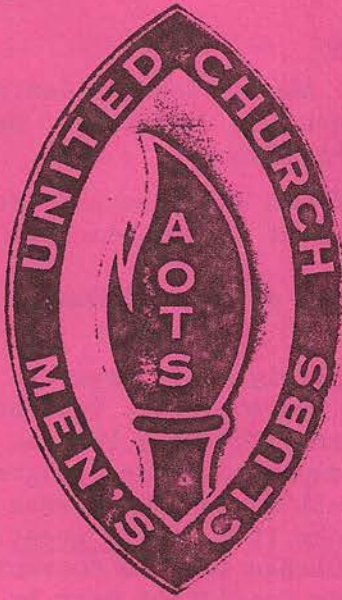


# National AOTS Newsletter

Vol. 3, No. 4. November 1980.



## Merry Christmas

- In this issue:
- AOTS loses Charlie Burritt
  - National Council meets at Cedar Glen
  - AOTS banners, all kinds available
  - "The Long Journey"

AOTS is a movement of United Church men founded in 1923 and dedicated to promoting Christian fellowship, deepening the spiritual life of men, and developing effective programs of Christian service. Clubs are active across Canada, from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland, and in Bermuda, and are united under the National Association. The Newsletter is published by the National Association for the exchange of information between clubs and individual members. It appears four times a year: February, April, September and November from the office of the Executive Secretary: G. Allan Smith, #602 70 Baif Boulevard, Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4C 5L2.

National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs

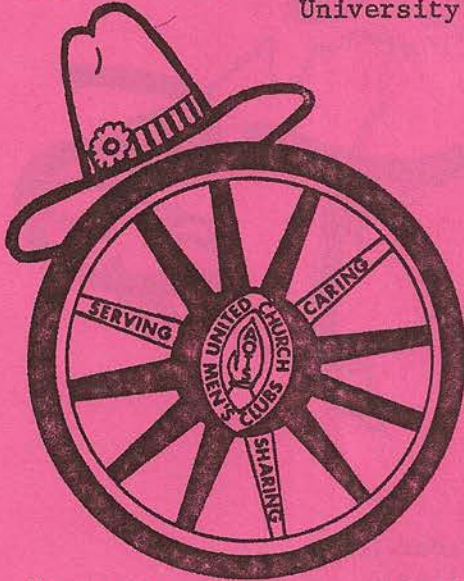
The United Church of Canada

"I am among you As One That Serves." Luke 22:27.



## COMING EVENTS

- March 28 - 1981 B.C. AOTS Round-Up, Duncan U.C., Duncan, B. C.
- April 10 to 12 - 1981 Ontario AOTS Round-Up, Geneva Park, Orillia. Hosts: Toronto Conference. Theme speaker: Don Smith, Past National Executive Secretary. Banquet speaker: Dr. Bob McClure, National Honorary President.
- June 6-7, 13-14 - 29th Annual Elgin House Conference. First weekend men only; second, men and wives. Information: Roy Atkinson, 391 King Street E., Oshawa L1G 7L3.
- August 21 to 23 - 12th Biennial Convention of the National Association of UC AOTS Men's Clubs, University of Calgary campus, Calgary, Alberta.



Plans for this event are developing nicely. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Alan Reynolds of Ryerson U.C., Vancouver. The famous Calgary "white hat horsepitality" will be seen in a program for those under 18, in an expanded ladies program, pre- and post-convention tours, as well as in many events of the convention itself. So plan to make it a family event. University accommodation will be available for the convention dates only; however, there are camping facilities near by to let you extend your stay both before and after. Begin to plan now, and with others, on how best to travel to Calgary.

Tentative rates on campus are, per person: room - \$20/night single, \$15/night double occupancy; meals - \$25 (Friday lunch to Sunday lunch). Registration: men - \$30, ladies - \$20, children - \$5. While registration forms will soon be widely available, to be sure you receive one write to: Convention Registrar Steve Megley, 10707 Maplecreek Drive SE., Calgary T2J 1V4.

