



Christian Reflection
A Series in Faith and Ethics

Christian Reflection
Center for Christian Ethics
Baylor University
One Bear Place #97361
Waco, TX 76798-7361
Phone 1-866-298-2325
www.ChristianEthics.ws

The Center thanks the
Cooperative Baptist Fellow-
ship for its financial support
of these study guides.

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

Study Guides for

Cities and Towns

These guides integrate Bible study, prayer, and worship to help us explore how we are called to care for the built environment of the cities and towns where we live. Use them individually or in a series. You may reproduce them for personal or group use.

- Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong?** 2
Many cities are deadzones, warehouses for those too poor to leave. With streets mean and shabby, stores boarded up, and schools closed, they are permeated by fear and despair. Must we choose between deteriorating urban cores and degrading suburban landscapes? Which policy decisions and cultural ideals led to the deeply anti-urban physical form of the suburbs?
- Citizens of Another City** 4
Scripture contradicts the modern view that religion is a private affair, something we do in the solitude of our “inner selves.” God creates a new pilgrim people who promote their own laws and patterns of behavior, and resemble nothing so much as a distinct nation. How then do we live as citizens of another city, but sojourners and pilgrims in earthly cities?
- Salt in the City** 6
In Elisha’s work of mercy for stricken Jericho and Jeremiah’s commitment to captured Anathoth, we glimpse God restoring cities and towns. These prophets inspire us to become “saltier” disciples, reclaiming communities with holistic ministry to individuals and well-considered structural reform.
- The New Urbanism** 8
The New Urbanists are reviving the ancient practice of civic art. They are bringing together experts, residents, and stakeholders to articulate a vision for their communities – based on historical models of blocks, streets, and buildings that form a coherent and aesthetically pleasing urban fabric.
- The Church Building as Sacramental Sign** 10
If the Church is to be a witness to the Heavenly City, Christians must once again be not only good patrons of architecture, but also (and even more) good patrons of urbanism. Heraldng the City of God is only made more difficult by acquiescing in the Suburb of Man.
- St. Benedict in the City** 12
A new kind of monasticism, or ascetic simplicity, is emerging among Christians who are gathering in intentional urban communities. What are these “new monastics” teaching us about faithful discipleship?



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

📖 **Dysfunctional Cities:
Where Did We Go
Wrong?**
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 11-19)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu

Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics
Baylor University
One Bear Place #97361
Waco, TX 76798-7361
Phone 1-866-298-2325
www.ChristianEthics.ws

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong?

Many cities are deadzones, warehouses for those too poor to leave. With streets mean and shabby, stores boarded up, and schools closed, they are permeated by fear and despair. Must we choose between deteriorating urban cores and degrading suburban landscapes? Which policy decisions and cultural ideals led to the deeply anti-urban physical form of the suburbs?

Prayer

Merciful God, we confess that we have walked away from the people Jesus came to serve, from the cities where he carried out his ministry.

We have chosen instead to make our home in the isolated places where Jesus retreated for prayer; and even there, our prayers have been mostly for ourselves.

In your infinite mercy, forgive us our sins and set us on the path of true righteousness,
that we may find the joy of our salvation as we seek the welfare of the world around us, especially our city of (name). Amen.

Scripture Reading: Lamentations 5:1, 15-22

Response to the Scripture†

What is the meaning of this city?

Do you huddle together because you love each other?

What will you answer? "We all dwell together

to make money from each other"? or "This is a community"?

Reflection

In order to bring substantial healing to American cities, says Lee Hardy, we must explore where we have gone wrong with the built environment. Since World War II, we have ignored the development of public space in cities and towns. He traces "the deeply anti-urban physical form of the suburbs, especially those built since the 1970s" back to public decisions and cultural ideals:

- ▶ *Uncle Sam's invisible hand.* Since the New Deal, federal loan policies have favored building single-family houses on suburban lots with large setbacks over repairing existing homes or building multifamily units and classic urban row houses. "The FHA downgraded [home values in] traditional urban neighborhoods that were old and dense and that incorporated nonresidential elements such as offices and retail establishments...[or harbored] 'inharmonious racial or nationality groups.'... Federal housing policies virtually guaranteed that the middle class would abandon urban neighborhoods."
- ▶ *two cars in every garage.* The U.S. rail system once was second to none. Yet during the Depression, FDR and the automobile industry dreamed of building interstate highways to provide jobs and enhance car sales. After World War II, while Europe rebuilt its railroads, Eisenhower authorized building 41,000 miles of roadway. Meanwhile in 1922, General Motors began acquiring and dismantling urban rail systems.



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Robert B. Kruschwitz, the author of this study guide, directs The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. He serves as General Editor of *Christian Reflection*.

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

- ▶ *mixed use as taboo*. Zoning codes that once protected residential areas from heavy industry were used in the 1920s to prevent commercial, office, and civic land uses as well and to separate residential types (single-family, duplex, multifamily, etc.). To lower traffic in developed areas, dendritic road systems replaced grids. The result is “the ‘exurb,’ a centerless sprawl that has made the private automobile the only viable mode of transportation, where various land uses – residential, commercial, office, civic, and industrial – are scattered across the countryside, and where most commutes are no longer between edge and center, but from edge to edge.”
- ▶ *every home a country villa*. If all of the above “made the exurb possible,” Hardy says, “the exurb became *probable* only with the push of a cultural ideal that valued the private domestic sphere over the public life of the city.” In England and America, families dreamed of retreating from the industrialized cities to country houses. Victorian evangelicals even believed the suburbs might spur a “reformation of manners” when “the home, as a source of Christian morality, was...physically separated from the evil influences of the city.”

Study Questions

1. How has the built environment in your city or town changed over the last century? Has it become a network of “exurbs”?
2. Which citizens are most disadvantaged when a city becomes an exurb? Why should this be a concern for Christians?
3. Cologne impressed Hardy as a “humane and coherent city.” Have you discovered such cities or towns in your travels?
4. How has the “perennial human tendency to blame evil on one part of creation and seek salvation in another” distorted Christian thinking about the built environment? What “antidote” does Hardy suggest for “this piece of bad theology”?

Departing Hymn: “Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life” (verses 1, 2, 5, and 6)

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
where sound the cries of clan and race,
above the noise of selfish strife,
we hear your voice, O Son of man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
on shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
from paths where hide the lures of greed,
we catch the vision of your tears.

O Savior, from the mountainside,
make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
among these restless throngs abide;
O, tread the city’s streets again.

Till sons of men shall learn your love,
and follow where your feet have trod;
till, glorious from your heaven above,
shall come the city of our God!

Frank Mason North (1903)
Tune: GERMANY

† T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from *THE ROCK*” (1934)



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

📖 Citizens of Another City
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 20-27)

Suggested Article:

📖 Blinded
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 54-55)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu

Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics
Baylor University
One Bear Place #97361
Waco, TX 76798-7361
Phone 1-866-298-2325
www.ChristianEthics.ws

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

Citizens of Another City

Scripture contradicts the modern view that religion is a private affair, something we do in the solitude of our “inner selves.” God creates a new pilgrim people who promote their own laws and patterns of behavior, and resemble nothing so much as a distinct nation. How then do we live as citizens of another city, but sojourners and pilgrims in earthly cities?

Prayer

Almighty God, across the ages you have guided your people through the wilderness, assuring us of a home in your eternal city.

Strengthen us along the way, so that we might not neglect our call to serve the cities and towns where we live.

Help us to trust in your unfailing presence amid all of our fears.

Grant us wisdom to discern your way in this world even as we hope for the next. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:13-16

Reflection

If citizenship in “the Heavenly City” sounds like pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by escapism today, it is because we totally miss its stern political bite. It was the sober truth to anxious, persecuted Christians in Rome. That powerful city claimed to be “*the City*, a permanent and ‘eternal’ City,” Georges Florovsky reminds us. “It posed as an ultimate solution of the human problem.” The book of Hebrews responds bluntly: “Here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (13:14).

