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Religion and the Regional Metropolis

by Arthur E. Farnsley II

During the last few decades, cities across the American heartland have redrawn their boundaries, both figuratively and literally. In 1970, Marion County became Indianapolis proper through an adoption of consolidated city-county government known as Unigov. Now even bigger changes are underway. Greater Indianapolis, defined by economic and social interdependency, is a nine-county region of which Marion County is the center. We are deeply interested in this shift from city to region and what it means for religious life in the metropolitan area: how will religion shape, or be shaped by, the developing regional metropolis?

Clifford Green, editor of the book Churches, Cities, and Human Communities, argues that thinking about ministry in the city must

> …begin with the paradigm of the metropolis; within this paradigm we can address the problems of urban life, considering the forms of the church and the types of ministry that enable us to engage them more faithfully and effectively [1].

Green argues that issue-based thinking—focusing on programs addressed to particular problems—results in a "reactive rather than creative posture." Religious organizations must think of the city as an ecology with varied, but interdependent, components.

But what would it mean to think institutionally about a metropolitan paradigm?

In practical terms, operating within that paradigm would require religious organizations to question continuously the structures and cultures that divide the city into distinct parts. The metropolitan region is obviously not a seamless whole. Moreover, homogenization need not be the goal of regionalization. But groups like CIRCL (Central Indiana Regional Citizens League) and MAGIC (Metropolitan Association of Greater Indianapolis Communities) do seek to create some form of metropolitan community. If faith organizations seek to contribute to a better understanding of interdependency and cooperation, they will need to think systemically about what divides the region and precludes broader, more contextual, approaches to ministry.

One of the most obvious divisions is the one between suburbs and inner city. In just the past four decades, the population of Indianapolis—as in most cities throughout America—has moved away from the center. Since 1960, the population of many city neighborhoods has declined by half or more, while the townships and counties around the city have experienced dramatic growth. Homes, schools, and even recreational opportunities are all segregated by social class, defined spatially. A religious community operating from a metropolitan perspective would address urban/suburban differences.

Another division, both structural and cultural, is the racial separation that is related to, but certainly not coextensive with, the urban/suburban split. Faith-based organizations that operate from a metropolitan perspective would seek to understand all races, including the separate congregations and denominations, as part of a unified whole.

Dealing with racial division need not mean glossing over genuine cultural, social, or political differences. What it will mean, however, is increasing everyone's ability to understand the social context in which these differences occur.

A third division in Indianapolis is the cultural wall that separates the northern half of the city from the southern half. The southern half of the city, nearly all white, is more blue-collar, more shaped by the immigration of upland southerners. The north side, also largely white with one integrated suburban area, is better educated and more white-collar. Most African-Americans live in neighborhoods that form an arc, just north of downtown, that separates north from south.

A religious community operating from a metropolitan perspective would address the structural and cultural differences presented by these inter-regional differences. Such a perspective requires seeing the connections and interdependencies in these very different environments.

There are already efforts underway in the Greater Indianapolis faith community to bridge the urban gap between suburb and inner city. Many suburban congregations put resources and volunteers into inner-city congregations that are doing urban ministry. A few even exchange members temporarily or, less often, have members who move from one neighborhood to another.

Much of this work is done ad hoc, on a congregation-to-congregation basis. The partnerships form for a variety of reasons, but interpersonal networks among individual pastors or members is key. In one case, a downtown congregation that founded a suburban mission post long ago now gets support from its suburban offspring as it pursues urban ministry. In others, suburban congregations have joined with inner city congregations, and in one case an entire neighborhood coalition of congregations, as mission partners.

Critics of checkbook charity, as they label it, worry that these partnerships are one-sided and unidirectional, dependent on a sense of noblesse oblige in the suburban groups. Such criticisms are fair in many cases, but may miss an important point. Even in paternalistic relationships, new friendships and better mutual understanding can grow from social contact that would otherwise never have happened. Put another way, people from very different worlds come in contact through these relationships, people who would likely not have met in other venues.