"In His Service to Care and Share" - "to capture the essence of AOTS and to reflect society's priorities for the 1980's", says Chairman Fred Holberton. You're invited. Come.

### Notice

You will note that Club News is missing from this issue of the Newsletter. This has been done to make room for a very significant address entitled: "The Long Journey: Laity in the United Methodist Church". Please turn to page 9 for further information. Club News will return in the next issue and coverage will include the events that would have been reported at this time as well as further news still to come. So keep sending in your reports etc. to Executive Secretary Al Smith, at #602, 70 Baif Blvd., Richmond Hill, Ont. L4C 5L2. The next deadline: not later than January 12th in your favourite mailbox. Be sure to read The Long Journey; and write and tell us what you think of it, indicating whether or not you are willing to let your comments be printed in the Newsletter.

### Harry Colnett Memorial Fund

The winners of \$500 scholarships for 1980 (because an award was not made in 1979 there is a second one this year), chosen from among 10 applicants, have now been announced by President Murray McPherson. They are

Jeanette Tramhel, of Edmonton, Alberta, at the University of Guelph, and  
Melvina Johnson, of Pleasantdale, Saskatchewan, at the University of Saskatchewan.

The awards support a 4th year of study in agriculture for these students. After graduation they are expected to seek service that is related to food production in a developing country. Our congratulations and best wishes to the winners. As you know, this scholarship fund was established at the 1975 Ottawa convention in memory of Harry Colnett, a long-time AOTS supporter, who died during the convention. Food for a hungry world had been the theme, and Harry had contributed to the idea for such a fund at a meeting during the convention.



AOTS Loses Charles Collins Burrirt

**BURRITT.** — Charles Collins, passed away after a brief illness on Thursday, September 11, 1980 in his 64th year. Predeceased by his parents, Edmund and Ethel Burrirt, his brother, Oscar. Survived by his loving family, wife June; son, Harvey and his wife Elizabeth; daughters, Lenore McAleese and husband, Ken; Arlene Dashwood and husband, Don; Pat Webber and husband, Joe. Dearly beloved grandfather of Glenn, Terry, Kathy and Corey McAleese, Randal and Steven Dashwood, Tim and Mike Webber and Katherine Burrirt. Also survived by his brother, Edmund, Gower Point, B.C., and his sister, Eleanor Martin, Comox, B.C.; many nieces and nephews and friends. Charles Burrirt was a member of a pioneer Vancouver family and second generation president of Burrirt Bros. Carpets. A Lifetime member of the United Church of Canada, he was a founding member of Chown Memorial Church in Vancouver and later was active for 27 years at South Burnaby United. He was a life member and former national president of the United Churches' A.O.T.S. Mens' Club, as well as serving at the provincial and local levels. He was chairman of the Naramata Centre Board for 9 years. In 1967 he was awarded the Centennial Medal by the Canadian Government in recognition of his service to the nation. A member of the South Burnaby Mens' Club Charlie served as soccer coach for a number of years, as well as team sponsor. Funeral service will be held at South Burnaby United Church, 7591 Gray Ave., at Rumble St., on Monday, September 15, at 2 p.m. Interment family plot, Mountain View Cemetery, in lieu of flowers, those wishing to do so may make a contribution in his name to either South Burnaby United Church Mission and Memorial Fund, South Burnaby Mens' Club or Naramata Centre for Christian Education, Rev. G. Morrison officiating, Royal Oak Funeral Chapel, Burnaby, in charge.