“The Church was a challenge to the Empire,” Florovsky says, “and the Empire was a stumbling block for the Christians.” Even if the Empire’s power was a forceful threat and an even more potent lure, as God’s faithful witnesses had “desired a better country” (11:16), so must they. As Christ was crucified “outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood,” so must they suffer with him for the good of others (13:12-13).

The early Christians saw the Church as “another city,” Barry Harvey explains. They called it an *ekklesia*, a term for the assembly of the citizens in a city. This was simply the arc of Scripture. “At the heart of the Old Testament we read that the creator of heaven and earth chooses a ‘people’..., secures for them a ‘land’ of their own,” and covenants with them to be “a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” that God will rule forever. Though an attempt to entrust the covenant relationship to a human regime eventually fails, “it establishes in the memory of the Jewish people a hope that will burst forth in messianic fervor with Jesus’ pronouncement that the Kingdom of God was drawing near.” Harvey writes, “Through his life, death, and resurrection, God’s messianic rule promised to Abraham and Sarah’s offspring becomes a present reality...through an alternative pattern of communal life, a distinctive set of personal habits and relations, and a different story in terms of which to make sense of all things on earth and under heaven—in short, participation in another city, one that God would set on a hill for all to see and share.”



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Robert B. Kruschwitz, the author of this study guide, directs The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. He serves as General Editor of *Christian Reflection*.

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

To live as though “our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20) doesn’t mean that we withdraw into “separate social enclaves,” notes Harvey. Rather, we participate in city life with “a distinctive set of loyalties and loves” and question our city’s organization and policies from another perspective. We seek the common good “according to a faith, love and hope that is different from those affirmed by the citizens of the earthly city which is governed by the *libido dominandi*, the lust to mastery.... [We] acquire those virtues that will allow [us] to use prudently those earthly goods that are necessary to life in this age, directing this use towards that alone which can truly be called peace....”

Study Questions

1. What did early Christians mean when they called the Church an *ekklesia* (see Matthew 16:18; 18:17; and Ephesians 3:8-10)? What were the political implications of this term?
2. How, according to Harvey, have religion and politics been separated in modernity? Discuss his paradoxical claim that “The formative images in the biblical story [have] relatively little resembling what we call ‘religion.’”
3. What is more important in describing an individual American’s views in the socio-political realm – ideological labels like “liberal” or “conservative,” political party affiliation, or his or her membership in a specific religious community? Give some examples.
4. What are the major obstacles to Christians today “thinking outside the box” of political parties’ platforms or conservative and liberal ideologies?
5. On Heidi Hornik’s interpretation, how did Pieter Bruegel I [the Elder] depict the relation between the Church and earthly communities in *The Blind Leading the Blind*?

Departing Hymn: “One Holy Church of God Appears”

One holy Church of God appears
through every age and race,
unwasted by the lapse of years,
unchanged by changing place.

From oldest time, on farthest shores,
beneath the pine or palm,
one unseen Presence she adores,
with silence, or with psalm.

The truth is her prophetic gift,
the soul her sacred page;
and feet on mercy’s errands swift
do make her pilgrimage.

O living Church, your errand speed,
fulfill your task sublime;
with Bread of Life earth’s hungers feed;
redeem the evil time!

Samuel Longfellow (1864), alt.

Suggested Tunes: ST. JAMES or ST. ANNE



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

📖 Salt in the City
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 69-73)

Suggested Articles:

📖 Moving to the
Carpenter's House
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 64-68)

📖 Restoring Urban
Communities
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 89-93)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to
Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu

Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics
Baylor University
One Bear Place #97361
Waco, TX 76798-7361
Phone 1-866-298-2325
www.ChristianEthics.ws

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

Salt in the City

In Elisha's work of mercy for stricken Jericho and Jeremiah's commitment to captured Anathoth, we glimpse God restoring cities and towns. These prophets inspire us to become "saltier" disciples, reclaiming communities with holistic ministry to individuals and well-considered structural reform.

Prayer†

Heavenly Father, in your Word you have given us a vision of that holy City to which the nations of the world bring their glory: Behold and visit, we pray, the cities of the earth. Renew the ties of mutual regard which form our civic life. Send us honest and able leaders. Enable us to eliminate poverty, prejudice, and oppression, that peace may prevail with righteousness, and justice with order, and that men and women from different cultures and with differing talents may find with one another the fulfillment of their humanity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Joshua 6:26; 2 Kings 2:19-22

Reflection

Jericho was "a city under a curse, with a river of death flowing into it. The city's water source was polluted and harmful, bringing sickness, death, and barrenness," writes Amy Sherman. When the people asked Elisha (whose name means "God saves") for help, "God responds mercifully and definitively through the prophet. The waters of death are transformed for good."

Sherman discerns a pattern for how God wants to work through us to restore communities. It's no accident that "the agency of the healing...is salt," she thinks. "Salt tossed into a river is by definition self-sacrificing. It hits the water and dissolves. We might say that it gives up or pours out its life." To engage in urban transformation today as Christ's disciples, "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13), will be costly — not only in money, but also in time and emotional energy. "Because of this, too many congregations do not get engaged in work that actually moves people out of poverty — as opposed to helping them manage their hardships a little better," she notes. "We are too eager to help the poor but not willing enough to know them." But saltier congregations will move beyond mere relief efforts to

- ▶ *form a true partnership with urban neighbors.* Notice how the people of Jericho cite a positive feature of their city — it is "well situated" — before they describe its problem. "That kind of 'asset focus' is often missing from a typical church's view of its city.... We think in categories of 'ministry to' or 'ministry in' the city, instead of 'ministry with.' We see needs, but fail to recognize the assets God already has in place — people, facilities, and neighborhood associations," Sherman laments. "But an asset-based approach is vital if congregations are to avoid paternalism and arrogance."
- ▶ *invest "foolishly for God."* Like the order for Jeremiah to purchase a field in enemy-occupied Anathoth (Jeremiah 32), so "God sometimes calls us to make what appear to the world as foolish investments," says Sherman. In the Christian Community Devel-



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Robert B. Kruschwitz, the author of this study guide, directs The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. He serves as General Editor of *Christian Reflection*.

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

opment Association, for example, members practice “the three R’s” — relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution — by moving “their homes to neighborhoods that have been devastated by racism, poverty, and economic inequality, for it is only by living and working close proximity with people that we can be reconciled to them,” Lissa Schwander notes. “Yet Christian community development is not a job for heroic individuals and isolated families. Rather it is most effectively accomplished in partnership with local congregations situated within the communities they seek to develop.”

- ▶ *provide a taste of God’s kingdom.* Jesus inaugurated God’s kingdom, yet “we patiently long in our still-broken world for its full consummation,” concludes Sherman. “But while we wait, it is the task of the Church — Christ’s Body — to continue to proclaim the good news of the kingdom and, through our actions, to give people foretastes of it. ‘Urban ministry’ is nothing less than laboring with our neighbors in the kingdom works of justice, love, and healing, to the end that our cities might grow to look more like the New City.”

Study Questions

1. Respond to Roger Greenway’s claim: “The question of where one selects a home and establishes residence is a religious question.” Must we live in a city to care actively for the city?
2. For Christian individuals and families, what are some of the biggest obstacles to moving back into a city neighborhood?
3. In Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early’s Arts in Redemptive Transformation (A.R.T.) model, how can local artists help urban communities glimpse “the NU JERUZ”?
4. In John Newton’s “Glorious Things of You are Spoken,” how can the vision of the New Jerusalem give content to and help motivate our concern for the cities of the earth?

Departing Hymn: “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken” (verses 1 and 2)

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!
God, whose word cannot be broken,
formed thee for a blest abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation’s walls surrounded,
thou mayest smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,
springing from eternal love,
well supply thy sons and daughters,
and all fear of want remove.
Who can faint, while such a river
ever flows their thirst t’ assuage?
Grace, which like our God, the Giver,
never fails from age to age.

John Newton (1779), alt.