Religious practice is highly segregated by race in Indianapolis, as it is elsewhere. In most of the congregations we have observed, nearly all of the members are of one race. We have encountered only a handful of congregations that reflect anything like the white/black (80/20) composition of the city.

But developing a metropolitan perspective about race need not mean that congregations themselves must become more integrated. It is possible to imagine a model wherein congregations remain racially homogeneous while the religious community as a whole effectively addresses other questions of racial difference and understanding.

The most visible interracial effort in the faith community today is the Celebration of Hope. Sprung from two congregations that have a genuinely metropolitan-wide influence—the predominantly black Light of the World Christian and predominantly white Second Presbyterian—the Celebration stands as surrogate for religious efforts to build understanding between blacks and whites [2].

The idea that northern Indianapolis is very different from the southern part of the city is not new, but the differences remain nonetheless very real. Whites in the southern part of the city are, on average, less well-educated and more likely to work blue-collar jobs than whites in the northern half.

These differences are apparent in the religious differences among the nine counties in the metropolitan region. For instance, United Methodists are an important part of the religious landscape in Indianapolis. In every county in our region, the percentage of Methodists is higher than the national average. But Boone and Hamilton Counties, to the north, have twice the percentage of Methodists as Johnson or Morgan Counties, to the south.

Catholics are far underrepresented in Indianapolis compared to national averages, although they still

constitute the single largest religious body in the city. But again, Hamilton County, in the north, has three times the percentage of Catholics as Morgan County, to the south.

On the other hand, Johnson County, on the south side, has more than twice the percentage of Southern Baptists as Marion or Boone or Hamilton Counties. Although Southern Baptists are far underrepresented in the Indianapolis area compared to other parts of the nation, Morgan County has nearly the percentage of Southern Baptists as the national average.

Anyone who thinks that such numbers are statistical flukes should note this simple comparison. Hamilton County has 12 times as many Catholics and 7 times as many United Methodists as it does Southern Baptists. Morgan County has more Southern Baptists than it has Catholics or Methodists.

Again the stereotype—that the southern part of the region is more dominated by evangelicals and fundamentalists—holds true. What may be less true, however, is the degree to which the northern tier is dominated by Catholics and the Protestant mainline. Although Catholics and mainline Protestants make up a much higher percentage of religious adherents in the north—and are fairly dominant in Hamilton County, as noted above—the number of evangelicals and fundamentalists has continued to grow in the north as the numbers of Catholics and mainline Protestants has leveled or declined.

Another denominational difference of note is between historically white and historically black denominations. African-Americans are concentrated in neighborhoods that arc across the center of the city, and here Black Baptists are the dominant group. Indeed, Black Baptists alone, not even counting all the Pentecostal groups or the various Methodists like AME or CME, make up 15 percent of religious membership in Marion County. In the rest of the Indianapolis region, Black Baptists do not make up even 1 percent of religious membership in any county except Madison, where the city of Anderson is located.

Stark denominational differences such as these are not idiosyncratic cultural artifacts. They represent very real theological and cultural differences in understandings about what God is like, what the church should be, and how people relate to one another. There is tremendous variation not only on political issues, but on foundational questions about what it means to be a person or to belong to a worshipping community.

How people relate to their worshipping community is in some ways symbolic of their relationship to other institutions, including the institutions of government, commerce, and education that span our region. Developing a metropolitan perspective will require understanding the very different ways of thinking about institutions that are represented by these denominational differences.

Ministerial alliances reflect the divisions noted here. If there is any issue that distinguishes alliances more than race, it is theology. Even when racial gaps are bridged, alliances seldom hold among liberals and conservatives. Indeed, in many venues mainline Protestants and Catholics are likely to have more successful partnerships with Jews, Muslims, and others, than with evangelical Christians.

