

## REFLECTION MANUAL FOR HMI STAFF MEMBERS

### MISSION STATEMENT

*The mission of HMI is to develop and implement an effective and more relevant paradigm for Christian world mission.*

1. “Develop” implies that we will create something new, or something with significantly distinctive features, over a period of time. We don’t begin with pre-packaged programs.
2. “Implement” means that what we do is not mere theory or an academic exercise. We will put our programs into effect right here in Paterson
3. “Effective” requires that what we develop must empower the poor. It must meet real needs in the lives of individuals, families, neighborhoods and civic structures, and communicate the gospel holistically in a typical “third world city,” viz., Paterson.
4. “More relevant” suggests that many or most contemporary (which is to say, traditional) approaches to world mission are not relevant to the century ahead of us, or not adequately relevant. This is primarily because they rely on suburban, middle-class missionary recruits whose training is primarily academic, who don’t understand urban life, and who are unable to relate to people who are poor, powerless and oppressed.
5. “Paradigm” is a synonym for “model.” It implies that we are not out to build a megachurch or parachurch empire. Rather, we aim to project a modest but concrete example which can be replicated by others, including any missionary interns the Lord sends our way.
6. “Christian world mission” suggests that the model we develop must be applicable to cross cultural mission globally, and particularly to “third world” situations anywhere in the world, including the USA.

### HMI’s PHILOSOPHY

#### 1. Our Kingdom Perspective

By “Kingdom” we mean the Kingdom of God. Jesus began his earthly ministry by proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:23). And Paul spent the final years of his life proclaiming the same Kingdom (Acts 28:30-31).

But what is the Kingdom of God? It is not a geographical entity as implied in the word “Christendom.” Nor can it be equated with the Church, which is itself a servant of the Kingdom. Essentially the Kingdom is the realm in which God sovereignly, actively, and effectively rules in mercy and judgment. That being so, there are three basic observations we can make about the Kingdom of God.

(1) It includes the whole universe. Hence the Lord’s prayer, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth *as it is in heaven.*”

(2) It has past, present and future dimensions. It was promised in the Old Testament. It was inaugurated by Jesus and offered by him as a present option. The apostles identified the Kingdom with Jesus himself, especially after his ascension to the right hand of God. And it will culminate after Jesus’ second coming in the creation of a “new heaven and new earth.”

(3) It features the establishment of justice in the broadest sense, i.e., eliminating Satanic opposition, rehabilitating creation, reconciling humanity to God, ensuring social justice, healing wounded personalities, and vindicating the people of God. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice” (Matthew 6:33). The word “justice” here is the most accurate translation and appears as such in most non-English translations of the Bible.

The practical implications that we draw for HMI from our Kingdom perspective include the following:

A. The word “Holistic” in our title reflects our understanding that God’s rule is directed to the whole of life, not just its “spiritual” aspects, but also its physical, material, social, economic, political and cultural aspects. In this we agree with traditional Reformed thinking.

B. The sovereign God is always involved in the world and ultimately determines the destiny of peoples and nations. More specifically, we understand that he was at work in Paterson long before HMI arrived on the scene. By ourselves we do not bring salvation to Paterson. God has his own plan for Paterson and the world. Therefore HMI does not approach Paterson with preconceived plans or prepackaged programs. We rely on the Spirit for guidance.

C. God works his will in part through the organized Church. But he also works through parachurch agencies such as ourselves. And he also works his will in society at large through secular agencies. So we are prepared to interact and cooperate with secular and other non-Christian groups whose agendas coincide in some measure with the objectives of the Kingdom noted above.

D. Since the Kingdom is identified with Jesus, we seek to introduce individuals to him so that they can personally experience the liberating power of the Kingdom. Discipling individuals is essential, both because of their own inherent worth and because we

believe the transformation of individuals to be a key to achieving our larger societal concerns.

E. Since the fullness of the Kingdom awaits God's action at the Final Day, we do not have to bring it about. We can aim at being a valid "sign" of the Kingdom. We do not have to build a great religious empire. We can concentrate instead on providing a replicable model, even if on a small scale. This means that HMI as a working body of believers must reflect the character of the Kingdom at all times.

## 2. Our Missionary Perspective

There is a crucial difference between "ministry" and "mission." Ministry has to do with service (Mark 10:45). Ministry is any service we render in the name of the Lord – anytime, anywhere, to anyone. Mission, however, has to do with sending, and being sent (John 20:21, Acts 13:1-4). The dictionary defines mission as "being sent out with authority to perform a special duty." The apostle Paul suggests that missionaries are "ambassadors" for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).