Suggested Tunes: AUSTRIA (Haydn) or ABBOT’S LEIGH

† Reprinted from *Book of Common Prayer* (1979)



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

- 📖 The New Urbanism
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 28-36)

Suggested Articles:

- 📖 Building a City that
Honors God
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 83-88)
- 📖 An Ordered
Neighborhood
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 56-60)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu

Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics
Baylor University
One Bear Place #97361
Waco, TX 76798-7361
Phone 1-866-298-2325
www.ChristianEthics.ws

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

The New Urbanism

The New Urbanists are reviving the ancient practice of civic art. They are bringing together experts, residents, and stakeholders to articulate a vision for their communities—based on historical models of blocks, streets, and buildings that form a coherent and aesthetically pleasing urban fabric.

Prayer

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

Responsive Reading†

Babylon.

**Not simply an evil territory or a dirty word,
as we are prone to believe.**

But a place where God's people were sent in exile,
on purpose, on mission,
to offer their culture to the culture there, in love.

For God so loved the world.

Like Israel in exile, still we hope for our homecoming
in the city of God, where there will be no more tears.

**Let us hope not in closed communion,
in isolated sanctuaries, apart from the Babylon-world.**

Rather let us hope in the fullness of God's love
in the life of the cities and towns
where we work and love and worship and play.

**And remember that God so loved not only us,
but the world.**

Let us hope for Babylon as we hope for ourselves.

**Let us embrace its people, its buildings, its streets,
and fill them with the beauty of God's temple.**

Let us hope with doors wide open,
welcome the city in and pour ourselves out.

For God so loved the world.

Reflection

"We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place you want to be and if you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer," C. S. Lewis observed in *Mere Christianity*. "Going back is the quickest way on."

Given the centerless sprawl and deteriorating neighborhoods in many cities, Eric Jacobsen believes we've taken a wrong turn in urban design. The Congress of the New Urbanism (CNU) is headed in the right direction—by *going back* to planning traditional neighborhoods in a more cooperative way. Jacobsen commends the CNU path not because it's nostalgic, but because it may restore the built environment and foster community.

- ▶ *Traditional neighborhood design* is the CNU response to "the faulty logic behind post-WWII suburban development," he explains. "Density in the suburbs tends to be low, which further discourages pedestrian activity (as well as public transit) and the public realm is so undervalued that the experience of getting about tends to be demeaning as well as frustrating. In contrast to this



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Robert B. Kruschwitz, the author of this study guide, directs The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. He serves as General Editor of *Christian Reflection*.

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

recipe for the abdication of citizenship,” the CNU endorses a traditional neighborhood that “has a clear center and edge, is about a five-minute walk from center to edge, is mixed-use (includes places for living, working, shopping, playing, and worshipping), and gives priority to public places (sidewalks, good public buildings, parks, and plazas).” And despite their name, New Urbanists do not focus only on cities; their transect scheme describes neighborhoods appropriate to six density levels, from an urban core to a rural setting.

▶ *The charrette planning process* is a breath of fresh air “for anyone who has ever been frustrated at a public review meeting where developers or policy makers pretend to listen to community concerns and people come to read angry speeches,” Jacobsen promises. The CNU encourages “everyone who has a stake in the outcome to come and join the process. On hand are architects who can quickly draw ideas as they come up and technical experts who can offer definitive answers to questions about culverts and fire codes. Most of the work is done by multiple small groups around tables who collaborate on ideas and then share them with the group as a whole.” By the end of the week participants not only trust one another, they also discover “a focused idea [for the neighborhood] that is better than anyone’s personal agenda.”

“If we build new traditional neighborhoods that attract homeowners who have lived their entire lives in the privatized world of a suburban subdivision,” Jacobsen wonders, “will these people automatically act more neighborly toward one another?” True community needs both good “hardware” — “buildings, streets, and blocks that dignify daily life, connect us to the physical realities of our local context, and encourage (or, at least, do not discourage) spontaneous social interaction” — and good “software,” or patterns of care among neighbors. Christians are in the software business, announcing the gospel of God’s *shalom* and restored relationships. “If church members are sensitive to the different perspectives represented in their community, a congregation can be an effective catalyst for community development. Members can invest their lives in the neighborhood by enjoying its amenities and advocating for its improvement.”

Study Questions

1. As we seek the shalom of the city, what value might we see in traditional neighborhoods? In the charrette process?
2. How does Jacobsen respond to those critics who accuse the New Urbanists of being against cars and freedom, but for sentimental architecture and gentrification? Do you agree?
3. What New Urbanist projects are underway in your area?
4. Discuss Jacobsen’s suggestion that we should see ourselves as stewards of the built environment, just as we are God’s stewards for the natural world. Is this analogy illuminating?
5. Which traits of Greenwich Village does Edward Hopper celebrate in *Early Sunday Morning* and *Nighthawks*?

Departing Hymn: “Crate and Castle”

†Adapted from Ann Bell Worley’s poem “Babylon” in *Cities and Towns*, pp. 47-48.



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

📖 The Church Building as
Sacramental Sign
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 74-82)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful
for your personal or group
study? Please send your
suggestions to
Christian_Reflection@baylor.

Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics
Baylor University
One Bear Place #97361
Waco, TX 76798-7361
Phone 1-866-298-2325
www.ChristianEthics.ws

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

The Church Building as Sacramental Sign

If the Church is to be a witness to the Heavenly City, Christians must once again be not only good patrons of architecture, but also (and even more) good patrons of urbanism. Heralding the City of God is only made more difficult by acquiescing in the Suburb of Man.

Prayer†

Grant us, Lord, the lamp of charity which never fails, that it may burn in us and shed its light on those around us, and that by its brightness we may have a vision of that holy City, where dwells the true and never-failing Light, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 122

Reflection

If “the first duty of the church building is to be an image of the Church as a whole, of that communion of God and human beings across time wrought through the mystery of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension,” Philip Bess wonders, “what form or forms... should twenty-first-century church buildings take?” He believes, “Good church buildings proclaim the Church’s faith in visible signs and evangelize the neighborhood, the city, and the nation. Nonbelievers point to them as stunning examples of art as well as mysterious, public symbols of Christian piety.”

Bess takes into account not only the architecture but also the immediate context of the church building in a city or town.

- ▶ *The FORM of a church building* should have features common to sacred architecture in most cultures – verticality (in height or depth); a concern for light and shadow; crafted, durable, and specially chosen materials; mathematical and geometric order; artistic composition; and a sense of hierarchy to remind us some things are more important than others. But it also should reflect some aspect of the Trinitarian God we worship. So, a *circle-based plan* reflects “the unity and changeless perfection of God”; a *high-roofed hall in a basilican plan* suggests “the dynamic movement of nature and history toward their end in God”; a *cruciform plan* expresses “the mystical Body of Christ” and “the communion of God and human beings at the axis mundi”; and an *elliptical plan* shows “the dynamic relationship” in liturgy between Word and Eucharist.
- ▶ *The STYLE of the church building* also can express the Church’s mission. “*Classicism*, with its interest in the proportions of the human figure, can be a celebration...of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity. The *Gothic style’s* verticality and its ethereal quality of light is a celebration of the mystical presence of God the Holy Spirit. *Exuberant localized vernacular expressions* can be a fitting testimony to the endlessly creative energy of God the Father,” Bess suggests. And “a case can be made for *monastic simplicity and austerity* of buildings to express the Church’s voluntary solidarity with the poor.”



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Robert B. Kruschwitz, the author of this study guide, directs The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. He serves as General Editor of *Christian Reflection*.