The problem with developing a metropolitan perspective also exists within denominational or theological groups. For instance, most Catholics in Indianapolis are part of the Indianapolis diocese, which extends on southward through Indiana. But residents of the northern suburbs are members of the Lafayette diocese. And it is no small matter to discuss moving the wealth represented by the Catholic parishes in places like Carmel and Fishers from one diocese to another. Here as elsewhere, historical boundaries can mitigate against regional thinking in the religious community. It is especially difficult to see the region as an interrelated system when institutional realities suggest divisions of their own.

If faith communities hope to operate from the perspective of a metropolitan paradigm, it is fair to ask whether their efforts will, or even can, be institutionalized. Are there religious counterparts to organizations such as CIRCL and MAGIC? Can there be? Should there be? Or is it possible that what is needed is not centralized, overarching organizations, but many decentralized organizations arranged around categories yet to be imagined?

Clifford Green notes that religion in America was fashioned either on an Episcopal model, which is feudal in nature, or a congregational model, which represents the situation of a small town or village. What is needed, he argues, is an organizational model that fits the metropolis.

But what would such a model look like? One element of a metropolitan religious model might be overarching interfaith or ecumenical efforts that operate more like CIRCL or MAGIC. Current organizational reality, grounded in very real differences in race, culture, and geography, makes such organizations difficult to imagine.

Indianapolis has some interfaith or ecumenical groups to be sure, but they are usually political alliances built around special purposes, the sort of "issue and program" efforts that concern Green. The ministerial alliances that are not neighborhood based are, as noted above, usually cooperative efforts among black pastors with similar theological or political orientations.

A few service groups have particular mission activities. Faith and Families, for instance, is an interfaith alliance that tries to match congregations with families in need of services and social support. The Interfaith Hospitality Network is a group of congregations working together as hosts to prevent homelessness. But neither group has more than 25 or 30 member congregations (out of 1200 in Marion County alone and at least 1800 in the metropolitan area), and each is made up of congregations that are relatively well-off and well-educated. The efforts are ecumenical and even interfaith, but they are largely defined by race (the member congregations are white) and nearly entirely defined by social class. Moreover, these congregations distinguish themselves clearly from evangelicals.

The group that best exemplifies the difficulty in creating a single organizational structure is the one most intentionally designed to serve this purpose. Founded in 1912, the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis is one of the oldest city-wide church alliances in the United States. In the middle of this century, it was a powerful ecumenical voice during the period when the National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches enjoyed much greater influence in moral and political debate.

Today, however, the Church Federation is trying desperately to be a relevant religious voice for the entire metropolitan area at a time when virtually no one is listening. For instance, one hears repeatedly that Indianapolis needs a directory of all the social services and outreach activities sponsored by congregations in the city. Yet when the Church Federation called a very well publicized meeting (with free lunch) to discuss the issue, fewer than 40 congregations—predominantly Black Churches and Episcopalians—sent representatives. The mayor of Indianapolis knows that on certain initiatives he would do well to get the religious establishment's blessing, but he does not turn to the Church Federation to represent that establishment.

Of course, an overarching Church Federation or local cooperative efforts are not the only options for increasing a contextual understanding of the metropolis. Perhaps overarching or centralizing organizations are not the best answer. The faith community may contribute to a systemic understanding, and to a metropolitan culture, through involvement in secular civic or professional organizations. Individuals from the faith community already have roles in groups like CIRCL or MAGIC. Faithful individuals participate in every walk of life. Perhaps involvement by the faithful in secular organizations may ultimately matter more than the activities of specifically faith-based organizations. Or perhaps some less-centralized faith-based organizations fit better with the complex, expanding metropolis than umbrella groups.

Ultimately, there are two different questions whose answers are inextricably linked. First, there is the question of whether and how religion will contribute to a better contextual understanding of the interconnectedness of life in a new, regional metropolitan area. Second is the question of how religion itself reflects, or even generates, many of the differences that make mutual understanding and cooperation possible.

