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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

Just a few weeks ago I was reminded of Gandhi's description of a sick society. A society shows the symptoms of deep pathology, reflected Gandhi, when it practices politics without principle; esteems wealth without work; provides education without character; engages in commerce without morality; seeks pleasure without conscience; exalts science without humanity; and extols worship without sacrifice. I remembered, and then I felt like I had just glimpsed a page out of the resume of our American culture.

I believe that the most critical need in our society today is the need to develop a brand new profession. We need to recruit, train, and send a whole cadre of new professionals who are certified experts in rebuilding the caring infrastructure necessary to reform "community." We need a new profession of consummately equipped men and women who are able to "seed" their cities as catalysts in rebuilding and restoring both compelling sanity and the warmth of humane embrace.

Imagine having a professional community restorer in every city armed with a tested and proven methodology for mobilizing the citizenry in a step by step process for taking back their neighborhoods and streets until there is safety and harmony in ever increasing measure. We train and trust and certify Doctors, and Lawyers, and Accountants, and Counselors, and Electricians, and Mechanics, and Pilots. We have all manner of skill acquisition. We provide illimitable opportunities for the precision practice of these skills to "build up society." Now just imagine flooding the parched landscapes of our urban deserts with a host of elite "re-builders."

I can see the development of a new science as we discover the necessary principles so critical to the intentional establishment and maintenance of deeply caring relationships. I can also see the development of immensely effective techniques for taking those principles and walking them into the streets of every city in America. And I can see fusing these two essential prerequisites for community renewal into the lives of bright, eager, courageous, and effective men and women who are willing to lift the torch of absolute commitment and carry it into the twilight areas of our fading culture until a new fire blazes out of the old things around us!

We have an absolutely critical need for a new professional. We need trusted, dedicated, and competent specialists in rebuilding "community." We need people who have matriculated and graduated from an Academy of Community Renewal and who hold a certificate in "Renewal" which will be so recognized by everyone that the bearer is immediately regarded as one who knows the strategy and the steps for the transformation of our cities - one who is not only a "know-er" but is also an able "do-er."

Now to have such a hope means that we must do two things here in Shreveport and Bossier. First, we must build a model of community renewal which transforms our neighborhoods into havens of safe and caring relationships. No one can argue with a

model that works. It has the compelling tendency to end debate. We are striving to rebuild the neighborhood system of caring relationships necessary for “community” in two areas of our city. Our prototypes will be proved in Highland and in Cedar Grove. We are well on our way to seeing a model built on rigorous principles which followed a measured methodology. We are taking planned steps following a predisposed strategy. We have room for innovation but not for aimlessness.

When the model is proven, a second element for producing a new professional now becomes essential. We must school men and women in the methodology for replication. Once there was no profession associated with the Oil Industry. Once there was no Oil Industry. Then the development of a whole profession began. The value of oil was discerned. Ways to find it, extract it, refine it, and ship it were developed. Models of rigs were built, perfected, and replicated. Trained geologists, chemists, engineers, mechanics, and a host of others arose to develop a profession to meet a need.

Is the process which I am describing any different than the development of an entire industry which did not even exist an eyelash ago in human history? You see, you and I are nosed up against the most pressing crisis which civilization faces: Can we arrest the disintegration and begin a transformation process which rebuilds “community?” No question is more crucial than this question. We must develop a new profession out of the process which we are engaged in right here in our city.

I want nothing hidden from you. I want you to know that we are seeking to develop a whole new profession by what we are undertaking through Shreveport Community Renewal. We must settle for nothing less than this dedication. I also want you to know that the First Principle of true community renewal lies in the absolute conviction that it is God and God’s love that powers all that we are and all that we must do. God’s love was already here when we came on board. It was here just as surely as light existed before we did. Then by designed miracle, eyes to see the pre-existent reality of light were given. And we could see the wonder of light.

God’s love was here before we came on this ship. Now we have been given the spirit and the soul to experience that wondrous power which makes all things new. And by letting that love live within us and reach out through us, we appropriate a power to stop the sickness and to be healed.

It was the ancient Isaiah through whom our God spoke saying: *Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. **Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.**” (Isaiah 58: 9-12)*

Armed with the trust of that promise, we are marching!