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

► *A church building should beckon people to God's community. "Unfortunately, it is not the church on the public square but rather the church in the parking lot that is the paradigm for church architecture today," Bess laments. So, he makes this fascinating proposal: "Instead of building a church and a parking lot on their six to ten suburban acres, why not build a church, a public (not private) square, perhaps a school, and the beginnings of a mixed-use neighborhood?... Why couldn't churches use this strategy to begin to integrate affordable housing and commercial buildings into suburbia as part of mixed-use neighborhoods? And who's to say that an initially random proliferation of such developments across suburbia – once the exemplary pattern was established – over time might not become...the very physical and spiritual centers so pointedly lacking in contemporary suburbia?"*

Study Questions

1. Review the *form* and *style* of your church building. Does it have some features that Bess identifies? How does it witness to the Heavenly City and call people to God's community?
2. Consider the location of your church building and the nature of its campus. What role do these suggest for the Church?
3. Identify the key differences between an automobile suburb and a traditional urban neighborhood. What are the problems, according to Bess, with an automobile suburb?
4. Since the 1970s, how have many new church buildings and campuses *been conformed to* rather than *challenged and transformed* the automobile suburb?
5. Discuss the proposal that a congregation (re)develop its campus into the beginnings of a mixed-use neighborhood. How might this work in a suburb? In the inner city? Is this an option for your congregation?

Departing Hymn: "Built by Jehovah's Hand"

Built by Jehovah's hand,
the holy city see:
its happy gates wide open stand:
to enter all are free.

One bright, eternal day
shall in the city reign,
darkness and death are fled away,
ne'er to return again.

O blessèd, happy state!
Great God, we thankful come,
low at your footstool humbly wait,
and make your church our home.

Jerusalem shall be
our peaceful, blest abode:
here we will love and honor you,
our Savior and our God!

Joseph Proud (1745-1826), alt.
Tune: ST. THOMAS (Williams)

† Reprinted from *Book of Common Prayer* (1979)



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

📖 St. Benedict in the City
(*Cities and Towns*,
pp. 37-42)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to
Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu

Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics
Baylor University
One Bear Place #97361
Waco, TX 76798-7361
Phone 1-866-298-2325
www.ChristianEthics.ws

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

St. Benedict in the City

A new kind of monasticism, or ascetic simplicity, is emerging among Christians gathering in intentional urban communities. What are these “new monastics” teaching us about faithful discipleship?

Prayer

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:1, 13-16

Response to the Scripture†

I told Jesus it would be all right
if he changed my name.
Jesus told me I would have to live humble
if he changed my name.
Jesus told me that the world would be against me
if he changed my name.
But I told Jesus it would be all right
if he changed my name.

Reflection

“You-all (plural) are the salt and light of the world,” Jesus tells his disciples (Matthew 5:13-14). It’s an image St. Benedict understood perfectly in the fifth century. As the social order of the Roman Empire crumbled around them, he and others began creating intentional communities based on a vision of the common good. Benedict realized that following Jesus is not for “Lone Ranger” disciples; it requires a new form of community.

Recently moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre surveyed the moral disarray of western culture. The problem, he concluded, is not that we desire different things and disagree, but that we reject all traditions that would allow us to settle our differences and aim for a common good. MacIntyre reached this provocative conclusion: “We are waiting...for another – doubtless very different – St. Benedict.” He meant that since the chaos is rooted in our individualistic approach to morality, we need new forms of community to sustain our thinking and living into goodness.

This moral and spiritual disorder too often reaches into Christian institutions that “merely reflect rather than transform the surrounding culture,” Bryan Hollon observes. “Thus, we need a new kind of monasticism, or ascetic simplicity, which enables us to minister faithfully to society while preserving our distinctive identity as a people ‘called out’ and ‘set apart.’”

He commends the New Monasticism movement that “is gaining momentum in urban centers across America,” because it

- ▶ *brings together intentional Christian communities that serve the urban poor.* New monastics may be young or old, celibate or married. They live in groups with long histories (e.g., Catholic religious orders, Catholic Worker movement, Bruderhof Communities, and Reba Place Fellowship) or newer communities (e.g., The Simple Way in Philadelphia, New Jerusalem in North Philadelphia, and Rutba House in Durham). They are united around “twelve marks” of Christian community.
- ▶ *serves wider Christian communities.* Not everyone will embrace the movement’s radical vows. Yet when Hollon’s Mennonite congregation sponsored several intentional communities in Los Angeles,



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Robert B. Kruschwitz, the author of this study guide, directs The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. He serves as General Editor of *Christian Reflection*.

© 2006 The Center for Christian Ethics

the monastics' "faithfulness, commitment to one another, and service to their inner-city neighbors gave all of us a better sense of what it means to be 'called out' of a life of self-interest in order to love God and neighbor."

- ▶ *can reform our desires.* "By moving into the abandoned inner cities," new monastics "are explicitly rejecting the consumerism and materialism that is so characteristic of suburban life." By reforming worship and practices distorted by seeker-sensitive rather than seeker-transformative churches, they show us how to be called "*out of* inordinate worldly attachments and *into* a fellowship of communal love in Christ."

"The Church's outreach to abandoned urban centers must go beyond soup kitchens, child care facilities, and other social service programs," Hollon concludes. Cities "need Christians who are willing to offer themselves completely in the hope that God will create vibrant faith communities in long-abandoned places. Why shouldn't all Christian church organizations sponsor new monastic orders committed to inner cities as a mission field?"

Study Questions

1. Review the "twelve marks" of the New Monasticism (p. 39). Which one is most radical? Which is most attractive?
2. Christian individuals and families face many problems in relocating to urban neighborhoods. How could a new monastic community alleviate some of these problems?
3. Some think that monastics *retreat from* rather than *deal with* the real world. Does this describe the New Monasticism?
4. Explore the websites of some communities mentioned in Hollon's article. How are they helping their neighborhoods?
5. If your congregation sponsored a new monastic community, what could be the benefits to your city? To the congregation?

Departing Hymn: "The Voice of God Is Calling"

The voice of God is calling its summons in our day;
Isaiah heard in Zion and we now hear God say:
"Whom shall I send to succor my people in their need?
Whom shall I send to loosen the bonds of shame and greed?"

"I hear my people crying in slum and mine and mill;
no field or mart is silent, no city street is still.
I see my people falling in darkness and despair.
Whom shall I send to shatter the fetters which they bear?"

We heed, O Lord, your summons, and answer: Here are we!
Send us upon your errand; let us your servants be.
Our strength is dust and ashes, our years a passing hour;
but you can use our weakness to magnify your power.

From ease and plenty save us; from pride of place absolve;
Purge us of low desire; lift us to high resolve;
take us, and make us holy; teach us your will and way.
Speak, and behold, we answer; command, and we obey!

John H. Holmes (1913)

Suggested Tunes: ST. THEODULPH or NYLAND

† Based on a traditional African-American spiritual.

Appendix: Optional Lesson Plans for Teachers

For each study guide we offer two or three optional lesson plans followed by detailed suggestions on using the material in the study guide:

- ▶ An *abridged lesson plan* outlines a lesson suitable for a beginning Bible study class or a brief group session.
- ▶ A *standard lesson plan* outlines a more thorough study.
- ▶ For some guides a *dual session lesson plan* divides the study guide material so that the group can explore the topic in two meetings.

Each lesson plan is for a 30- to 45-minute meeting, with about one-third of the time being set aside for worship.

Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong?

Lesson Plans

| <i>Abridged Plan</i> | <i>Standard Plan</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Prayer | Prayer |
| Scripture Reading | Scripture Reading |
| Response to Scripture | Response to Scripture |
| Reflection (skim all) | Reflection (all sections) |
| Questions 1, 2, and 3 | Questions (selected) |
| Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn |

Teaching Goals

1. To explore the public policies and cultural ideals that led to the deeply anti-urban physical form of the suburbs.
2. To discuss the features of a “humane and coherent” urban environment and understand which citizens are most disadvantaged by the development of an “exurb.”
3. To consider how a badly distorted form of Christian theology, twisted with sentimentality for family life, has encouraged many people to abandon urban neighborhoods.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 2-3 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cities and Towns (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn “Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life” locate the familiar tune GERMAN-
NY in your church’s hymnal or on the web at www.cyberhymnal.org.