1. HMI is a missionary society first and foremost – though this is not immediately apparent in our name. The "M" in HMI stands for Ministries, not Mission. This is appropriate since a mission society may have a variety of ministries, but a ministry is not necessarily a mission. Our missionary perspective is implied in the word "International," which has for us a philosophical connotation rather than a geographical one.

2. Generally speaking, organizations emerge as the embodiment of a single person's vision. The origin of HMI is rooted in my own calling as a missionary (Isaiah 49:1). Early childhood experiences, the missionary ethos of the Plymouth Brethren among whom I was reared, cross-cultural experiences in Albuquerque in my early teens and in my military service in my late teens, and 30 years of actual service as a missionary in the Middle East, Asia, and elsewhere with The Navigators, the World Evangelical Fellowship, and American Leprosy Missions – all contributed to the way I approached the founding of HMI.

3. Georgia, as co-founder and current president of HMI, brought her own unique and complimentary set of experiences to the venture. Among other things, these include her African-American heritage, an indigenous understanding of the inner city, a powerful personal experience with Christ, an appreciation for education as a means of empowerment, and a feminine perspective on life and ministry.

4. Each staff member should consider carefully and prayerfully what special gifts and experiences he or she brings to HMI.

As a missionary society, we are different than a church. This creates tensions which can, however, be creative and mutually beneficial. We will discuss these below (see 3. Our Relationship to the Church).

Our missionary perspective beings to bear on inner city witness the lessons taught by twenty centuries of Christian mission history:

1. The necessity of “learning the language,” the pervasiveness of cultural biases, the danger of creating dependence rather than empowerment, the awareness of mixed motives, the destructive potential of money, the importance of developing indigenous leadership, etc.

2. Our missionary perspective instinctively incorporates a cross-cultural focus which is essential in all urban settings, including Paterson. Moreover, it acknowledges and especially values the way God has always used “foreigners” to diffuse the Gospel across cultures.

3. With a missionary perspective, we never lose sight of the imperative of the unreached peoples (Isaiah 49:6). All mission must aim at and contribute to *world* mission. There is always the need to overcome chronic tendencies to parochialism.

4. Our missionary perspective also enables us to understand world mission realities more clearly. Hence we more quickly recognize the convergence of “home” and “foreign” missions. Historically, home missions had to do with “Christendom.” Foreign missions had to do with non-Christendom and was closely tied in with western colonialism. Today all that has changed. The idea of Christendom is passé. There is one world and one mission. World mission is no longer a European/North American project. “Third World” missions are a new reality.

So we recognize that our cities today, with people immigrating into them from every part of the world, represent a kind of modern Pentecost. We note the global phenomenon of urbanization and the need to learn how cities work. We understand Paterson to be a microcosm of the unreached world.

Paterson has all the characteristics of Third World cities, especially as regards immigration patterns and the experience of poverty and marginalization. We note the emergence of Third World missions and believe that any city, even Paterson, can become a center of world mission. HMI has great potential for cross-cultural training and relevant missionary internships.

In contrast with contemporary short-term, technologically oriented mission strategies, we emphasize the need for traditional long-term commitments. The kind of disciplinmaking and community development we envision requires this.

### 3. Our Relationship to the Church

Within Paterson we aim to develop a symbiotic relationship with one local church, while cooperating freely on specific projects with other churches, parachurch societies and secular agencies. “Symbiosis” is a biological term. It refers to the process in which two dissimilar organisms live together in mutual dependence and to their mutual advantage.

In what way is HMI dissimilar to a local church? The primary difference is the one that distinguishes modalities from sodalities. Churches are modalities. Mission societies are sodalities. The membership of a modality is inclusive of age, gender, spirituality, etc. It has a basic commitment to minister to anybody and everybody.

A sodality, by contrast, is exclusive. It exists for a limited purpose, operates with a prescribed set of values and methodologies, and its membership consists of those who are committed to that particular purpose and those particular values and methods.

Note that we aim at a symbiotic relationship. That implies mutual dependence and mutual advantage. The relationship cannot be forced. Both parties must recognize the value of such a relationship. This may take some time, and the ideal may never be achieved. HMI’s purpose in working toward such a relationship with one local congregation is two-fold:

In the first place, as Christians we recognize ourselves to be part of the Body of Christ, the universal Church, and we need to identify with the Body in a given location, not isolate ourselves from it. In this way we express the unity that Jesus prayed for.