As Indianapolis evolves from a one-county city to a nine-county, regional metropolis, people of faith and their organizations must consider their actions in the context of the metropolitan paradigm. It would be easy for the congregations, denominations, and even interfaith alliances to symbolize and constantly re-create the racial, cultural, and geographic schisms that divide the city. It will be much more difficult, however, for the faith community to see the metropolitan community of Greater Indianapolis as the social context in which it acts. To do so is to acknowledge that the divisions in our community are systemic, and so too must be the efforts to bridge them.

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[1] p. 297, Green, Clifford, Churches, Cities and Human Community: Urban Ministry in the United States 1945-1985. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996.

[2] For the past two celebrations, the Indianapolis Star reported attendance numbers that greatly exceeded the estimates of Polis Center observers. Clearly, there are those in the city who hope such efforts succeed.

ROUNDTABLE

On January 7, a cold and snowy day, Research Notes hosted a roundtable discussion held at the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. Participants had been provided beforehand with the text of this issue of RN, and were invited to respond to the issues raised in the paper. Weather and road conditions were such that two of those invited were unable to make it. But two hardy souls braved the elements to attend the roundtable. Kim Didier works with the Front Porch Alliance (FPA), an initiative of the Mayor's Office that helps faith-based and neighborhood associations gain access to services provided by the City. Bill Enright is pastor of Second Presbyterian Church. They were joined by Art Farnsley, director of research at The Polis Center, and by Kevin Armstrong, pastor of Roberts Park United Methodist Church, and senior public teacher at The Polis Center. The following is an edited version of their discussion, which was moderated by Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG: Let's jump right into it. In Art's essay he describes a kind of urban adolescence, and how congregations have grown into this body of a growing city. How have you seen that kind of relationship between congregations and the growing city manifested? How has that found expression in your own life and observations?

ENRIGHT: Well, one thing that has certainly interested me has been the linking in partnerships of congregations. I think congregations have tremendous resources in their membership that are seldom utilized fruitfully and creatively. So, from my perspective as a pastor, it's linking congregations together, and focusing on neighborhoods. We have a relationship with a small congregation on the near east side, that we have had for eighteen years. And we also have a growing relationship with a large African-American congregation on the east side on 38th Street.

ARMSTRONG: You mention that congregations don't utilize members as well as they could. What are some ways that could happen?

ENRIGHT: What I've discovered is that partnerships have three ingredients. One is leadership. It's the pastoral relationship that is pivotal. And whenever there is a pastoral change, that whole relationship becomes open to another contract, another way of thinking – or maybe a weakening of that relationship. The second is focusing on a neighborhood. And what's important is that the majority of their membership must live within the geography of that neighborhood. I've been involved in partnerships where people cared deeply and profoundly about a neighborhood, but when you are commuting in and don't live there, the stakes just aren't the same. The third factor is knowing what that church and that neighborhood are about. And it's not the church from the outside coming in and saying 'this is what you should do,' but rather, 'how can we be a resource in helping this church realize its dreams and visions for its community?' When you have those three factors, then you have what can be a very dynamic and creative and meaningful relationship that makes a difference in the city.

ARMSTRONG: Kim, have you noticed those patterns as well in the Front Porch Alliance?

DIDIER: I think what Bill said is true. It's different where you have large churches within urban neighborhoods, but most of the congregation is coming from outside. They may have actually lived or grown up in that neighborhood and that's what still attaches them to that particular church. Our FPA consultants have seen that a lot in churches.

FARNSLEY: What's the difference between those congregations where the members mostly live in the area around the church building, and those that have substantially drive-in populations?

DIDIER: Where the residents are coming from the neighborhood, it tends to be more outwardly focused. They're there and they know what those needs are on a day-to-day basis, not just one day a week. Other

churches tend to be more inwardly focused. That's been one of the challenges for the Front Porch Alliance, to see if the church is willing to open up, and be an active participant in that neighborhood and an anchor for that neighborhood.