Charlie Burrirt, of Burnaby, B. C., one of the "old guard", passed away on September 11th. The news reached some of us on Saturday, September 13th, at United Church House in Toronto where we had gathered for a regular quarterly meeting of the National Executive. It came as a great shock, for many of us knew Charlie well, both for his total dedication to the AOTS movement and as a personal friend. Nelson Ball of Vancouver very kindly sent us a copy of the obituary notice, which is here reproduced for those who may have missed it. And Bill Hastings of Vancouver (Past National President, 1973 - 5), Lorne Thornley of Toronto (Past National President, 1967 - 9), and Phil Spence of Deep River (Past National Executive Secretary, 1956 - 70, 76 - 77) have very kindly sent us some comments and recollections of their contacts with Charlie over the years. I quote from these accounts in what follows.

Charlie Burrirt is perhaps best known to AOTS men as the first president of our present national organization. Thus, the time was September 1959, the place the Canadian Keswick Conference Centre in Muskoka, and the occasion a convention of 314 men's club delegates and the launching of a new unified program for men in the United Church, one that would unite the work of UC Men and AOTS Men in a new National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs. Charlie was elected as our first president, having served as a vice-president of the former National Association of AOTS Clubs. It was an historic occasion for men's work in the Church, and for AOTS. Such was the talent of Charlie Burrirt and the respect in which he was held that he was called to lead us at that time.

Lorne Thornley, writing about this occasion, says: "I had the pleasure of serving with Charlie on the Interim Committee in 1958 which orchestrated the bringing together of all men's club work in the United Church under one banner. Through him and the late Dave Sherwood I gained a much deeper understanding of AOTS and of the genuine concerns these leaders and others had about joining with other United Church men's organizations. That the new National Association came to be a reality in 1959 was due in large measure to the efforts of Charlie and Dave in rallying the men of AOTS to support this new concept. And what a thrill when Charlie and others led in calling for and receiving a unanimous vote of approval from AOTS delegates. Charlie gave an inspired and inspiring address as he drew the convention to a close, challenging us as a Men's Club within the Church to take our service outside the Church ..... 'in the service of God'. And this, as I associated with Charlie at innumerable meetings, conventions and socially, seemed to me to be the theme of his life ..... working for God in the field ..... influencing for God the lives of all he met, on the job, in the street, wherever."

And it was not an easy time. Phil Spence writes: "To those who had the privilege of working with Charlie during the stormy formative years of the United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, memory will bring the picture of an astute leader who carefully analysed the many facets of the developing panorama of men's work in the Church before deciding on a course of action. He always remained true to his AOTS principles and never compromised these basics, but he also recognized the needs of the men of the United Church and worked long and hard to weld together UCM and AOTS. Moreover, it is a tribute to Charlie that his



leadership was always upheld by the founders and early workers in AOTS. Many times I heard some of them say: 'I am not sure this joining together of AOTS and UCM is the best for AOTS but, with Charlie as our President, I'm willing to go along with the idea'."

Charlie's interest in the national outreach of AOTS was well rooted in his local church. Says Bill Hastings: "Charlie was known to have served in every capacity that was open to him within his own Church --- and in AOTS he held every position from that of a club member to national president." His influence reached even into the UCW, says Bill, because "his dear wife June covered those offices and I am sure she shared her UCW problems with him as he undoubtedly shared his AOTS problems with her." Phil adds that "he sang in the local choir and represented his church at Presbytery, at Conference, and at General Council, was a member of the Board of Men of the United Church for several years, and served for nine years as chairman of the Board of Naramata Centre. He was one of the first recipients of the Canada Medal when the Order of Canada was established."

"Charlie was a big man both mentally and physically", says Phil. "His mind was always planning greater things for AOTS. However, he could also play a hard shifty game on the volley ball courts or in lacrosse. [Lorne recalled that he first met Charlie at an Ontario AOTS Round-Up at Wildwood Inn, Sparrow Lake, about 1957, and how Charlie, though it was in early May, startled everyone by going for a swim one morning in the icy lake!] His carpet business was the largest of its kind west of Winnipeg and to listen to him calm an irate customer on the phone was a lesson in Christian diplomacy. He was an outstanding representative of what he believed and did not package these credos into special areas, but put them all to use in his business, at home, at play, in his church, and in AOTS ..... quietly and without fanfare."