For this reason our fundamental stance is not only evangelical but ecumenical (though some will see this as a contradiction in terms), and we want to be open to cooperating with all Christian churches, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox alike.

Second, we acknowledge the biblical teaching on the mutual dependence of various parts of the Body. We cannot claim self-sufficiency. Unless we are prepared to become an organized church ourselves (which as this point we are not) we need the local church for worship, for fellowship, for prayer and financial support, and to keep in touch with the mainstream of the Christian community.

Parachurch agencies tend to be so absorbed in their mission that they are unable to meet the full range of the emotional and spiritual needs of their staffs. Parachurch agencies also tend, in their absorption in their specific mission, to become tunnel-visioned.

What HMI has to offer in return to the local congregation has previously been discussed. In addition to modeling the missionary perspective, which in many local churches is diminished, we also link the local congregation to other groups in the city, secular and

religious, that it might not otherwise be in touch with. And of course we bring our own individual spiritual gifts to the congregation.

But why one single congregation? Because such an intimate relationship cannot be sustained with all churches or even a smaller number of disparate churches. If we were trying to develop a large ministry empire, we might need to maintain relatively superficial relationships with a large number of church – and this is, indeed, the strategy adopted by most mission agencies. But HMI is not building an empire, so we can experiment with a smaller, more intense approach.

At the same time, we need to maintain our own identity and the distinctiveness of our calling. And the reasons for this are both biblical and historical.

1. In terms of biblical history, churches (modalities) are structured along a “priestly” line while parachurch societies (sodalities) are structured along a “prophetic” line. The priestly line (e.g., Aaron and Ezra) focuses on worship and the care of established congregations. The prophetic line (e.g., Moses and Elijah) focuses on mission to the nation and the world.

Sometimes the two lines converge, but for the most part the prophetic line stands somewhat apart from, and is sometimes critical of, the religious establishment.

2. In the Christian era, the most visible type of parachurch organization has been the Orthodox and Roman Catholic monasteries. The Protestant parallel during the past three centuries has been the mission society. There has always been tension between modalities and sodalities through history (even throughout the Bible). The Catholic church succeeded in accommodating the tensions. Some very significant popes came out of the Catholic sodalities.

Within the Protestant Reformation this accommodation broke down as Martin Luther reacted against his own monastic background. As a result, without an adequate concept of sodalities, Protestants had little or no missionary outreach during the first 200 years of their existence.

The typical Protestant model of the people of God today is that of a circle, with the local church at the center. This leaves little room for parachurch legitimacy, which some pastor even deny, while others accept it as “second-best,” pragmatically required because of the failure of the church to do all the good things the church presumably should do but doesn’t.

The tension can be resolved by utilizing the alternative Catholic “elliptical” model. This can also be demonstrated to be the biblical paradigm. The elliptical model incorporates two foci that interact creatively with each other and the people of God.

As of this writing the jury is still out as to the effectiveness of our attempt to promote symbiosis.

#### 4. Our Kind of Programs

The Paterson Paradigm states that our programs are community based, holistic, and largely self-supporting. By “community based” we mean:

1. HMI is people-oriented, not program-oriented. We do not come with pre-packaged programs and try to adapt them to the community. Rather, our programs are rooted in the community; they meet felt needs articulated by the community; they are staffed by local people; and decisions are made locally.

2. By being community based we are forced, as a mission, to learn our community. What are its ethnic and racial distinctives? Who are the community leaders, secular and religious? What resources does the community offer? What programs are already in existence?

3. By community based we further imply community development as over against the most common secular approach: large-scale economic development. On the one hand, community development includes economic development, but much more besides. On the other, large-scale economic development is beyond the reach of most mission organizations.

4. Community based for us means church based, as in CBCD, “church based community development.” Local congregations are close to the people and aware of their needs. Churches offer resources that HMI needs, such as prayer and volunteers. And they provide an additional spiritual base for community programs. CBCD implies a need for church based community organizers, a longer term goal of HMI.

Our programs are holistic, a concept that for us has theological overtones, reflecting our special understanding of the gospel.

1. We believe in and strive for a balance between evangelism/discipling activities on the one hand, and social service/social action activities on the other.

2. The material/social aspects of an inner city ministry are urgent, and the kind of people attracted to inner city work are socially oriented, so achieving the balance noted above is difficult. We have two approaches. The first is to encourage each and every staff member to try to achieve the balance in his or her individual life and ministry.

The second is to recognize that different individuals have different spiritual gifts, and there try to achieve the balance as a team. This means making a special effort to recruit people to our

ministry who have interest and ability in evangelism and discipling.