FARNSLEY: It strikes me as a paradox that, in inner-city neighborhoods where there aren't a lot of resources, not a lot of money, the congregations whose members live nearby are more likely to be outwardly focused. They don't just have a building there – it's their neighborhood and they're thinking outward.

DIDIER: Right. Their resources are more the compassion and the willingness to take whatever they have and try to make something different in their neighborhood.

ENRIGHT: These larger churches where most of the people drive in – do people from the neighborhood become identified in a worship sense or in a congregational life sense with that congregation? Or are they simply people who are the recipients of various programs?

FARNSLEY: There are congregations in downtown neighborhoods that are, for historical reasons, not very much like the people who live in the neighborhood today. Some good examples are in Mapleton-Fall Creek, which once was a well-off neighborhood. I know of several congregations that have tried like the devil to get the neighbors involved in the worship life. But I think the tradeoff there is, you can make the worship style more amenable to the people who live in the neighborhood and lose the people who have been coming to your church, or you can keep it like it is. I don't think that's entirely racial, either. I'd be willing to say that the black churches in black neighborhoods that have drive-in populations from the suburbs don't do any better.

ENRIGHT: In your paper, you talk about the enormous theological differences. When you begin to tinker with worship, it is so touchy. There's something so...soulful about where people seem to be in their religion, and how the liturgy touches that, and style. As you say, if you go one way you lose a base, and you're not certain you're going to get people from the neighborhood – maybe you will. I saw a study of turn-around churches. These are churches that dwindled to where they were next to nothing. And then they experienced significant growth. Almost all were in urban inner city settings.

DIDIER: What was spurring the growth? Were there any trends or influences?

FARNSLEY: One of the things we found is that with inner-city churches especially, it's not so much of a turnaround as that the old church essentially dies.

ENRIGHT: Right.

FARNSLEY: It gets down to ten or fifteen people, and essentially they give up and let a new thing happen.

ARMSTRONG: Yes, you move from critical mass to critical loss and then you can do something.

FARNSLEY: Bill was talking about pastoral leadership being so key. When FPA is working with leaders – is it important to you for these people to be established? Or are you better off working with new people?

DIDIER: I think there have been some key examples where leadership can make or break a program, especially when you have a charismatic individual who's committed to a particular project and they work day and night for that project. And when they aren't available anymore, then that project really begins to founder. I think it takes longer to build the trust of established leadership because they've been there for several administrations or attempts at different types of programs. But once we do gain that trust and show that we're committed to the program that we're embarking on, and meet the commitments that we've made, then because we've won the trust of that particular leader, everyone else kind of falls into place.

ARMSTRONG: Is it even reasonable to expect that the religious community will have any voice in shaping the metropolitan community? It's difficult to get things going in one's own neighborhood. So what happens when we're talking about regional issues of crime, transportation, race relations? How do religious communities help shape that agenda – or do they?

FARNSLEY: If the religious community has a voice, is it certain individuals, or certain congregations or denominations, or other kinds of institutions? What would be the voice if there was one that could speak to the metropolis?

ENRIGHT: Well, if you buy into Loren Mead's notion of 'the once and future church,' which I think has a great deal of truth in it, churches stand outside the structure. Churches may be co-opted for certain things, but they don't sit around the table. Community leaders may say, 'maybe we should try to use that resource,' but churches don't have a part at the beginning. It's like our African-American friends say: 'Let us be there when you first gather around that table to talk about what's needed.' I don't think the religious community is really part of a lot of the dialogue in the city.

DIDIER: Is that because of the religious community not seeing themselves as one and taking the initiative in starting some of those conversations, and leading the way in areas where they're particularly interested? Or, is it because secular institutions don't think of the religious community when they're starting to formulate questions and initiatives in certain policy areas?