Those who knew Charlie and worked with him will never forget him. Says Bill: "We give thanks to the Lord for the privilege which was ours of working and worshipping with this brother --- our Barnabas. He left his mark on us as no other man has." We knew him, says Lorne, "as a great man, a great leader, a great friend, husband and father; he set a tremendous example for us." And from Phil Spence: "We shall miss Charlie from our AOTS gatherings and committees. Our sympathy goes out to June and the family and we thank them for the support they gave him through the years. Most of all we are grateful to God for raising up men like Charlie to give Christian leadership and set an example of being truly 'As One That Serves'."

\* \* \* \* \*

Charlie Burritt was for 27 years a member of South Burnaby United Church and, of course, of the South Burnaby AOTS Club. Because the funeral fell on the day of their regular meeting, Monday, September 15th, the meeting was postponed to the 22nd and it took the form of a Charlie Burritt memorial night. President Barrie McFarlane presided. Bill Cumming opened with a devotional in which he drew a parallel between Barnabas --- "the encourager", and the Charlie they had known so long. Dr. Bill Hastings gave a short eulogy and he was followed by Norm Carter, B. C. Conference AOTS President, who read letters from the five Victoria clubs. Among those who recalled events they had shared with Charlie were Captain K. R. Sylling, Ernie Jackson (Chemainus), Harry Vogel (Campbell River), and representatives of Fraserview, Collingwood and the U.C.M. Don Morton (Duncan) and Rev. Chris Jack (South Burnaby) paid the final tributes. Spirited devotional singing was led by Bill Anderson and Bob Bagshaw, past presidents of the Club and close friends of Charlie.

Bill Hastings advises that a memorial fund in Charlie's name is to be set up and that the details are now being worked out. When this information becomes available it will be printed in the Newsletter.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Matt. 5:16



National Council Meets at Cedar Glen

The 1980 annual meeting of the National Council was held at the Cedar Glen Conference Centre of the United Church, near Bolton, Ontario, November 7 to 9. The attendance was 29, members coming from as far as Vancouver Island on the west and Newfoundland on the east. The sessions were chaired by President Murray McPherson.

An unexpected surprise --- and a highlight of the weekend --- was the visit of the Moderator, Dr. Lois Wilson. She was present Friday evening and for about an hour, following a few prepared remarks, took part in a far-ranging question-and-answer session. In a very informal and intimate manner she sat on the chairman's table facing the audience while her alert mind fielded the questions. The discussion touched on many things, and the following were some of the thoughts she expressed:

- it is a time of great change:
    - we are now recognizing that our planet has physical limits, and we are re-examining our relationship with earth;
    - we have personal limits as well; we can't be all parts of "the body" and so must support each other;
    - men-women relationships are being renegotiated;
    - technology: for every good thing there seems also to be a bad thing.
  - we have a pluralistic society in Canada:
    - in Toronto, for example, every race is a minority;
    - native peoples: they are now concentrated in the cities, e.g., 30,000 in Regina, so this is where the Church must now direct its mission effort to these people.
  - we have a changing church:
    - the United Church is a minority church, and it is becoming increasingly a population of the over-50's and facing declining revenues;
    - there are now more Muslims in Canada than Presbyterians;
    - however, we should not be overly concerned about numbers for Jesus said we would be small; what is important is that we work to change things for the better, that we be "the salt and the leaven"; we shouldn't feel depressed if we are not big --- only if we are unfaithful, i.e., unsalty or unyeasty.
  - on the Bible:
    - we should be more literate and more questioning; "we don't have to put our brains to bed when we engage in Bible study: truth can bear all questions, if the Word is of God."
- And much more.

