UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

October 28, 1965
Report of the Assistant Pastor

A. In the opening Sunday Evening Forum this year, Prof. Roger Johnson tackled the theme "The Vanishing Christian Intellectual." He argued that the age of a comprehensive, synthetic idea or vision of reality is past. What is called for, he said, is a "new breed" of Christian intellectuals who refuse to withdraw from rational encounter with the whole world, but who at the same time are willing to live with the tensions of a broken, analytical age.

I would generalize Prof. Johnson's point with regard to the life and mission of our congregation. The centralized, comprehensible image of our work is fading away; and we are entering a time when we will have to get by more and more with a de-centralized, difficult-to-comprehend image. This, I think, is the strong implication of Pastor Horn's report. I concur.

Our Sunday Evening Forums are a case in point. As Pastor Horn observes, attendance is lagging compared to other years; and, I would add, enthusiasm also seems to be lagging somewhat compared to earlier times. On the basis of this alone it might seem that our student-program is in serious trouble. But I don't think so. IN MY JUDGMENT WE OUGHT NOT TO JUDGE THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF OUR WHOLE PROGRAM ON THE BASIS OF THE NUMBERS WHO ATTEND OUR FORUMS. I think all of us will have to exphasize a more subtle kind of evaluation. When we do this, I think, we will see -- de-centralized -- seeds of new life beginning to bud everywhere.

In an age where everyone is calling the Church's worship dull and its message irrelevant, we are drawing a high number of anticipating, responsive, participating students to the 9, 10, 11, and 5 PM Services. This is clear to me from meeting people at the door and elsewhere. The same is true of the Wednesday morning Communion Service. BUT, in terms of overall numbers it seems that we are lagging. In a word, quality seems to be coming up while overall quantity seems to be going down. Interestingly, the number of students attending seems to be going up.

In an age of anonymity, sometimes bitter anonymity, we are succeeding in a variety of small ways in getting people to know each other personally. NB our coffee-hour after the 11 AM Service, our conversations on Monday evening, the Wednesday AM and the Sunday 10 AM Communion Services, the crew of students who cook Sundays, our whole host of committee meetings, and the yet untapped potential of informal non-churchy get-togethers. Our church building is buzzing with personal encounters almost every day of the week. People are finding it fun to be human in the context of our congregation. And if indeed the Holy Spirit is using our congregation in this way, then -- to cite a sermon I heard not too long ago -- we can afford to enjoy a few good nights' sleep now and then.

We are about to inaugurate a program of open houses on Friday evenings: the Church will be open with no program, except perhaps coffee-drinking. On a few of these Friday evenings we will present a new program: "Musical Offerings." Here professionally competent musicians will offer music to the Lord, and we anticipate that a few enrolled members, a few student members, and perhaps even a few "lost sheep" will stray in to listen, too.

AA continues to meet here Monday evenings. The significance of this meeting should not be underestimated! The university community knows that we are providing this service. It's clear to all who know about this, moreover, that here we are being the Church. And with hardly any effort on our part!

Musica Sacra also is enthusiastically associated with us. Here, again, with little effort on our part we are being the Church: we are allowing these people to get to know each other in a friendly atmosphere and allowing them to praise the Lord as they could not do individually.

I should say, too, that our Forums have shown some solid life. WE SHOULD BY NO MEANS WRITE THE FORUM OFF AS DYING. IT CONTINUES TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE. In few other places can a whole range of ideas and problems be discussed with such thoroughness, such freedom, and such a variety of people. To cut off our Forums would be to cut off a vital organ of our life and mission.

B. Then two questions intimately related to the foregoing -- regarding our building, which is the space for our life together and the point of departure for our movement out into the world around us:

First, concerning the chancel and the nave, that is, the most important section of our building. Is there a master plan for developing this whole crucial area? Does a committee exist perhaps, similar to the organ committee, which has or will come up with proposals and guidelines for ongoing renovation and inovation? Perhaps such questions ought to be discussed even though the prospect for immediate changes of a major kind may seem remote.

Second, concerning the Alumni Room, an area of our building which is surely no less significant than the chancel and the nave. The Property Committee is presently considering the problems and the potential of renovating our Alumni Room. Several students have taken a keen interest in this as a possible project. A variety of alumni have also shown interest in this connection. It seems clear, indeed, that renovation of our Alumni Room is presently a <u>necessity</u>.

Quite apart from the mere physical needs of the room, which are many merely from the perspective of upkeep, the Alumni Room has great, and to a considerable extent untapped, potential. It is here that our small groups meet. It is here that significant breakdown of isolation between student and student, student and staff, student and enrolled members, staff and enrolled members, may occur. Yet the room is presently harsh and drab and glaring. It does not easily lend a humanizing aspect.

It seems to me that we should procede with all deliberate speed with plans to renovate the Alumni Room. BUT WE SHOULD NOT PROCEDE WITH UNDUE HASTE. Money of course is the big problem; and we must handle this problem with a full and realistic awareness of our whole financial picture and with consultation with the Board. BUT LET US NOT ASSUME THAT THE PROBLEM OF THE ALUMNI ROOM WILL BE RESOLVED AS SOON AS THE PROBLEM OF MONEY IS RESOLVED. Poorly planned renovations or piecemeal renovations or renovations which make the room look nice but which do not meet our needs -- such renovations might well be <u>worse</u> than no renovations, and a waste of money and effort at that! What are we to do about the Alumni Room?

C. Finally, a personal word. Your Assistant Pastor has been overwhelmed with his warm and friendly reception into the congregation. Everywhere he sees people willing to make his work easier and willing to assist him in the Lord's work in all manner of ways. For all this he is deeply grateful.

Respectfully submitted,

H. Paul Santmire