Begin with a Comment

The influential urbanist Jane Jacobs once noted, “Whenever and wherever societies have flourished and prospered rather than stagnated and decayed, creative and workable cities have been at the core of the phenomenon; they have pulled their weight and more. It is the same still. Decaying cities, declining economies, and mounting social troubles travel together. The combination is not coincidental” [Jane Jacobs, “Forward to the Modern Library Edition,” *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961; Modern Library Edition, 1993), xvi].

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently and then ask members to read responsively the prayer in the study guide. The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Lamentations 5:1, 15-22 from a modern translation.

Response to Scripture

Ask the group to read together these lines of poetry from T. S. Eliot’s “Choruses from *THE ROCK*.”

Reflection

This study guide examines how many American cities became so dysfunctional, with declining urban residential and business districts and increasingly isolated suburbs. Lee Hardy suggests this sinful distortion of our built environment is rooted in public policies and cultural ideals. The solution that he briefly urges – that “Christians rediscover urban neighborhoods, live in them if possible, and try to make them once again good places for others to live” – is explored in two other study guides, “The New Urbanism” and “The Church Building as Sacramental Sign.”

The scripture reading is from the fifth lament in the Book of Lamentations. Written by an anonymous poet in response to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans in 587 B.C., this poem describes a joyless city suffering because of past sin. Even though our urban areas have not been destroyed by war, they, like Jerusalem, are suffering because of our neglect of the common good, short-sighted public policies, and faithless fears. We can resonate with the poet's cry, "Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored" (5:21a).

Study Questions

1. Encourage members not only to recall how their city or town has changed in their recent memory, but also to brainstorm on what it was like between fifty and one hundred years ago. How was it more pedestrian-friendly than it is today? Were the downtown residential and business districts more or less vibrant than they are now? Did mixed-use neighborhoods exist? How did people commute to work and school and shopping?

When did your city change, and why? Did the public policies and cultural ideals described by Hardy play a role? Were other policies, ideals, or events significant?

Review the description of an exurb in the study guide. August Comte Sectorsky coined the term "exurb" (for "extra-urban") in 1955 to describe the rural bedroom communities that surround cities and are made possible by super highways that link the countryside to city centers. Hardy notes, "If there is any center to this system, it is arguably the home—where all trips originate, and to which they return. That is to say, there are many centers, and they are all private. Public space—built, formed, used, and valued—has virtually disappeared."

2. People who cannot afford an automobile or cannot drive one (the elderly, young, and disabled) are the most disadvantaged citizens in an exurb. Maybe the next most disadvantaged people are the friends and relatives who must care for these by driving them to their appointments. Ask members to perform this thought experiment: from their homes, could they easily attend church, shop for daily groceries, visit a library, obtain government services, attend a public or private school, access entertainment, and go to work without a car? Do they feel safe walking or using public transportation in their own city for these purposes?

We are called to care for the poor, weak, and marginalized members of the community, and not participate, even inadvertently, in the systems that disadvantage them further.

3. Cologne impressed Hardy as a "humane and coherent city" because his family did not need a car. He could ride a bike to the university, and family members could walk just three or four blocks to attend church, go to elementary school, shop for daily needs, and enjoy bookstores and restaurants. "The *Stadtwald*, a ten-mile-long semicircular park that rings the western edge of the city, was just a ten-minute walk along a canal, putting playgrounds, tennis courts, tearooms, lakes with boat rentals, a petting zoo, and ice-cream vendors within our family's pedestrian reach. On weekends we often took the bus downtown. On the plaza before the great Cologne cathedral there was always something free and festive going on—church choirs, street musicians, sidewalk artists, magicians, mimes, and acrobats. There were no neighborhoods to avoid. There were no slums." Where have members found such cities or smaller towns in the states, or elsewhere, in their travels?

A wonderful way to explore and compare the built environment around the world is through aerial photographs and satellite imagery. For example, with an internet connection and free *Google Earth* software (www.earth.google.com), you can study the neighborhoods of Cologne that Hardy describes. Another site, *TerraServer USA* (terraserver.microsoft.com), provides free aerial photographs and topographical maps for cities in the United States.

4. Christians fled the industrialized cities for country cottages, where women and families could foster virtue and piety. Hardy recommends, as an antidote for this sentimental notion, a good dose of "total depravity," the view that "all parts of creation—nature and culture, men and women, reason and emotions, cities and families"—are distorted by the Fall yet "are candidates for restoration in Christ. There is no need to play them off against each other."

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

Citizens of Another City

Lesson Plans

| Abridged Plan | Standard Plan |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Prayer | Prayer |
| Scripture Reading | Scripture Reading |
| Reflection (skim all) | Reflection (all sections) |
| Questions 2, 3, and 4 | Questions (selected) |
| Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn |

Teaching Goals

1. To explore the political implications of seeing the Church as “another city.”
2. To understand how this view is implied in both the greater biblical narrative and the New Testament description of the Church as an *ekklesia*.
3. To consider how this view stands opposed to the privatization of religion in modernity.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 4-5 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cities and Towns (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn “One Holy Church of God Appears” locate one of the familiar tunes ST. JAMES or ST. ANNE in your church’s hymnal or on the web at www.cyberhymnal.org.

Begin with a Quote

In Augustine’s inclusive urban vision, Christians are at once citizens of another city – the City of God or the Heavenly City – and pilgrims who care for their earthly cities and towns:

[While] this Heavenly City is a pilgrim on earth, she summons citizens of all nations and every tongue, and brings together a society of pilgrims in which no attention is paid to any differences in the customs, laws, and institutions by which earthly peace is achieved or maintained. She does not rescind or destroy these things, however. For whatever differences there are among the various nations, these all tend towards the same end of earthly peace. Thus, she preserves and follows them, provided only that they do not impede the religion by which we are taught that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped.... Indeed, she directs that earthly peace towards heavenly peace: towards the peace...[that] is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God.... This [heavenly] peace the Heavenly City possesses in faith while on its pilgrimage, and by this faith it lives righteously, directing towards the attainment of that peace every good act which it performs either for God, or – since the city’s life is inevitably a social one – for neighbour” (Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Book XIX, Chapter 18, translated by Robert Dyson).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by reading responsively the prayer in the study guide; the leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Hebrews 11:13-16 from a modern translation.

Reflection

In our study of *Cities and Towns*, it is appropriate to examine why the early Christians described themselves as “citizens of another city.” They were expressing high regard for the *polis*, or city, as the context for human flourishing, and they were rejecting the claims by earthly cities for their ultimate allegiance. They identified the Church as the political community where we are formed in the virtues that we need to seek and realize our highest good.

This has rich implications for understanding the Church's role in society. As Christians, we should neither withdraw from the earthly city's public affairs as though our discipleship were a private matter, nor try to dominate the slots of leadership so that the city will run smoothly. Together we should learn to "think outside the box" of any ideology or political party allegiance—so that we are not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Study Questions