We aim at being largely self-supporting, staff-wise and program-wise. This means we want to avoid undue reliance on outside resources, whether from church or government, foundations or businesses.

1. At the same time it is understood that we will not be fully self-supporting in either of the above-mentioned areas. We need some financial support from other Christians in part to ensure adequate prayer support. And we can always benefit from a modest amount of outside support for any of our programs, provided there are no, or unreasonable, strings attached.

2. It is important for our staff to be largely self-supporting in order to ensure that we have the freedom to do what God is calling us to do, rather than merely carrying out objectives determined by others. It is important for our programs to be largely self-supporting for this is a form of local empowerment. "He who pays the paper calls the turn." If our programs rely excessively on suburban or government resources local people ultimately will lose control.

3. It is important for us as an organization to be largely self-supporting because it provides a model suitable for mission in a post-colonial world. It further provides an organizational model for suburbanites to consider as an alternative to the conventional dependency mode. And it provides a model for poor people because they are able to replicate it.

Our kind of programs are "owned" by individuals and those they recruit. We do not begin new programs just because there is a need. Needs are never-ending. Nor do we hire people to run programs we have devised. We initiate new programs only when God has raised up someone with a particular vision to meet a certain felt need. Then we become the support group for that individual, assisting him or her with our fellowship, prayers, contacts, prior experience, and whatever finances we can contribute.

To date our programs have been educationally oriented, for the most part. Why is this? For one thing, education – at a variety of levels – is a highly felt need among inner city people. Second, education is a powerful first step toward empowering people. And third, certain types of educational programs are inexpensive to initiate and are self-sustaining to a great degree.

The longer term requirements of HMI's vision demand that we research and develop programs related to other areas of felt need in urban life: employment, health, housing, recreation, family integrity, religion, politics, etc.

## 5. Our Incarnational Lifestyle

The Lord Jesus Christ models our fundamental approach to mission in his incarnation. “The Word became and made his dwelling [pitched his tent] among us” (John 1:14).

The first practical implication of this is that we believe we must live and work among the people God has sent us to serve. We reject the “compound mentality “ of traditional missionary policy which gathered missionaries together in a protected environment apart from the people.

Applied to Paterson, this means our staff does not live in the suburbs, enjoying the conveniences and privacy attached thereto, and commuting to the inner city during the week in order to “do ministry.” Jesus did not live on the moon and commute to Palestine from nine to five six days a week.

Jesus spent the first thirty years of his life learning and practicing a trade. By this means he identified himself with his community. He developed relationships with his neighbors, participated in communal activities, contributed tangibly to the economic welfare of his society, and established his own credibility.

1. Applied to Paterson, this means (as noted above in Point 3. Our Kind of Programs) that we do not invite potential staff to fill a given “position.” Instead, we invited them to move to Paterson, establish residence, get a job, join a church, identify with HMI, do volunteer work, and in other ways participate in the normal life of the city.

2. Over a period of a year or two they are expected to “learn the language” and absorb the culture of the city. Some time during this period God will make them aware of certain “felt needs” in the community to which they may want to respond. They will share their concerns with HMI staff and out of this will emerge a new activity or program, carried out under the auspices of HMI but “owned” by the individual.

In pursuing his earthly ministry Jesus did not seek leadership as such. He said, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). We work with people, alongside them, sharing their struggles and learning from them in the process. We do not assume, even unconsciously, a position of superiority. We make ourselves vulnerable, allowing others to see our weaknesses and share our own struggles.

We believe, contrary to the American Dream, in the efficacy of “downward mobility” as ascribed to Jesus in the classic text, Philippians 2:3-8.

1. Applied to HMI, this means that as individuals and families we aim at a simple lifestyle, avoiding consumerism and applying good stewardship to our limited resources.

2. It also means we try to operate with a minimum of corporate structure. “Small is beautiful.” We expect growth in our

ministries, but in no way do we aim at building a spiritual empire. We are aware that our approach contradicts the conventional wisdom of our time, but we also believe that God chooses “the foolish things of the world to shame the wise...the weak things of the world to shame the strong...the lowly things of this world and the despised things” to fulfill his will (I Corinthians 1:27-28).

## 6. Our Commitment to Justice

HMI is committed to justice not in the abstract but in the concreteness of actively pursuing justice in every area of life. Justice in this holistic sense is a dominant theme of Scripture and a major characteristic of the Kingdom of God. Each HMI staff member should become thoroughly conversant with the many Scriptural passages that focus on justice.

