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Six Videos Available Soon

In February, The Polis Center will release six educational videos, produced by the Center and 19th Star, an Indianapolis-based production company. Titled *Religion as a Window on Culture*, the 20 minute videos will come with study guides. Themes common to most religious traditions will be examined, under the general categories of Sacred Space, Sacred Time, Sacred Memory, and Sacred Journey.

Indianapolis area churches, synagogues, and mosques are portrayed in the videos, as are local clergy and lay people. The lessons conveyed by the series would apply to any American city, but the videos will be of particular interest to residents of Indianapolis. The videos are designed for use by congregations, and in introductory college-level religion courses. Each video and its discussion is designed to take about an hour.

The videos will become available for sale from The Polis Center on March 1. The set of all six videos is priced at \$79.95. Orders received before March 1 will be processed at the discounted price of \$64.95.

An open conference to introduce the videos to congregations will be held February 24 at Fatima Retreat House. Call 274-2455 for reservations. Deadline is February 20.

Knowing Our Place

For many congregations, the boundaries that traditionally kept them apart – or aloof – from the wider community have been crumbling. Enclaves once defined by denomination, neighborhood, ethnicity, or class may find that the definitions have changed, or become irrelevant. Without the old verities of turf and tribe to sustain them, these congregations may wonder where they fit into a shifting landscape.

One object of The Polis Center's Project on Religion and Urban Culture is to facilitate a public conversation on the ways religious communities interact with their neighborhoods. No one has a complete grasp of the complex relation between congregations and the surrounding environment. But by entering into a dialogue with each other, and with our neighborhoods, we may come to a new definition of what it means to be a



“community of faith.” If you would like to join the dialogue, call Art Farnsley at the Polis Center, at 274-2455.

Churches Really Can Reach Out and Grow Too

Folk wisdom has it that a church cannot have a community ministry and at the same time increase its membership. The typical congregation does not have the energy or skills to do both, the common assumption goes. In a study conducted last fall and winter, the Metro Mission of the United Methodist Church found that ain't necessarily so.

A study committee appointed by the Metro Methodists found they had 15 congregations in the area which had neighborhood ministries and were also increasing in members. The study, focusing on eight of the congregations, found that:

- The leadership of each church were aware of the changes taking place in the area.
- All said their community outreach efforts were growing.
- In every case a group within the congregation advocated for community outreach.
- In none of the churches did the congregation reflect the diversity of the neighborhood, although each had that as a goal.
- Each church reported an internal tension between the need to change and contentment with the status quo, but each church saw this tension as an asset.
- All churches valued their educational and music programs, good preaching, and their ability to support mission beyond the neighborhood.
- Pastors were seen as leaders who encouraged lay leadership.
- Each church had a recognized goal for its future work.
- These congregations stretched from the inner-city to the suburbs.

For a copy of this study, call the Methodist Metro Mission office at 464-9321.

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