ENRIGHT: What do you think?

DIDIER: Well, I'm just wondering. I was reading some literature on community building. There was a recent initiative in Chicago where it was really being driven by the religious community – where leadership within the religious community were taking the initiative.

FARNSLEY: Was it the Catholic community?

DIDIER: Yes, the Catholic community was a part of it, and this organization called I-F, I think…

FARNSLEY: Oh. The Industrial Areas Foundation. [1]

DIDIER: Right. They were originally from Chicago and they went out on the East Coast and they're now moving back to Chicago to help foster this new organization. And they had a wonderful weekend event where over a thousand people turned out to start talking about these issues.

FARNSLEY: Reverend Enright, you lived in Chicago. Indianapolis has the reputation of being a place that doesn't have that kind of grassroots neighborhood organizing, religious or otherwise. It must look very different here.

ENRIGHT: Yes, yes. And yet to me the challenge and intrigue of Indianapolis is that while it's a large city, it's still is of a size that may be manageable. The mayor seems to be putting at least a lot of talk into the neighborhoods, and the importance of the neighborhoods. Is the religious community so fractured that it's hopeless to try to get them together? Where do we begin? You know, on the north side we have a breakfast group that meets regularly. A few of us said, 'Let's start getting together.' It's very ecumenical, and it's a means of friendship. In the suburban area where I was in Chicago, we had a wonderful clergy council that had every single church in the community, and it spanned the theological spectrum from right to left. And we could address some concerns within that community from a larger perspective. And I wonder if the neighborhood initiative is something that might work by bringing people together.

FARNSLEY: There was a fairly thriving church and community ministry project on the south side in the Fountain Square area, and one on the east side. And it seems to me both of those to some degree developed into secular organizations. They became neighborhood development groups.

DIDIER: You know, in talking with the CDCs [community development corporations], the fourteen or sixteen that are in the city, we were having these conversations about that kind of tradition, that a number of the CDCs did start off as faith-based organizations. And they still have their faith-based connection and mission.

FARNSLEY: It may just be the way social services and neighborhood development is now linked with the government. It seems to me though there almost has to be some sort of civic or secular organization serving as the glue. I think the Front Porch Alliance has been the catalyst for the churches working together [in the UNWA neighborhood.] And my guess is, if you guys took your hands all the way off of that, in two years you'd

find it . . . just kind of floating around. Or, it would have become something else.

DIDIER: The main objective of the Front Porch Alliance is just to start connecting the resources and partnerships that are already there in the neighborhood. We keep cognizant of that each time as we're trying to build these partnerships and trying to provide any assistant we can in those neighborhoods. We ask, okay, so who are you collaborating with, what other resources and assets in your neighborhood are you tapping? Is there any way we can help you do that better? But we don't want to just bring things in or tell them how to do anything. Because if we go away, there's nothing left behind. You can't impose community building and community leadership upon a neighborhood. It's more a case of trying to find who are the natural leaders in that neighborhood, and then providing them some assets or resources so they can take on a leadership role in the neighborhood.

ARMSTRONG: But I wonder: do we set up a competition of neighborhood and civic leaders, saying 'We're looking for leaders to help build this neighborhood.' While at the same time, congregations are saying, 'We're looking for leaders to go out and promote (in a Christian perspective) the cause of the Gospel.' If the community is to be formed by the church being outside of that civic realm, then its witness comes from standing outside. And yet, other neighborhood leaders are saying, 'This is where you need to be to make a difference.' Do you see that happening?

ENRIGHT: Well, from my perspective, that's a no-brainer. We're there to nurture people where they are. I'm reading a book now on calling. And I think it's on to something. To see yourself, wherever you are in your community, as being called there. I would say to our members, whether you are serving on a school board, whether you're serving on a community foundation, that is your place of calling and that is where you serve God. And that's probably more important than serving on the Christian Education Committee of Second Presbyterian Church. It's more influential in the long run.

