



THE INSTITUTE FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP

P.O. Box 1081 / Hendersonville, NC 28793 / (704) 697-6957

TURNING POINT

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The Institute for Servant Leadership is an educational ministry offered to the Church.

*We believe the Church is called to serve God's vision for the world according to the prayer the Church knows best
—that God's Kingdom come, God's will be done on earth as in heaven.*

*We teach that the power of Servanthood, derived from the life and truth of Jesus, will energize the Church for leadership in
God's work of individual and global transformation—where compassion rules relationships, all creation is cherished and justice yields peace.*

WHY THE NAME "TURNING POINT?"

Strange to say, nobody has asked. So we don't know if our name has aroused curiosity. But what we DO know is that serious readers of TURNING POINT are concerned about connections between religious faith and clamoring issues in the world—like the turning tide of environmental plunder, like the unturning tide of popular fascination with violence and war, like economic and social justice, like how to tune one's life to the will of God as a member of systems that seem to smile on liars and predators while regarding truth and generosity as entirely optional.

TURNING POINT carries two big dimensions of meaning in the work of the Institute. The first is personal, the second public.

A. In the personal dimension, TURNING POINT has to do with the impact of significant religious experience in the lives of all human beings. For Christians this impact comes to focus in the penetrating immensity of Jesus of Nazareth. After 2,000 years Jesus remains the world's perennial contemporary, calling all within reach of his voice to personal change in values and behavior. The key word in his message is REPENTANCE. The word in Greek means 'to have another mind'. In English it spells phonetically as 'metanoeh' (verb) and 'met-anoyah' (noun).

In practice it means making two profound shifts at the center of one's

being. The first shift installs God as the all-important reality in life—not social conventions, not country, not even commandments—but God, whose love for each living entity in creation is limitless.

The second shift makes one personally responsible for the character of one's personal life—not circumstance, not a dysfunctional family history, not spouses or unjust rulers or money or luck—but one's own free-under-God self. In simple personal terms REPENTANCE means breaking the most pervasive of all human addictions, namely the habit of confessing other people's sins—of holding others responsible for what is wrong.

To make these shifts is to be grasped by the truth of the universe. Christians call this truth 'the Gospel', the surpassing Good News. Jesus IS this truth in himself and in his teaching—especially in his axial story about a Father and his younger and older sons. The younger one accepted personal responsibility and lived in joy. The other persisted in his addiction to blaming and lived in bitterness. The repentant one trusted truth-telling and discovered love at the heart of things. Christians call this GRACE. A certain hymn-writer understood that such a reality requires an emphatic adjective. He chose 'Amazing'.

Such life-giving change is more a process of turning than a point. In

many ways it is identical with 'growing up'. But however it is understood, it cannot happen without companionship. The long process of personal change requires community. This is the meaning and purpose of the Church—a support system for growing up in what Christians understand as the central Truth of the Universe, the Gospel.

B. In the public dimension, TURNING POINT has to do with the what increasing numbers of people believe about our moment in creation history. The human family lives at a point of sea-change in perception about the way humanity fits into time and the universe.

In some circles this change in human consciousness is called a 'paradigm shift.' It comes to focus in the difference between two prepositions that locate humanity with respect to the planet. We humans are long accustomed to seeing ourselves as ON the earth. The immense turning now underway uses IN as expressing human location. Humanity is immersed in the earth, not extracted from it and functioning on it. This changes all of nature from OBJECT to SUBJECT.

When human activity abuses the earth we no longer mistreat a thing, we injure a living being. To plunder the earth is to commit violence against life—not only against life in the abstract, but against our own life as a species.

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Slowly we begin to see this truth. It reveals itself in all the elements of the environmental crisis. Population growth, if not radically diminished, will drive the human species into fratricide over what remains of the earth's raped resources. Waters, soils, forests, the gossamer mantle of air and all that dwell therein—these not only sustain humanity, they are humanity's living companions. They are the womb from which God has brought all life. Go gently therefore among the living. Human life is debtor to all that lives.

Turning from ON to IN with respect to human habitation of the earth is not a new view. It speaks an ancient wisdom, buried under heaps of exuberant human ingenuity and a stubborn misreading of biblical literature.