1. *Ekklesia*, a term for the gathering of citizens from their homes (literally, the "called out") to deliberate on city affairs, is used 115 times in the New Testament to name the Church or a congregation. It was a political institution, in the ancient view of politics as "the art of human community, the *telos* or end of which is living well, that is, in accordance with our highest good as rational beings. Political institutions are a principal means to this end, tasked with cultivating activities and habits that will direct women and men toward that which gives life its meaning, its purpose." Christians are citizens of another city, the *Ekklesia*, given by Christ and tasked with discerning the good, so that the world might know God's rich wisdom and love.
2. John Locke (1632-1704) distinguished religion ("a Concernment for the Interest of Mens [*sic*] Souls") from politics ("a Care of the Commonwealth"). Politics concerns the nation-state, which has, as the only recognized form of political association, final authority over the actions of citizens. "Yet, because this modern view also excludes any substantive conception of the common good, it reduces politics to procedures for protecting and promoting the pursuit of individual self-interest in the marketplace of desire and consumption," says Harvey. Religion is reduced to "private beliefs about what individuals see as ultimately true and important in their lives"—views about matters beyond "the world of eating and drinking, passing laws and prosecuting offenders, acquiring and disposing of property, making war and making peace, and producing and exchanging consumer goods. Such matters have been handed over to the purview of the state (in conjunction with the market)." Harvey objects that the Bible does not limit God's reign to private beliefs or cultivation of inner selves.
3. Encourage members to discuss how they classify views on "social" issues (e.g., abortion, homosexuality, war, capital punishment, gender roles, sex education, and moral education) and "political" issues (e.g., tax policies, welfare reform, energy policy, environmental conservation, the role of global corporations, and immigration policies). Once we learn a person's views on several of these issues, how do we estimate his or her views on the others?
4. One obstacle is the modern idea that religion concerns only private beliefs and cultivating inner selves: as a result, political and social issues are not discussed openly in congregations or in Christian literature, and thoughtful religious beliefs are rarely deployed in public discussions, magazines, books, and TV. Another obstacle is the "politicization" of issues—the simplifying, distorting, and reframing of their discussion in order to gain short-term political advantage. Also, many Christians know very little about the Bible and their own heritage of political and social theology. "Thinking outside the box" is not just in the head, but also in the habits of the heart. How can congregations help form the virtues of intellectual humility, obedience, studiousness, patience, and love that we need to consider issues well?
5. Because a church steeple appears in the background between the leader and his "followers," some interpreters think that Bruegel depicts the Church as leading people away from community and the common good. Hornik questions this reading, which is suspiciously modern in its view that religion contributes nothing good in politics. Given Bruegel's sympathy for peasants and the details of this composition—"the peasants are being led away from the village *and* the church"—she suggests the artist "is warning us of the peer pressure that can lead us away from the community, the common good, and faithfulness to God."

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

Salt in the City

Lesson Plans

| <i>Abridged Plan</i> | <i>Standard Plan</i> | <i>Dual Session (#1)</i> | <i>Dual Session (#2)</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Prayer | Prayer | Prayer | Prayer |
| Scripture Reading | Scripture Reading | Joshua 6:26; 2 Kings 2:19-22 | Jeremiah 32 |
| Reflection (skim all) | Reflection (all sections) | Reflection (all sections) | Returning/staying in a city neighborhood |
| Questions 1, 2, and 4 | Questions (selected) | Questions 1 and 4 | Questions 2 and 3 |
| Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn |

Teaching Goals

1. To understand “urban ministry” as a calling to reenter the life of urban neighborhoods.
2. To consider the obstacles faced by Christian individuals and families who are called by God to move back into urban neighborhoods.
3. To explore how a vision of the New Jerusalem gives shape to and motivates our concern for the earthly cities where we live.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 6-7 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cities and Towns (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested articles before the group meeting. For the departing hymn “Glorious Things of You Are Spoken” locate one of the familiar tunes, AUSTRIA (Haydn) or ABBOT’S LEIGH, in your church’s hymnal or on the web at www.cyberhymnal.org.

Begin with a Comment

“Christians are not their own, but they belong to God, and the Lord has assignments for all his servants. The question of where one selects a home and establishes residence is a religious question,” writes the urban missiologist Roger Greenway. “It must not only be compatible with, but a result of one’s understanding of God’s will for his life and the task God expects him to carry out in the society.... To the extent in which individuals, families, and churches are convinced that urban presence is God’s will for them, they will accept the challenge to remain in the city and bear witness there” (quoted in *Cities and Towns*, p. 63).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently and then ask members to read aloud together the prayer in the study guide.

Scripture Reading

Ask two group members to read Joshua 6:26; and 2 Kings 2:19-22 from a modern translation.

Reflection

Drawing upon her reading of the stories about Elisha and Jeremiah, Amy Sherman offers guidance and inspiration for Christians who are called to live and minister in an urban neighborhood. She agrees with Lee Hardy’s idea that in order to restore shalom in our cities, Christians must “rediscover urban neighborhoods, live in them if possible, and try to make them once again good places for others to live” (*Cities and Towns*, p. 18).

In a supplemental article, “Moving to the Carpenter’s House,” Elizabeth Benton describes how her ‘downsizing’ congregation discovered opportunities for ministry and deeper Christian commitment in its neighborhood. In “Restoring Urban Communities,” Lissa Schwander provides other helpful examples and resources for individuals, families, and congregations.

You might extend this discussion to two sessions. In one, review the story of Elisha in Jericho and begin to explore the community assets and ministry needs of a specific urban neighborhood. In the other, discuss Jeremiah’s buying a field in Anathoth (a commentary on Jeremiah 32 by community developers Noel Castella-

nos and Mark R. Gornik is summarized by Sherman on pp. 71-72), and use ideas from the supplemental articles to explore the opportunities and obstacles in your city for Christian individuals and families who relocate to urban neighborhoods.

Study Questions

1. Members may agree that where we live—in this rural area, that town, or that city neighborhood—will shape our opportunities for ministry. Greenway’s full statement (quoted above and in *Cities and Towns*, p. 63), suggests that Christians should settle in a place based on “God’s will for [one’s] life and the task God expects [one] to carry out in the society.”

The stories of Jeremiah and Elisha recognize two dimensions of actively caring for a city. Jeremiah identifies with the stricken community of Anathoth by investing his resources there. Sherman and Schwander give reasons why Christians should relocate to and invest in city neighborhoods: “It is only by living and working close proximity with people that we can be reconciled to them,” Schwander writes; and Sherman laments, “We are too eager to help the poor but not willing enough to know them.” Can members think of other reasons?

On the other hand, Elisha cares for the people of Jericho and solves their problem, but he does not live with them. How can Christians living outside the city core be good neighbors to the city? How can they actively care for it by voting in elections, supporting taxation policies, sharing expertise, and encouraging or financially supporting inner-city congregations?

2. Let members make a personal list of obstacles—for themselves and family members. Some might be job-related—the move might require changing a workplace, job, or career; forgoing a promotion or salary increase; or leaving good colleagues. Others will relate to worship and community—changing church membership and style of worship, leaving neighborhood friends, adapting to a new school. Some will involve lifestyle—living in an apartment rather than a house, walking or using public transportation for shopping, developing new recreational interests. Is the neighborhood safe, affordable, and attractive?

With careful planning, could some obstacles be avoided or offsetting advantages gained? How could a congregation or intentional community in the urban neighborhood help us overcome the obstacles or compensate for the losses? We mistakenly think that Christian discipleship, because it is so *personal*, is also *individualistic*. “Yet Christian community development,” Schwander reminds us, “is not a job for heroic individuals and isolated families.”

3. The A.R.T. model, like other Christian programs for urban restoration, is inspired by a vision of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-22:5). Local artists share a vision of the “NU JERUZ” —“not so much a place... [as] a way of living in which all people are empowered to live lives that are full, free, and pleasing to the Creator in all aspects – artistically, economically, culturally, politically, spiritually, environmentally, and socially” – and use this vision to interpret events in the local community. *Prophetic art* “awakens us to a social problem or problems; *agape art* helps “us ‘love our neighbor’ and restore relationships”; and *celebrative art* marks “the victory the community has won.” Corbitt and Nix-Early “stress...it is not the art itself but the process of creating the art and the relationships that result from this process that provide an impetus for community transformation.”
4. John Newton’s original text of five verses is available online at www.cyberhymnal.org. Those who live in God’s city are blest and their peace is unshakable (v. 1); they are filled with life given by God’s unflinching love and grace, and this life fulfills their needs (v. 2); God’s constant presence provides for them (v. 3); they flourish and reign as kings because they put Jesus’ type of love ahead of self-love (v. 4); and this brings joy (v. 5). This vision can inspire us to not give up on our cities and towns, for they can be a foretaste of this loving community.