Moreover, seeking justice, creating justices, establishing justice are all integral to mission. All this has been exegeted in Bring Forth Justice (Scott, Eerdmans, 1980).

Justice as we understand it includes a four-fold “righting” of our relationships with God (justification), within our own psyche (healing, sanctification), with our neighbors (social justice), and with our environment (ecological stewardship). HMI in its totality, and in each of our particular programs, must function with these four dimensions in view.

Justification directs us to evangelism, for the greatest injustice we can do to any individual is to deprive her or him of the knowledge of good news of the Kingdom. Evangelism includes *presence* as we give credibility to the gospel by our lives and vocations. Evangelism includes *proclamation*, the verbal presentation of the gospel story. And it includes *persuasion*, the conscious attempt to influence people to respond personally to Jesus Christ.

Sanctification directs us to discipling, beginning with ourselves. With respect to ourselves, we try to develop various aspects of our devotional lives, and we make ourselves accountable to other staff members for our character and behavior.

With respect to others, part of our discipling responsibility is fulfilled in directing people to membership in a local church. But we believe this by itself is insufficient. We also want to personally disciple a few select individuals, following the pattern Jesus modeled with his disciples. These select individuals will usually be found in the context of the particular programs we are involved in.

In our dealings with individuals, one on one, we must remember that, as important as justice is in the larger scheme of things, mercy is even more important. As James, the Lord’s brother, reminds us, “Mercy triumphs over justice” (James 2:13).

Social justice directs us to active participation in the life of the city, and beyond the city to the nation and the world.

1. Cities and nations cohere through structured institutions (commercial, educational, medical, judicial, political, religious, the media, the police, family, unions, etc.). These institutions are essentially morally neutral, and often are beneficial. Yet most injustice is conveyed through structures that, by design or indifference, oppress the poor and the powerless. In Paterson, we become involved with these institutions through the Leadership Paterson program sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

2. Some unjust structures are illegal (e.g., drug trafficking) but many are embodied in legal institutions. After becoming acquainted with the city's institutions we attempt to penetrate them and influence them toward Kingdom values, especially as related to social justice. Georgia has served as a County Freeholder. Dan Groh, our vice president, is involved in public education. I have been chairman of Paterson's Council of Social Services and the YMCA.

3. Injustice also occurs from the lack of appropriate structures. HMI's programs (themselves modest alternative structures) are designed to fill voids where adequate structures are lacking. Hence Loving Care for parents and children, PLUS for functionally illiterate adults, and LAMP for Hispanic immigrants. Georgia and I together developed the Citizens' Alliance for a Drug Free Paterson.

In short, like the prophets of old, we are committed to working within "the system," though we do not rule out the possibility that from time to time, in faithfulness to the gospel, we have to confront the system or even work against it.

Finally, Ecological Stewardship directs us to our planet. HMI needs to be ecologically sensitive. This implies activities ranging from dialing attention to recycling to participating in the annual Pride in Paterson Day.

## DEFINITIVE VALUES

### 1. Servant Leadership

Jesus is our model in ministry, and Jesus came as a servant-leader (Isaiah 42:1, Zechariah 3:8, Mark 10:45, Philippians 2:7). He was a leader in terms of accepting responsibility for mission, and guiding others in mission. But he was a servant in his heart-attitude and in the manner in which he carried out his mission.

This model is contrary to conventional wisdom (Luke 22:25-27). Yet the Bible specifically applies it to civic leaders (Romans 13:4) and to Christian ministers (I Peter 5:1-4). The word

“ministry” means “service.” Are we committed to following Jesus in this respect?

It needs to be noted that Jesus’ model is that of a suffering servant (Isaiah 53:3). We are called to share his sufferings (Philippians 3:10). One does not become a servant in order to live a life of ease or to avoid pain. That is a role reserved for masters. Servants do not court pain, but they expect it and learn to handle it, knowing that suffering produces perseverance, character and hope (Romans 5:3).

The essence of service is to place oneself at the disposal of another. This has profound implications for our ministries. It means always putting others first. Our ministries do not exist for the benefit of our convenience – neither in general nor in details – but for the benefit and convenience of others. We cannot be double-minded in this. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters” (Luke 16:13), referring to God and money, but applicable also to interpersonal relationships.

1. With respect to *benefit*, it is true that as individuals we are apt to be personally fulfilled in our ministry. But that is not why we minister. Any degree of personal fulfillment is secondary to meeting real needs for others. Nor do we begin a ministry in order to make money. Though we may want a ministry to be largely self-supporting or even generate a profit, and though we may conduct a ministry in a business-like fashion, it is never a business. It is a service (I Peter 5:2).