Lois remained for the 10 PM snack and more questions and conversation, and was in fact among the last to call it a day. We found her a very warm approachable listening person; those of you who have yet to meet her have a pleasant experience to look forward to. And for the United Church --- the next two years will likely be eventful ones because Lois has the energy and the will to make her leadership felt. [See The Observer, September, 1980, page 20, for a fine article on "the new moderator".]

The Saturday and Sunday sessions of the Council meeting were busy ones. They included reports from the president and other officers, committee reports, and a lengthy work session on the redrafting of the Constitution (to better cope with changing times). Song sessions were led by Stan Farrow of Toronto (it was Stan who composed those two fine AOTS songs "Reach Out" and "Nothing Fancy"). We were shown the "sneak preview" of the forthcoming United Church one-hour TV special, courtesy Rita Deverell. And we had a fine address from Alan Staig (Associate Secretary, Ministry With Adults, Division of Mission in Canada) on the theme "Responsible Men". Finally, there was the Sunday morning Communion Service led by Rev. Karl Burden, Director of Alcohol and Drug Concerns, Toronto.



One report of note was that of the Projects Committee, given by Norman Pydde, chairman. They have proposed that we have a country-wide AOTS walk-a-thon in May of next year to raise money both for the local club (80% was suggested) and for our national organization (20%). Norman was so enthusiastic in his presentation (as he moved in big strides back and forth) that even the most doddering of us could not refuse him. And so the meeting concurred. You will hear more of this as the Committee develops the detailed plans. Meanwhile, you can be looking for a good pair of walking shoes.

Another report, by Bill Sefton of the Youth Committee, was an appeal to direct our youth work to "the boy on the curb", "the boy who is last to be chosen for the team" --- sometimes not chosen at all. This is the boy, said Bill, who most needs help. As you know the time to prepare your entry for the D. R. Poole Memorial Trophy is approaching. This is the trophy awarded biennially for the best youth program by an AOTS club. A mailing on this will be going out soon.

The "sneak preview" referred to above is a 16-minute glimpse of the kind of material to appear in the one-hour TV special due for prime-time airing on the CTV network some time between mid-January and mid-February. It will be a series of film vignettes capturing the faith styles of United Church people from across the country, plus music, plus a visit with the Moderator, Dr. Wilson, entitled: "These things we share". After its showing on television the special will be available on video tape for showing to interested groups. [Meanwhile, if you wish to see the preview --- and it would be good program material for a meeting --- contact your nearest U.C. office, or write to: The United Church National TV Project, P.O. Box 2006, Station Q, Toronto, Ont. M4T 2V5.]

In his talk on responsibility Alan Staig noted, as had Lois Wilson, that we are indeed a minority and not the "vast army" for building the church that Elton Trueblood spoke of 20 years ago in his "Company of the Committed". Thus, 1 in 25 Canadians is of the United Church (it's 1 in 40 in Toronto!), or about 900,000, and of this number 68% attend church once a year or less! Moreover, 60% of Canadians have little or no commitment to any religion! Further, of the men of the U.C., 1 in 50 is in UCM or AOTS (1 per square mile in Toronto!). [One person commented that if we were to run a coast-to-coast relay each AOTS member would have to carry the baton about 1 mile.] As a result, the church today, though a world-wide fellowship, is in a secular largely hostile environment, and so it is a time for pruning dead wood, sifting, and testing if it is to become stronger. It is also a time, he said, for rediscovery: to ask who are we --- what does it mean to be a Christian; who are all these other people; how do we keep our feet on the ground, our faith strong --- by daily prayer and study; how do we manage our time --- with skill! for one can be trapped into doing unimportant things (i.e., not necessarily by using every minute for work, but by developing personal relationships, etc. --- by taking time to be holy, in the fullest sense of this word).

Alan then went on to the question: how do we make things happen? and he cited 10 rules for producing change: don't do it alone and don't get too emotional about it; stand for something --- not to take a stand is to endorse the status quo; only action counts; discontent is no sin; decide what you want to get done and define it exactly; keep it simple; know your adversary well; never make your adversary your enemy; keep asking - what are we doing, and why; and finally, don't worry --- plan.