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

The New Urbanism

Lesson Plans

| <i>Abridged Plan</i> | <i>Standard Plan</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Prayer | Prayer |
| Scripture Reading | Scripture Reading |
| Responsive Reading | Responsive Reading |
| Reflection (skim all) | Reflection (all sections) |
| Questions 1, 2, and 4 | Questions (selected) |
| Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn |

Teaching Goals

1. To consider how the shalom (or, peace) of cities and towns must include the welfare and order of their built environment.
2. To understand why the New Urbanists value traditional neighborhoods and the charrette process for planning them.
3. To explore what it means to be God's stewards of the built environment.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 8-9 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cities and Towns (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested articles before the group meeting.

Begin with a Story

Eric Jacobsen reminds us that "Jeremiah's message to the Babylonian exiles was to 'seek the *shalom* of the city to which you have been called.' Shalom includes peace, wholeness, and restored relationships. In the Church we have interpreted this prophetic call too abstractly; we have set up programs to benefit individuals, but neglected the shalom of the physical city."

Jacobson observes, "Following the destruction by Hurricane Katrina of eleven municipalities stretched out along 120 miles of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Governor Haley Barbour invited architect and cofounder of the Congress for the New Urbanism Andres Duany to help with the rebuilding. The governor instructed him to 'do what you do and do it well.' Duany responded by gathering 100 fellow New Urbanists and about the same number of Mississippians in Biloxi for a week to formulate a coherent plan for recovery...."

"The eleven Mississippi cities destroyed by Hurricane Katrina are not the only North American cities that need an infusion of shalom, but their dire situation is helping us to see some interesting realities more clearly" (*Cities and Towns*, pp. 28, 35-36).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by praying that members will grow in Christian community, bound together by their love for God, one another, and their neighbors.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 from a modern translation.

Responsive Reading

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

Reflection

This study examines the New Urbanism, an urban planning movement that promotes traditional neighborhood design as a way to restore the built environment of our cities and towns. It is a fitting companion to two other study guides: "Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong," in which Lee Hardy explores some causes of

the woes of our built environment, and “The Church Building as Sacramental Sign,” in which leading New Urbanist architect Philip Bess urges congregations to be catalysts in restoring traditional communities.

It is important to distinguish between *architecture* (the design and styling of individual or small groups of buildings) and *urbanism* (the design of spaces among the buildings that shape the public realm). “Urbanism involves making streets feel like hallways and plazas feel like welcoming rooms that invite people to explore, rest, and enjoy social interaction with one another,” Jacobsen writes. “For urbanists, the architecture of the individual buildings is significant, but it is definitely secondary to the central task of urban planning.”

Jacobsen disputes the idea that urban design is insignificant or, at most, peripheral to important moral concerns. He believes we are called to be God’s stewards of the built environment (on analogy with our stewardship of the natural world). Authentic community requires a good physical form (the “hardware”) as well as caring practices of neighbor love (the “software”).

Study Questions

1. Jacobsen suggests traditional neighborhoods are “coherent and aesthetically pleasing” and what people want their communities to look like. Things are accessible to more people—the poor and rich and the old and young members of the community. The design encourages interaction and mutual care for common spaces.

The charrette planning process encourages trust, a mutual vision, and a sense of common ownership among neighbors. It breaks down barriers between experts and community members. Thus it contributes to wholeness and restored relationships.

2. Jacobsen explains that New Urbanists (1) want “to create viable alternatives to using a car for every trip,” to allow more freedom and “reclaim the romance of driving”; (2) rely on market mechanisms and seek less government regulation (just the opposite of the Smart Growth movement, which also favors traditional neighborhoods); (3) are less concerned with architecture (the design of individual buildings) than with urbanism (the placement of buildings, parks, and plazas in a neighborhood); and (4) “are not causing gentrification nor are they able to stop it by some sort of authoritative decree. Gentrification can only be tempered by government policies that protect the rights of the poor or by the work of churches and other institutions of compassion.”
3. To help members identify New Urbanist projects in their region, visit the CNU website, www.cnu.org. It lists representative projects and designers in each state or province. It also identifies representative projects for each transect zone, from urban core to rural preserve. Many projects have links web pages that describe the goals and progress of the project.
4. Jacobsen’s analogy suggests that the built environment is part of God’s handiwork (executed through human art) and belongs to God. Like the natural world, our good depends upon our respecting and caring for the built environment. It is meant to be shared for the common good. It is ultimately good, though now we encounter it in a distorted, fallen state. This analogy highlights our responsibilities to God and neighbor through the design and maintenance of the built environment. It prevents us from sentimentalizing either nature or human construction, or playing one off the other.
5. Hopper celebrates the individuality of his neighbors (in “the varying types of curtains, heights of shades, and colors in the windows—of their personally decorated homes”), their shared community life (through “a barber pole and fire hydrant [that] become, along with the building façade, the main ‘characters’ in the composition”), and the peaceful calm of the Greenwich Village neighborhood. These traits are even more pronounced when we realize that he was painting during the horrors of the Great Depression and World War II. “Hopper was able to communicate the American Realism of an ordered neighborhood at a time when the rest of the world was looking to the United States for solutions to chaos,” Hornik notes.

Departing Hymn

“Crate and Castle” is on pp. 43-45 of *Cities and Towns*. If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

The Church Building as Sacramental Sign

Lesson Plans

| <i>Abridged Plan</i> | <i>Standard Plan</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Prayer | Prayer |
| Scripture Reading | Scripture Reading |
| Reflection (skim all) | Reflection (all sections) |
| Questions 1, 2, and 5 | Questions (selected) |
| Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn |

Teaching Goals

1. To explore how the form and style of a church building can witness to the Heavenly City and beckon people to God's community.
2. To examine the automobile suburb and the traditional urban neighborhood as alternative ideals of community.
3. To consider how a congregation might (re)develop its property into the beginnings of a mixed-use neighborhood.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 10-11 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cities and Towns (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn "Built by Jehovah's Hand" locate the familiar tune *ST. THOMAS (Williams)* in your church's hymnal or on the web at www.cyberhymnal.org.

Begin with a Comment

Speaking of the urban church in *Planting and Growing Urban Churches*, Harvie Conn has written, "We are God's demonstration community of the rule of Christ in the city. On a tract of earth's land purchased with the blood of Christ, Jesus the kingdom developer has begun building new housing. As a sample of what will be, he has erected a model home of what will eventually fill the urban neighborhood. Now he invites the urban world into that model home to take a look at what will be" (quoted in *Cities and Towns*, p. 62).

How should Christians live together in love within this home, this urban church? It is a crucial question, and one that we often ask. But we should also ask another question: What should be the physical structure of the urban church, that it can reflect Christians' new relationship to one another and before God, and beckon others to enter? This is the question Philip Bess invites us to explore.

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently and then ask members to read aloud together the prayer in the study guide.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Psalm 122 from a modern translation.

Reflection

This study examines how a church building and its campus should beckon people to God's inclusive community, how it should be "a visible witness to the mystery of the ongoing life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus." This is increasingly difficult, Philip Bess notes, within the sprawl of an automobile suburb, which celebrates the culture of individualism, separates people by class, and isolates them by their generation and inability to use a car.

Bess concludes with the fascinating proposal that a congregation might become the catalyst in restoring the surrounding community by (re)developing the campus around its church building into the core of a traditional mixed-use neighborhood. Thus, this study is a fitting companion to two other study guides: "Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong," in which Lee Hardy explores some causes of the woes of our built environ-

ment, and “The New Urbanism,” in which Eric Jacobsen introduces this urban planning movement that promotes traditional neighborhood design as a way to restore the built environment of our cities and towns.