2. The matter of *convenience* often proves more problematic. The incident of Jesus and the man with leprosy (Luke 4) is a perfect example. Once we have initiated a program to serve people, we tend to structure it for our convenience. We surround it with rules and regulations designed to make life easier for ourselves. To some extent this necessary to maintain a minimum of order, but it is also dangerous. It diverts our attention from the needs of others to our own needs and desires.

Who are we to serve? To begin with, we serve each other (Galatians 5:13), up close and individually. This is what creates the basic environment of our homes and HMI.

Then we are to exercise our gifts more generally in the service of others (I Peter 4:10). In our case, the “others” include children and teenagers as well as parents and other adult clients. It also includes our non-Christian staff, fellow church members (I Corinthians 16:15), and the general public. That is, HMI is at the service of Paterson and the world Christian mission, not just our narrowly defined “ministry.”

Ultimately we are serving God. This is the source of our motivation (Romans 12:11). Recognizing all service, to whomever, as a service to God enables us to render service in difficult or disagreeable circumstances (Ephesians 6:7). This is the case not

only when serving unbelievers but also when serving believers (Colossians 3:23-24, I Timothy 6:2). One of the prime roles of Christian ministers is to prepare God's people for "works of service" (Ephesians 4:1-2). Obedient service rendered graciously is a witness to unbelievers (2 Corinthians 9:13).

Serving God and our fellows is a high honor. "I am the Lord's servant," Mary assured the visiting angel (Luke 1:38). Service to Jesus leads to intimate friendship with Jesus (John 15:15). We should be faithful, wise, single-minded and non-quarrelsome in our service (Matthew 24:45, 2 Timothy 2:4 and 24). God, who is faithful, will reward faithful service (Matthew 25:21, John 12:26).

## 2. High Standards of Excellence

Excellence follows from our commitment to service. If we are going to serve, we should excel in our service. In serving other people we are actually serving Christ. At the Last Judgment the King will reply, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers [and sisters] of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). By the same token, we should aim to excel in all other areas of our corporate and personal lives and ministries. God has "*called* us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3).

HMI should earn a reputation for service – but we should also merit a reputation for excellence. Service reflects our heart; excellence reflects our professionalism. Our programs should be the best in the city, and should be improving all the time.

The meaning of excellence. Excellence is not the same as perfection, but it draws its inspiration from perfection. "Nobody's perfect," we say. Yet Jesus challenges us to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Paul counsels us to "aim for perfection" (2 Corinthians 13:11). Christians should have a passion for perfection. And as we aim for perfection we are driven to excel.

To excel means to surpass (Proverbs 31:29), to exceed, to be superior to, more competent than some established norm, better than expected, better than what we think we are capable of. God despises mediocrity, lukewarmness (Revelation 3:16).

A certain level of competitiveness is implied in excelling, and this can be dangerous to the Christian. We need to monitor and discipline our motives. The ultimate motive for excellence is the glory of God. "Let your light shine before me, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

The ever present driving motive for excellence is love. This is the "more excellent way" Paul expounds on in I Corinthians 13. True love for God, for our neighbors and for ourselves (Mark 12:30-32) requires that we do our best.

Disciplemaking requires a commitment to excellence. “Excel in gifts that build up the church” (I Corinthians 14:12). Paul also urges us to excel in generosity – another special value cherished in HMI and which we will discuss further below.

How excellence is achieved. Excellence begins with our *thought life*. Not all thoughts are of equal value. So we are challenged to learn to “discern what is excellent” and to “think about such things” as are “excellent and praiseworthy” (Philippians 1:10, 4:8). Much of what we read and view and talk about does not promote excellence in our character or in our ability to disciple others.

Excellence is promoted by *effort*, hard work. The famous missionary, David Livingstone, said, “Nothing great is ever accomplished for God without patient, long, continued effort.” Criticized for working on the Sabbath, Jesus re-plied, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working” (John 5:17).

To those who compared him with other apostles, Paul responded, “No, I worked harder than all of them” (I Corinthians 15:10). And to Christians in Colossae he wrote, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:23). In the world, successful people routinely put in 60-hour weeks, yet some believers complain when they are asked to put in an hour’s overtime!

Excellence requires focusing on *priorities*. An this in turn calls for planning and organization, which in turn require *thinking*. Planning, prioritizing and organizing enable us to be proactive rather than reactive. It keeps our larger vision fresh and clear. It keeps us from frittering our time away on non-essentials. It relieves the frustration that comes from inevitable interruptions. The biggest single obstacle to planning and organizing is not making and taking time to do it, every day.

