

**A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter**  
**February 1999**

***“The Reality Of Racial Reconciliation”***

Our logo is a bridge. When you look at it, it is obvious that it is a large and long suspension bridge. It spans an ocean of deep swells. And our motto under the picture is, “*Today’s Bridge To A New Tomorrow.*” The symbol of a bridge for the work of Shreveport Community Renewal is wonderfully appropriate, I believe. Because bridges create a new reality. They link and unite entities which were once separated. And they create new possibilities. To create a new reality, bridges must be built, but to bring *new possibilities* within that reality, bridges must be *crossed*.

In our city, as in many, many cities across our land there is a divide almost continental in its proportions. I was born in a Shreveport much like that sign that I stood before several years ago in the Rocky Mountains. It read “Here Is The Continental Divide.” On the scale of racial reconciliation and unity, *the magnitude of racial division* in the Shreveport of my childhood and youth would have easily registered as “*continental!*” Now how can we rise to the challenge of building a workable bridge to span the greatest divide in America? It obviously must be the biggest bridge ever built in our history. How can we do it?

I want to suggest that all we have to do is to build a footbridge! I am not being trite. A bridge for *all* of us must be built by *each* of us. Is this realistic? Can it really be done? Consider that this gigantic bridge is *relational in nature*. Therefore it can only be constructed by a person to person approach. As each of us builds and crosses a footbridge of love to another of us, then a gulf of “continental” proportions is spanned.

A relational bridge will usher in the reality of racial reconciliation. There is no mystery here. All we need to do is to meet the conditions necessary for relationships between persons to begin, to grow, and to flourish, and the results of racial harmony will follow just as surely as the night follows the day. Now I am convinced that there are *two basic principles* which are essential for us to build this best of all bridges of racial harmony.

(As an underlying presupposition to these two principles, we must fully understand and accept the reality of diversity. And once accepting it as the field upon which we play this wonderful game of harmony...go on with the business at hand. Here is the dictum of diversity: ***We are all different!*** All of us! I have never met anyone who is the same. Now let us *accept that* and *leave it* to go on to construct a bridge of love that brings life!!)

**The first principle necessary for racial harmony is to embrace together a common purpose. The second condition for reconciliation is to work together to achieve our common purpose.** No mystery here. It is simply the process of friendship, or marriage, or family written large, as large as all society. By holding a common dream and earnestly seeking its realization through sharing together, working together, laughing together, eating together, and suffering together, we become “bridge people.” ***We become the bridge we are seeking to create!***

The key is to create the *means* for these two conditions to be fulfilled. This is where critical thinking must issue forth into practical programs which generate harmony. In essence, our task is to be an “industry” which “produces” renewal by “manufacturing” unity. Here is what we are doing to flood the market with “bridge people,” and thereby building ***The Bridge of Racial Reconciliation.***

**Quarterly Clergy/Laity Suppers ...** for four years we have gathered black and white clergy and spouses together in homes all over Shreveport in table fellowship. We have over 70 couples now eating together. This Winter we now are beginning to add two lay couples from each church.

**Operation Antioch! ...** We are now clustering churches in Highland and Cedar Grove (allied with Broadmoor churches) to serve together in mission anchored in the ICU Friendship Houses in both areas. Soon we will see a total of over 30 churches of all denominations working together in the Love of God.

**The SCR Mission Team ...** Almost 1000 persons ethnically diverse serving together in a common purpose ... to remake our city into a community of love and caring.

**Haven House Leaders’ Meeting ...** On the last Saturday of each month black and white, rich and poor, men and women who have committed to “remaking our city by making friends on the street where they live” meet together for an hour to share their toils, triumphs, and tales as Haven House block Leaders. Our goal is 1000 Haven House Leaders meeting together each month by the end of the year 2000!

**Interracial Covenant/Friendship Teams ...** As we move into the second phase of our Neighborhood Penetration Plan in our ICU areas, we will have volunteers from our “Operation Antioch!” church participants to form teams of friends to enable the residents of Highland and Cedar Grove to hold and to reach their own “Life Plan.”

**The Men of SCR ...** “*A New Network of Men Building A New Community For All*” that is our motto. We now have over 50 men from all walks of life who have committed to meeting together monthly, eating together, having a yearly project, sharing our stories together, and financially giving to win our city back. Our goal for 1999: 100 men marching together; 1000 men in three years!!

**Celebration of Unity March/Celebration of Caring Picnic ...** Our second annual march and our fourth annual picnic to show our unity to a city which needs the hope of a visible symbol of true togetherness.

**The Women of SCR ...** Our new women’s auxiliary, now our fastest growing group. A group where all the women of Shreveport can share in the rebuilding of their homes and the safety of their children.

**Cornerstone Luncheon ...** Our fourth annual luncheon bringing together the business, government, organization, religious, educational, and community leaders to share in common the SCR vision and progress.

All of these programs are generating the reality of racial reconciliation, because they are peopled with folks like you and me who have committed themselves to building a bridge by walking over to their neighbor. Each has built a footbridge of friendship and thus become a “bridge” themselves. ***I am saying to you, sign up for one of these programs!*** Help us build the bridge of racial reconciliation by becoming a bridge. Don’t you see now. Only **YOU are “Today’s Bridge To A New Tomorrow!!**