It is easy to misread God's charge to 'subdue' the earth. (Genesis 1: 28). 'Subdue' as understood in English implies an adversarial relationship—some counter-force that needs to be brought under control, or subjugated to a superior will. In Hebrew the meaning is quite otherwise. The term is 'kabash'. Its principal connotation is agricultural. It means 'to cultivate' or 'to prepare for planting'. Clearly this implies collaboration with forces that are for us, not against us. 'Subdue' means to unlock energies, not conquer them. It means to empower waiting powers, luring them to life.

This ancient layer of wisdom is confirmed by the newest science. Quantum physics ratifies a mystical intuition that loves the earth as a pulsing, nurturing friend and mother, alive in all her parts. The Cartesian view of the universe as an intricate arrangement of inert parts, awaiting ruthless rearrangement, is corrected by Quantum theory that insists on the livingness of all entities.

All things move to the mystic impulse of love—or recoil for want of it. Exploit any component of creation and it will withdraw. This is true of

children, spouses, customers, employees, dogs, rivers, soils—even a lawnmower. A subjugational, manipulative relationship with anything or anybody will always carry immense cost to both parties. With patience, love and respect will yield the rewards of reconciliation, justice and peace.

The reason it works this way is that the universe works this way. It is GRACEFUL—a living network of interwoven vitality. Nothing in all creation is inert. Everything is alive. All life is interconnected. All is one. The cosmic order is called a UNIVERSE, not a multiverse. Somehow in the beginning of human language we intuited this truth of the cosmos. That is how deep in the soul of humanity this wisdom lives. So the public dimension of TURNING POINT is really a recovery, a going back in order that the human odyssey may go forward.

This is the only way that the human species can continue on the planet. The human experiment is utterly finished unless we come 'to have another mind'—unless there develops a wholesale METANOYAH. The most thrilling thing about living in this moment of creation history is that the sea change of public METANOYAH is emerging all across the earth. Everywhere a new compassion for creation marks an emerging human consciousness and our habit patterns.

SO... TURNING POINT can be seen as a single point of turning in both personal and public realms. The single axis has to do with an understanding of Power. Power used for blaming or subjugation is against the grain of the universe. Power used for SERVING is the way power works at the heart of things—vividly seen in the way Jesus walks the world. Servanthood is love and respect for all that lives. It is the strongest force in the universe, because it is the power

of God. St. Paul defined the Servanthood of Jesus as "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:24).

But present political history forces the question: given the immense tide of American applause for the Gulf War can there be real hope for a shift away from the use of armed violence for settling international conflict? The next issue of TURNING POINT will carry an essay that addresses this question. Meanwhile a few comments about hope.

Almost anything is possible once a people has changed their mind. METANOYAH has turned the human family from slavery, and in our own time from lawful segregation. METANOYAH has turned the human family from publicly structured contempt for women, and in our own time to a rising tide of regard for women in all expressions of human enterprise.

It does seem implausible that the nations should ever turn from war. But consider that plausibility never makes history. Plausibility only repeats history, lots of it good, lots of it brutally bad—like racism and war. It is the irresistibility of vision and risk that builds all the high roads of the human odyssey, and the vision of humanity at peace with one another and the environment drives mounting numbers across the world.

The human family has experienced TURNING POINTS before. The greatest such in history for Christians is the implausible blossoming of a community with arms around the earth — all from the carnage and sorrow of a crucified field preacher. Implausibility vanishes before this irresistibility.

Hope never need be blind, because we can see behind us.

B.J.S.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOR THE WORLD'S NEED

**A Core Conference on
Servanthood for Laity and
Clergy from all the Churches
October 30 -
November 3, 1991
at Kanuga**

Lord Coggan will weave a uniting thread of biblical theology through the conference with devotional lectures each morning.