Excellence is characterized by *attention to detail*. Details are what slip through the cracks. “The devil is in the details,” the proverb states. After the Exodus, God instructed Moses to “make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you” (Exodus 25:9) – and then proceeded to outline in the most specific detail every aspect of the construction of the tabernacle and all of its furnishings.

Carelessness, sloppiness, glossing over what we consider “unimportant,” failure to clean up and put things away as we go along, unwillingness to exercise imagination or to think through on the implications of a course of action – all this inhibits excellence.

### 3. A Teachable Spirit

In HMI we associate service with excellence. And there is no excellence apart from teachableness. Teachableness is a high value in HMI because we are a small fellowship with a large vision. There is much to do and our resources are limited. We don't have time to reinvent the wheel. We have to take advantage of whatever experience is available. We must be open to each other, to learn from each other.

How do we become teachable? First of all, behind teachableness is humility and the desire to learn. "Let no one think of himself more highly than he ought to think," Paul counseled (Romans 12:3). The Greek word for disciple is *mathetes*, which means a learner. To be a disciple is to be a lifelong learner. Paul challenged the Ephesians to "learn" what is pleasing to Christ" (Ephesians 5:10).

Second, we can accomplish a great deal of learning on our own, but this requires a lot of personal initiative. One must really want to learn. "And if you *call out* for insight, and *cry aloud* for understanding, and if you *look* for it as for silver and *search* for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5). Again, "Though it cost you all you have, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).

Third, we learn by observation (Genesis 24:21), Proverbs 13:20) and by listening (Proverbs 18:13, 19:20). It is well to keep in mind that "you ain't learnin' nothin' when you're talkin'."

Fourth, we learn by reading (Deuteronomy 17:19). One must create the time for learning. For example, if you were to devote just 15 minutes to reading each night before going to bed, you could easily read a book a month, twelve books a year that would otherwise remain unread.

But the real essence of discipleship is to learn from others. And that raises a problem. As Winston Churchill, British prime minister during World War II, famously admitted, "I love to learn, but I hate to be taught!" – meaning, "I hate to have another person correct me, rebuke me, set me right."

We don't like to be taught because the lessons are often embarrassing, even sinful. But the Book of Proverbs specifically distinguishes the wise person from the fool by noting that the wise person accepts rebuke. "Rebuke a wise man and he will love you; instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; instruct a righteous man and he will add to his learning" (Proverbs 9:8-9).

Our problem, of course, is pride and stubbornness and willfulness, the opposite of which are humility and meekness. The latter are preconditions for teachableness. " Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart" (Matthew 11:29). For this reason Peter also urges younger persons to "be submissive to those who are older" and then challenges all of us to "clothe yourselves with humility" (I Peter 5:5).

The proof of teachableness is change – attitude changes and behavioral changes. It's not just the hearing but the doing that demonstrates teachableness Jesus told the story of a son who, when asked by his father to go work in the vineyard, refused. Later he repented. The other son cheerfully replied, "I will, sir," to this father – but never worked (Matthew 21:28-31).

Jesus' story of the wise and foolish builders also focuses on the importance of doing, as proof of hearing. Similarly James 1;19-24.

#### 4. Responsible Stewardship

HMI is called to be a good steward of the manifold grace of God (I Peter 4:10). Stewardship has to do with the management of resources. Responsible stewardship means we manage resources in such a way as to ensure their integrity, and maximize the return on their investment. That Jesus placed a high value on good stewardship is evident from his parable in Matthew 25:14-30.

HMI's immediate resources include the presence and power of the Spirit, the Bible, our staff, money acquired from fees and donations, the church, our society at large, and creation.

For all of these we are accountable for good stewardship. For the purpose of our present discussion we will focus on the financial values of HMI and the implications of those values for responsible stewardship.

1. *Simplicity and frugality.* How we spend money is more important than how much we get. So we aim for simplicity both in our personal lifestyles and in our ministries. We will learn how to live contentedly within the amount of money God provides (Philippians 4:11-13). This goes against the grain of modern consumerism, not to mention the American Dream. But it is in harmony with the reality that most of the world's peoples have to adapt to.

The notable missionary to China, J. Hudson Taylor, asserted that "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's support." Implicit in a commitment to simple lifestyle is frugality. A pioneer missionary of The Navigators, Roy Roberson, used to say, citing a West Texas proverb, "Use it up. Wear it out. Make it do. Do without."