Study Questions

1. Typically, a sanctuary building will be based on one of the *plans* and executed in one of the *styles* that Bess mentions. It will exhibit a number of the features common to sacred architecture. (For example, the sanctuary in which I was baptized was a long hall—as in a basilican plan—executed in a New England colonial style. Its notable sacred features were verticality in height and depth, geometrically patterned woodwork, finely crafted furniture and pews, and the importance of its raised chancel area and central pulpit.) Encourage members to reflect on features, plans, and styles that have impressed them in other church buildings.
2. Bess contrasts two Chicago-area churches. Which of these is more like your church campus? Is it located at the center of a traditional neighborhood, on the edge of a suburb, along a major artery, or in a business or shopping district? How far do members commute? Do they walk, use public transit, or drive their cars? How do elderly and young members travel to church activities? What do you notice first about the campus—a vast parking lot, a children’s play area, a distinctive sacred architecture? How accessible is the campus to those with disabilities? Are church signs written in several languages? Are the buildings filled with church or community activities through the week? Some church campuses are a hub of neighborhood services and activities; children play on their grounds and people stop in to pray. Some appear to be reserved for members who drive in from other parts of the city.
3. Traditional neighborhoods have several types of housing, private buildings for shopping and work, good schools, parks and plazas, civic buildings, and monuments. Houses and apartments are built close to the street; many buildings have mixed uses. There is public transportation. All the streets have wide sidewalks and on-street parking; most of them connect to others. “Buildings for education, religion, culture, sport, and government are sited either at the end of important street vistas or fronting squares or plazas.” The community is relatively dense, with most of these sites within one-quarter to one-half mile distance.
Suburbs are spread out; buildings are isolated by function; houses are separated from streets and one another by big yards; many streets are cul-de-sacs, a few are major arteries; there are few sidewalks and little on-street parking; driving a car is a necessity rather than a convenience. “Suburban sprawl is problematic because it renders cross-generational, mixed-class communities of place impossible,” Bess objects. “The automobile suburb—of its very nature, owing to its physical characteristics—effectively demobilizes and disenfranchises that significant percentage of the population which is too young, too old, too poor, or too feeble to drive an automobile. Suburbia cannot deliver on its promise of convenience, mobility, beauty of the natural landscape, and individual freedom and well-being for all.”
4. Many church buildings look like shopping malls or suburban office centers surrounded by huge parking lots. Some churches relocate along a freeway or at the intersection of major arteries to encourage automobile commuting. They entice Christians with a particular theology, worship “style,” or social or economic class to drive several miles to the new campus. To compete, churches in traditional neighborhoods experiment with new leadership, worship styles, and special need-based ministries to attract members from across town.
5. Churches on the edge of a city might build a neighborhood core like the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century neighborhoods sponsored by London aristocrats. (View these neighborhoods on *Google Earth*.) An inner-city congregation might redevelop unused buildings for mixed-use, build a park for neighborhood activities, or construct a mix of new housing.

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison or silently and meditatively as a prayer.

St. Benedict in the City

Lesson Plans

| <i>Abridged Plan</i> | <i>Standard Plan</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Prayer | Prayer |
| Scripture Reading | Scripture Reading |
| Response to Scripture | Response to Scripture |
| Reflection (skim all) | Reflection (all sections) |
| Questions 1, 2, and 5 | Questions (selected) |
| Departing Hymn | Departing Hymn |

Teaching Goals

1. To introduce the intentional Christian communities in the “New Monasticism” movement.
2. To discuss how the new monastic communities serve the urban poor and witness to the wider Christian community about what it means to be the *ekklesia*, the “called out.”
3. To discuss how intentional communities can encourage and support Christian individuals and families who are called by God to move back into urban neighborhoods.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 12-13 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cities and Towns (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn “The Voice of God Is Calling” locate one of the familiar tunes ST. THEODULPH or NYLAND in your church’s hymnal or on the web at www.cyberhymnal.org.

Begin with a Comment

“One of the most interesting developments to emerge over the last 20 years has been an increasing number of ‘intentional’ communities, especially in poor urban areas. These initiatives enable people of faith to express a lifestyle which some call a ‘new monasticism,’” observes the Commission on Urban Life and Faith, an interfaith group initiated by the Church of England. “They have a structure that enables a deeper commitment (a total lifestyle informed by gospel values) than is usually expressed by membership of a local church; are responsive to local challenges; emphasize both devotion and active involvement; have flexible arrangements to enable people both to join and to leave; build an ‘esprit-de-corps’; maintain a positive relationship to a local church, although the vocation of the group is not necessarily expressed through the church.... The challenge to long-standing local churches is to rejoice in the exceptional commitment that is emerging in so many diverse expressions” (*Faithful Cities: A Call for Celebration, Vision and Justice* (2006), 8.25-27).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by praying that members will grow in Christian community, bound together by their love for God, one another, and their neighbors.

Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Matthew 5:1, 13-16 from a modern translation.

Response to the Scripture

Ask the group to read together the text of the traditional African-American spiritual, “I Told Jesus It Would Be All Right If He Changed My Name.”

Reflection

This study introduces the informal network of intentional urban Christian communities that dubs itself the “New Monasticism Project” (see www.newmonasticism.org). These communities are exploring ways for Christian individuals and families to follow Lee Hardy’s advice (in “Dysfunctional Cities: Where Did We Go Wrong?”) to

“rediscover urban neighborhoods, live in them if possible, and try to make them once again good places for others to live.” They not only are serving the urban poor, Bryan Hollon writes, but also are helping to reform the wider Christian community by revealing how our consumerist desires must be challenged and transformed by Christian communal practices. Finally, simply by calling themselves “new monastics,” they are challenging us to rethink the contributions of monasticism to the Church over the centuries.

Study Questions

1. Distribute copies of the “twelve marks” to group members who do not have them. You can reprint p. 39 from “The New Monasticism” article (online at www.ChristianEthics.ws) or the appropriate webpage from the New Monasticism Project’s site, www.newmonasticism.org. This list of twelve marks is not supposed to be novel; it is prefaced by a “wish to acknowledge a movement of radical rebirth, grounded in God’s love and drawing on the rich tradition of Christian practices that have long formed disciples in the simple Way of Christ.”

Do some of the twelve marks describe every healthy congregation? Which marks would be embraced by your study group and congregation? Which ones would be controversial? Which ones require more mutual trust and commitment than members have known?

2. Ask members to brainstorm the problems that their families would face in relocating to an urban neighborhood. These might relate to changes in church membership, jobs or educational opportunities, neighborhood friendships and community, or personal lifestyle. Is the urban neighborhood safe, affordable, and attractive? (Members may have developed this list previously in response to question 2 in the “Salt in the City” study guide.) How would some of these problems be alleviated or overcome within an intentional urban Christian community, which would provide a new home for worship, friendship, and mutual support?
3. “Monastic communities called people *out of* inordinate worldly attachments and *into* a fellowship of communal love in Christ,” Hollon says. Sister Margaret McKenna likens the new monasticism’s commitment to redeeming community life in America’s cities to a potter reworking clay: “It gives up on patching the pot thrown off balance on the whirling wheel, re-kneads and throws again the clay, centers it carefully this time, and realizes afresh the reworked clay’s potential for beauty and service.” So, in this sense, the new monastics are withdrawing from individualistic suburban life. Yet, many groups encourage marriage and family life, and they support these through the resources of the community. Rather than retreating from urban problems, Hollon thinks, the new monastics are tackling them in creative ways.
4. Members might review some of these websites: Rutba House Community in Durham, NC, and the New Monasticism Project (www.newmonasticism.org); Camden House Community in Camden, NJ (www.camdenhouse.org); Reba Place Community Church in Evanston and Chicago, IL (www.rebaplacefellowship.org); Common Ground Community in Shreveport, LA (www.lvoe.org); Bruderhof Communities (www.bruderhof.org); and Catholic Worker Communities (www.catholicworker.org). Ask members to describe similar Christian communities with which they are familiar.
5. Discuss specific urban neighborhoods to encourage or problems to address with an intentional urban Christian community. What support could your congregation provide—legal, real-estate, ministry, or other expertise in setting up the community; office or living space in your church buildings; volunteers to help with specific programs; on-going financial support; or a place of worship for community members, and so on? Hollon was a pastoral intern in a church that sponsored intentional communities in Los Angeles. “While no more than twenty of our congregation’s 120 members lived in these communities,” he reports, “they had a profound influence on the rest of us through their preaching, leading worship, organizing neighborhood events, and educating us on the difficulties of inner-city life.”

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison or silently and meditatively as a prayer.