakthrough will, with the grace of God, present to the world a church which, by its action, shows that God Himself is acting even today to bring His Kingdom to fruition. It will show that God is not dead, but very much alive.