ARMSTRONG: Well, I think you're absolutely right. But I also recognize that there could be a pretty strong tension there…there are some who argue that congregations have actually generated some of the metropolitan differences that we experience with regard to race –

FARNSLEY: – or north-south.

ARMSTRONG: – right, between the folks who live north, and those who live south. And perhaps congregations are even generating the differences, which some would say are false, between urban and suburban. Can you think of any examples of how congregations have bridged those differences? Or can you imagine ways in which congregations could bridge some of those differences, which are very real in this city?

ENRIGHT: Take our congregation, which has been around a long time, a hundred and sixty years. Very staid, very typically Presbyterian. Also, from the beginning a very strong commitment to the city. And take Light of the World, which is an African-American congregation that is almost as old as we are. In style of worship you couldn't find two congregations that are more different. And we've had some fascinating conversations. Bishop Benjamin's congregation is essentially African-American. Our congregation is essentially Caucasian. And the demographics of our congregations are not likely to change. So how do we deal with that given? By creating partnerships that bring us together. And if we can bring people together, to sit down and talk, some intriguing things begin to happen. Sensitivities are elevated. You begin to see things through other's eyes.

FARNSLEY: Kim, I won't insult you by asking whether you think the racial gaps are real. But do you find in your own work the north-south difference to be as strong? Do you think it's real, or is it in my head?

DIDIER: I think there are hints of it in some of the work that we've done and some of the experiences that we've had. I don't know if there's a chasm there, some big gap that's very difficult to bridge. One of our goals this year for the Front Porch Alliance is to move beyond the so-called seven targeted neighborhoods in Center township, and foster some partnerships that go wider and more regional.

ENRIGHT: Your paper was really interesting on the north-south demographic. Does the Mason-Dixon line run right through Indianapolis? I remember a conversation with somebody in the congregation who said, 'The north side of Indianapolis is the North, but when you get on the south side you're really into Appalachia.' I am amazed at how often I hear comments like that.

FARNSLEY: When I think of the [urban-suburban] partnerships, I always think of them as running from just north of Washington Street, up into the suburbs. The mainline congregations there seem to work very well with the black denominations here in town. But the further south you go into Johnson County and Morgan County where evangelicals are the big segment – I'm not trying to lay any blame at their feet – that turns out to be an extremely difficult line to cross. It's not just whether 'we care about poor people' or 'we're interested in inter-racial dialogue.' Everyone in those groups would say that they are. But when we try to get people involved in civic dialogue or talking about church in the city, there are lots of evangelicals for whom that's just not a particularly interesting question, because it's not what they see themselves doing.

ENRIGHT: But the evangelical world, we have to remember, is as diversified as mainline Protestantism. To bring a liberal evangelical together with a conservative evangelical, isn't going to happen. But you can bring a liberal evangelical and a mainliner together. Some of the new alliances that I've seen one would not have thought about twenty-five years ago.

ARMSTRONG: Well...last words here? Anything that you came with the desire to say, or questions or comments?

ENRIGHT: I find it interesting that we're sitting here talking in this Indianapolis Center for Congregations [2]. And that's one of my hopes. Is this an entity that can build bridges and bring us together, that can help engage congregations in conversation with the city?

[1] The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) is a neighborhood-empowerment movement founded by Saul Alinsky in Chicago in the 1930s. A key strategy pioneered by Alinsky was to form alliances with Catholic parishes for neighborhood organizing.

[2] The Indianapolis Center for congregations is a program of the Alban Institute, a national research organization based in Bethesda, Maryland. The Indianapolis Center was established in 1997 with support from Lilly endowment Inc. The Center provides consulting, educational programs, and other services which are available to any congregation in the greater Indianapolis area. For further information, contact: Indianapolis Center for Congregations, 950 North Meridian Street, Suite 950, Indianapolis, IN 46204. Telephone: (317) 237-7799.

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