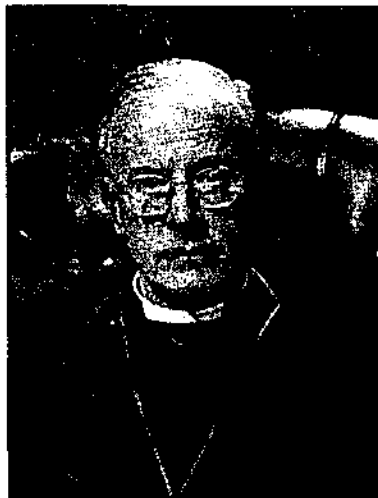
Congresswoman Schroeder will address the issue of peace and war in a single lecture—as will Chief Fulwood on the issue of reclaiming the city—as will Mr. Rouse on the issue of housing for mounting numbers of the homeless.

Dr. Robert K. Massie, Jr. of Harvard will speak more than once on ethics and public policy. Bennett Sims will serve as chaplain and offer meditations on the theme of Christians and the Environment.

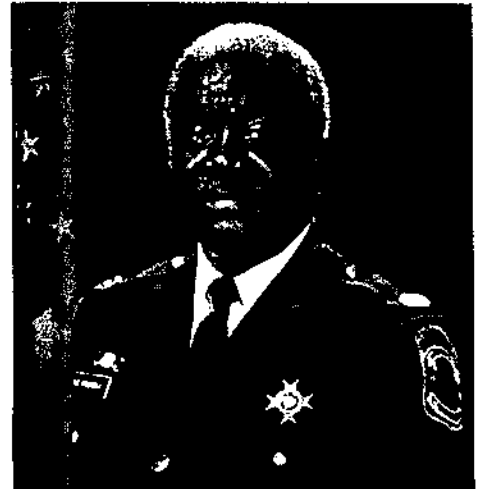
Tuition, room and meals is \$345 (double occupancy) for the full span, Wednesday supper thru Sunday lunch; \$245 for an accompanying and participating spouse; and \$395 for a participant desiring single occupancy.

Make reservations with a \$100 deposit, using the tear-off on this issue of TURNING POINT.

Leaders:



Lord Donald Coggan,
101st Archbishop of Canterbury



Chief Isaac Fulwood, Jr.
Metropolitan Police,
Washington, D.C.



Mr. James W. Rouse
Founder, The Rouse Company, Columbia, MD
Chairman, The Enterprise Foundation
*(a non-profit corporation for the development
of low-cost private housing for the poor)*



The Honorable Patricia Schroeder
U.S. Congresswoman from Colorado

SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOR THE WORLD'S NEED

**Core Conference on Servanthood
at Kanuga**

October 30 - November 3, 1991

Please reserve _____ space (s) _____ double occupancy _____ single occupancy

for _____

address _____

phone _____ / _____

_____ \$100 deposit enclosed. Signed _____

Send to: The Institute for Servant Leadership, P.O. Box 1081, Hendersonville, NC 28793

OVER THE TOP

Last fall we asked for year-end gifts to further the work of the Institute. We needed \$25,000 to move us thru 1991 and mount a pilot project in clergy continuing education. We exceeded the goal. The latest gift from an alumnus pushed the figure to \$25,025.

Since the last issue of TURNING POINT gifts have been received from:

All Souls Parish, Biltmore, NC
Mr. and Mrs. John S. Graettinger, Jr.
The Reverend Camille S. Hegg
The Reverend John T. Koenig
The Reverend John W. Tuton
Mr. E. I. Vatcher

So... the pilot in clergy education is scheduled and recruited. Twelve clergy will live and work together as a

community September 11-18, 1991 at Kanuga—ten priests and two bishops (eight men and four women). They will come from Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia.

The goal for the eight-day design is to create a setting in which three things may happen:

- a. the primal motivating sense of Call to the ministry of Christ can be recovered and nourished;
- b. the ministry of the ordained to the ordained can become a reality, and ways found to translate this reality to the back-home situation;

- c. a theology of Servanthood can be explored as a biblical and contemporary definition of the baptismal ministry of all Christians in leading both the Church and the world through the fearful and yet beckoning sea-change of human experience world-wide.

Participants will be required to evaluate the seminar at three points: before leaving, after three months and after a full year. If it goes at all well we'll proceed with the two additional seminars already scheduled on the Kanuga calendar for 1992. Any of our clergy readers who may wish to participate are urged to write for information.



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