All of which adds up to some good counsel for us as we try, as individuals and clubs, to meet our various responsibilities.

At the Communion Service Sunday morning Karl Burden spoke on the important role that men have to play in our society and how, in an over-reaction to the feminist movement, the place and worth of men has diminished. Speaking from his experience in teaching disadvantaged children and in dealing with young people in the drug scene he saw this as a serious matter. There is a great need, he said, particularly among young people, for the love and concern, and guidance, that can only come from men.



Toronto Conference AOTS Men Hold Annual Fall Rally at Cedar Glen

With Dr. Murray McPherson as theme speaker and taking advantage of his presence at Cedar Glen for the annual meeting of the National Council the Toronto Conference AOTS fall rally was scheduled for the afternoon and evening of Sunday, November 9th. 64 men attended, including several who remained from the Council meeting. The rally was chaired by Layton Stewart, AOTS President for Toronto Conference. Singing was led by Sid Bagnall assisted by Bob Whitman at the piano.

Speaking to the theme: "Who is my neighbour?", Murray saw, in the work of AOTS, a parallel to the actions of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30). Our purpose, he said, is to reach out and in a spirit of love bring men into the church. He reviewed the origins of AOTS and its philosophy, asking: have we got it and how do we use it. He saw the aims of AOTS as having different dimensions: in promoting Christian fellowship, a circular dimension; in deepening the spiritual life of men, a vertical dimension; in developing an effective program of Christian service, a horizontal dimension; and then, in the national front, the means to act collectively, still another dimension --- all essential to a healthy wholeness. Finally, referring to Luke 10:2, he reminded us that because we are few in numbers personal courage is needed to identify with and pursue the aims of AOTS.

Following dinner a panel of four: Murray McPherson, Cyril Locke (Newfoundland), Jack Cleave (London), and Alan Staig, dealt with a variety of questions on AOTS raised by the audience. Some of these related to current problems of organization and finance which are now under review in the redrafting of the Constitution.

Hamilton Conference UC/AOTS Men Discuss Human Sexuality and Lotteries

The men of Hamilton Conference met for their annual fall rally at Melrose U.C. in Hamilton on Saturday, October 18th. It was a day-long meeting, running from 9 AM to 4 PM. Taking as the theme: "Moral Dilemmas of the Day", there were two main speakers: in the morning session, Rev. Dr. Robin Smith speaking on "Human Personal Relationships", and in the afternoon, Rev. Robert (Bob) Lindsey speaking on "Lotomania". The latter included the showing of a new 27-minute film of the same title prepared by the National Film Board of Canada. Wives were present this year and total attendance was 77.

As you know, Robin Smith, a staff person in the Division of Mission in Canada, headed the Task Force on Human Sexuality which authored the recent highly publicized and controversial report: "In God's Image --- Male and Female". In his talk he described the reasons for undertaking this study and then reviewed the contents of the report. A lively question-and-answer period followed. [This report is now available from either Canec Publishing and Supply House, 47 Coldwater Road, Don Mills, Ont. M3B 1Y9, or The Book Room, United Church House, 85 St. Clair Ave. E., Toronto, Ont. M4T 1M8, at \$3.75 plus postage. See the October issue of The Observer, page 18, for General Council reaction to the report.]

In introducing "Lotomania" Bob Lindsey described how lotteries have become very big business. Until 1968 they were illegal in Canada but then, as a means to pay off a large Olympic Games debt, Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau launched the first provincial lottery. Now the federal and other provincial governments are running lotteries and it has become a billion dollar industry. The film shows what goes on behind the scenes, how the lottery is sold as a "fun" thing and staged as an entertainment spectacle. And it interviews some winners and losers to reveal people's attitudes. The director, Tom Shandel, setting out simply to tell the story was reported to have become strongly hostile to lotteries as he became increasingly involved in the making of the film. [This is good program material. If interested, contact your nearest U.C. office on how to borrow the film. For a kit on the position of the U.C. on gambling (including cassette) write to Bob Lindsey at UC House.]

