

## A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

### "WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?"

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, the great pulpit prince of Riverside Church in New York City of a bygone era, was a masterful teacher as well as pre-eminent preacher. To his students in the preaching classes he taught at Union Theological Seminary, he was forceful and rigorous *in* demanding that every sermon they preached must clearly show what Fosdick called, *the big idea*. For Fosdick, *the big idea*, was the single driving purpose of a particular exposition. It should be summed up in one sentence and everything should flow from and to that one *big idea*. This approach has so filled my life that it has spilled over into everything I do. So I have to ask, "What's *the big idea* with Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal?"

**Here it is: *Together we are growing an effective relational model which can actually produce a caring and loving community in our midst and thereby reverse the process of disintegration which has destroyed every prior civilization in history.***

Without calling upon me to defend this seemingly grandiose claim, let me expound upon its meaning and significance for all of us:

*Together...: togetherness is the only means by which we can reach our ultimate destiny on planet earth, which is finally to come together as one family filled with love for one another. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."*

*... we are growing: here we see the perfect illustration of the primacy of caring relationships with one another. If we care for one another, we grow and we grow and we grow. We never exhaust the dynamism of personality. We can never know all there is to know about each other. That is the great adventure of life! So this model is dependent upon the rules that govern caring relationships.*

*...an effective relational model: the key to success is to find a means to methodically and measurably harness the power of caring relationships so that step by step everyone can consciously apply themselves to a contagious commitment to seeking the good of others. By involving every willing and caring person within our cities in the three strategies which comprise the model, i.e. *The Renewal Team, The Haven House Plan, and The Internal Care Unit*, we are seeing an effective regeneration of the foundation of caring relationships upon which every community and society must rely.*

*... which can actually produce a caring and loving community in our midst: the caring and willing people are already here! They are everywhere in vastly overwhelming numbers and far surpassing the destructive necrophiles scattered among us. The model simply, intentionally, and systematically makes all of the caring people *visible to one another* so that we may be *connected to one another in community*. So the caring and loving community which is *produced* is actually the fabric woven from existing strands of caring and loving people who practice daily acts of a lifestyle of other-centeredness.*

*... and thereby reverse the process of disintegration which has destroyed every prior civilization in history: here is our greatest need!! If we are to succeed in doing what no previous society has ever done, i.e. arrest the collapse phase and grow an ever renewing community, then we must dedicate ourselves and our resources to the equivalent of The Manhattan Project for community renewal. We must gather the finest minds in the academic world, bring the clearest thinking practitioners from corporate life, add the resources of the private foundations and government institutions, and apply ourselves to the rigorous creation of a *social technology*. We have the technology to look at an old building and then to renew it step by step. We must have the technology to look at a city, diagnose its status on a community development scale, and then be able to bring an effective application of community renewal principles to bear in order to *make decaying societies ever new*. If this is not done, then we go the way of every society that has ever marched across this globe. *This is the challenge before us. We must create a new and vibrant industry of community renewal And together I know that we have steel in our resolve to see it happen. Thank you for caring!!!**