

work out very well either...

We probably defaulted on and had to turn over to the bank the last properties about 1974. We held onto them a long time...

#### Investigative Reporting Makes a Difference: Priority One

Another project was an investigative newsletter called Priority One, which attempted to change the attitudes of the middle class. Rev. Harold W. Garmon talked about Priority One:

Priority One was an outgrowth of my work with the United Methodist Church. It became very evident by 1968 and 1969 that we needed a vehicle to deal with the attitudes of the middle class in this community... I worked with a group of about 100 citizens in the creation of ... Priority One. Our first priority was racism and what could be done about it. We made a multimedia (package) called "The Name of the Race Is Human" and ... showed it in church groups and in civic groups. This was an ecumenical endeavor... The money was coming from several sources and the community... Then we discovered you couldn't really deal with racism without dealing with everything else, so we had to begin prioritizing issues. The name of the group was very apropos...

We published a newsletter which eventually was sent out to over 20,000 homes in city and county... We were able to reach ... the more conservative people in the community ... because it was a very reasoned, moderate approach. Sometimes we didn't do anything but present the facts.

One time we tape recorded for a series of months the newscasts on one of the radio stations. One of the newscasters was particularly demeaning in references to blacks. We just let it be known we were tape recording those and collating them, ones we thought were appropriate, and we never had to do anything with it.

Lucia Whisenand was president of Priority One:

I was president of Priority One for two years... I think we kept people more honest in a way because they never knew when we'd show up with our little newsletter. We really were able to

elicit some very good investigative reporting... I do think the very fact we used the kind of technique we did... had influence on the groups we were investigating,... You may start off with a real problem but then you have various meetings about it. People discuss it and do articles on it, and in this whole process, people change some of their attitudes and ways of behaving. When you talk about attitudinal change, it's very hard to measure, which was one of our problems in ever getting any kind of money...

#### The Bomb Threat at Grace Episcopal Church

Another minister who took the lead in his church in the civil rights movement was Rev. Walter N. Welsh, rector of Grace Episcopal Church during the Sixties. According to Anna Mae Williams, his was the only church in which "really stuck its neck out... (It) allowed CORE as a black group to meet without any reservations. None of the black churches would let us in their doors and none of the Catholic churches..." He began by discussing his commitment to the civil rights movement:

To see and to know that God's work was going to be done through the civil rights movement... was the impetus and the inspiration that led me to risk everything...

Byron (Rushing, Executive-Secretary of Syracuse CORE) came to me and said, "We need a place to meet... We must meet in a church. That is one of the underlying principles of ... CORE and there are no other churches which are large enough... (and) are opening their doors to us."

Because of... my conviction... I took the responsibility since I as a rector had been given the privilege of using the building for the purpose of serving God's ends... I ... gave CORE permission to meet in the church...

When the tv cameras and the news media got wind of CORE's meeting, they covered the meeting rather completely... Some... of the white people in the congregation saw... (the CORE leaders) sitting in the chancel... in their blue jeans. They thought the worst... This was the crisis.

I think it was the following Sunday after several of these meetings that I was preaching to a full congregation. I can't remember a fuller congregation off hand... I was just to begin my sermon when the superintendent of the Sunday school, Ted

Stone, came over to the pulpit and said, "We have just evacuated all the children from the Sunday school. They're lined up... and down Madison Street." There was a good large Sunday school in those days. Sunday school... (was) black and white, well integrated... We (had) had a telephone call saying a bomb was planted and it may go off sometime during the morning.

I faced the congregation and ... I said to them exactly what Ted Stone had told me. I said, "If anybody wishes to leave, they can leave right now... I'm going to stay here in the pulpit and preach my sermon." I didn't explain anything more than that. There were two people (who) left, anxious because they were a new(ly) married couple and they had a child... in the nursery...

The point simply was there we stood and there we sat. We stayed for the whole service while the police, the fire department marched around the church, searched the basement, and came away with nothing... We took an awful risk and people were traumatic afterwards. There was a whole series of real showdown discussions on how we will handle ourselves as a parish in the future in relation to such events.

I found tremendous support from responsible, intelligent neighborhood... and university people alike. The ones who decided they could no longer stay at Grace Church packed up, withdrew their money, called me on the phone and that was that. That was one of the turning points...

It had national repercussions in the church press particularly and our participation from then on was so wholehearted that our parish was turned into a training ground for everything that was... community action from training VISTA volunteers (to) building a full-fledged training workshop in the basement for people who were going to other parts of the world.

## CHAPTER 8

### INTEGRATING SYRACUSE SCHOOL DISTRICT

In the education field, there were two major problems. One was a general problem of comparatively poor education for minorities and more particularly for blacks and ...(the other) was clearly a segregated school system.

Norton Putter

In spite of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling against racially segregated schools, Syracuse maintained a segregated school district for another eleven years and took thirteen more to integrate every single school building except three.

#### 1962: Picketing Against Segregation

Dr. George Wiley noticed that the movement of individual school district boundaries maintained racial segregation. His example was Sumner Elementary School which was initially a racially mixed building. However, as black families fled the advancement of the bulldozers and resettled in nearby neighborhoods, more black children fell into Sumner's attendance zone. In the spring of 1962 he found the zone lines redrawn so that most of the white children living near the building would attend another school in the fall, and the majority of