2. *Generosity.* Frugality is not the same as miserliness, or meanness of spirit. We will discuss generosity as a separate value of HMI in another section.

3. *Self Support.* We have already discussed this at some length when we were exploring the underlying philosophy of HMI. For now suffice it to say that as far as possible each ministry of HMI will be self-supporting by generating fees for services rendered and by utilizing volunteers and bi-vocational staff.

This does not mean that we will avoid fundraising, grant-seeking or government aid altogether, for these may be available to indigenous missions overseas, but that our ministries will not depend on outside funding. Nor will our ministry leaders spend time and effort on fundraising and organization-building at the expense of direct ministry to people.

4. *Faith.* While there is a pragmatic basis for our self-support policy, there is also a principled basis. We want to demonstrate that relative material powerlessness is not a decisive handicap to God's people (Philippians 4:13). What is more important than the power inherent in money is the faith that expresses itself in what we call "ownership."

We do not create "positions" to fill and offer competitive salaries to potential staff and leaders. Rather, *we articulate a vision and provide opportunities* for people to become incarnate in the community, identify with their neighbors, learn to discern "felt needs," and ultimately assume personal ownership for a particular project, trusting God to make it happen.

5. *Accountability.* HMI is financially accountable to the government through our Board of Directors and annual reports to the IRS. We are also accountable to donors and the public at large by making our financial records available upon request, and by circulating news of our activities as often as possible.

We are accountable to God as we meet regularly for prayer, study and evaluation. And we are accountable to each other through fellowship, our supervisory structure, and the Board of Directors. Finally, where possible, we want to make ourselves accountable to a local support group and/or a local church. All of this suggests genuine openness to others.

6. *Partnership.* We have previously discussed this in connection with our symbiotic relationship to one local church. In the context of financial stewardship we will simply note that Third World urban needs cannot be met in isolation from the more affluent world, represented in America by suburbia. So we need to develop interest on the part of suburban Christians for inner city ministry. This means building bridges of relationships, creating opportunities for service, and soliciting prayer and finances.

## 5. Generosity

Generosity is an aspect of stewardship, but it is not a financial concept only. We value generosity in every dimension of HMI's affairs and as a distinguishing feature of each of our individual personalities. Our loving God is a giving God (John 3:16). Jesus is reported to have said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). And when Jesus gives, he gives generously (John 10:10).

Originally the word “generous” (from the Latin *genus*) referred to persons of noble birth. Gradually it evolved to denote special qualities presumed to be characteristic of noble persons, such as excellence and goodness. This in turn came to mean liberality, magnanimity, bountifulness.

Generosity is exhibited in giving and sharing, in forgiving and forbearing. A generous person is non-judgmental, always prepared to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. A generous person is hospitable, unselfish, freely sharing not only home and money but praise, time, effort, and even privacy. This is the kind of spirit Paul manifested: “We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our [very] lives as well” (I Thessalonians 2:8).

The opposite of generosity is stinginess, miserliness, meanness, niggardliness (from the Scandinavian “to hoard”). In the final analysis, lack of generosity is based on either selfishness (= greed) or insecurity, or both. “Mercy triumphs over justice” precisely because God is generous.

One of the earliest biblical examples of a generous spirit is Abraham in his dealings with his nephew, Lot (Genesis 13). Although God had promised the land to Abraham, when the time came for him and Lot to part company, Abraham generously gave Lot first choice – and Lot predictably chose the best watered, most fertile areas.

Abraham could be generous because he was concerned solely with his walk with the Lord, not with personal gain, and because he trusted wholly in the Lord for his personal needs. Jesus must have had Abraham in mind when he said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things [referring to material needs] will be yours as well” (Matthew 6:33).

The great New Testament passage on generosity is 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Paul opens Chapter 8 by citing the Macedonian churches who, though severely persecuted and living in extreme poverty, nevertheless exhibited “rich generosity.” They were motivated by the “overflowing joy” of their Christian experience. Late on in Chapter 9 Paul extends his commentary on generosity, citing Old Testament passages in the process.

One of the Old Testament texts Paul quotes is Proverbs 11:24-25, “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others himself will be refreshed.” There are many ways, in addition to unbegrudging financial help, to “refresh others.”

An important element in generosity is *immediate response*. It is dangerous to hesitate because one will either defer the matter indefinitely, or leave the impression that one’s response is reluctant. “do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Come back

later. I will give it tomorrow' – when you now have it with you”  
(Proverbs 3:27-28).