The rally was chaired by Hamilton Conference UCM/AOTS President Howard Reed. In a short business session the present officers were re-elected: Howard Reed as president, Jim Wark vice-president, Dave Cunningham secretary, and Joe Hockin as treasurer.



Banners BANNERS BANNERS BANNERS

Yes - all sizes!

Chatting with Gordon Mowat at the recent Toronto Conference AOTS rally and noting the several banners he had placed around the room, it occurred to us that many clubs may not know that these banners are available to all clubs, on loan and free of charge (except for mailing costs). Here is a brief description of some that Gordon has which might suit your needs and which you can borrow. This would certainly be cheaper and easier than making your own.

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA  
AOTS MEN'S CLUB  
SERVING OUR COMMUNITY  
"AS ONE THAT SERVES"

OUR UNITED CHURCH MEN'S CLUB  
REACHING OUT  
JOIN US TO SERVE AND HELP OTHERS  
"AS ONE THAT SERVES"

The two above are of white cotton, 18" x 6 ft in length with the print in red and blue.

- BACK TO BASICS -  
AN ARM OF THE CHURCH  
"AS ONE THAT SERVES" HELPING OTHERS  
UNITED CHURCH AOTS MEN'S CLUB IN ACTION

UNITED CHURCH AOTS MEN'S CLUBS  
- REACH OUT -  
TO SAVE A BROTHER AND HELP EACH OTHER  
"AS ONE THAT SERVES" JOIN US!

These are 3 ft by 20 ft, red and blue letters on white cotton.

WELCOME  
to  
UNITED CHURCH  
AOTS  
MEN'S CLUB  
in  
ACTION

GLAD  
TO SEE YOU  
AT OUR  
UNITED CHURCH  
AOTS  
MEN'S CLUB



These two are on 1/8" hard board, red and blue letters on a white background, 24" by 30".

The AOTS crest is available on cardboard, also on a flexible plastic sheet, in full colour, each 30" by 60".

For further details and for information on other AOTS banners that he has (or perhaps could make for you) drop Gordon a line at: 59 Joseph Street, Weston, Ont. M9N 2H9. He will be glad to help you.

\* \* \* IN MEMORIAM \* \* \*

Jock Bremner, charter member of St. Andrew's UC AOTS Men's Club, Regina, Sask.

Frank Locksley, member of Faith UC AOTS Men's Club, Toronto, in December 1977, at age 69.

Cyril Bartlett, member of Faith UC AOTS Men's Club, Toronto, on April 19, 1980, two days following his 99th birthday.

Jimmy Jordan, member of Faith UC AOTS Men's Club, Toronto, on June 23, 1980, at age 63.

Earl Gardner, member of Faith UC AOTS Men's Club, Toronto, on August 27, 1980, at age 59.

Charlie Burritt, long-time active member of South Burnaby UC AOTS Men's Club, Burnaby, B.C., on September 11, 1980, in his 64th year.

Ernest Ivan McTaggart, four-time president of Lake Cowichan UC AOTS Men's Club, Vancouver Island, on October 18, 1980, at age 64.

"And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."  
John 17:3



The Long Journey: Laity in the United Methodist Church

This is the title of an address given at the General Conference of the United Methodist Church of the United States in April 1980. It is noteworthy for two reasons: first, it was a laity address, prepared and delivered by a committee of lay people, and the first such address at a General Conference in the history of the Church, and second, it deals with the emergence of the laity in the history of the Methodist Church and the need to accord to lay people still greater recognition and responsibility if the Church is to meet the challenges of these times. It was an event of great significance, as indicated by the editorial note by Mark Gibbs, editor of Laity Exchange, through whose information service this address came to our attention. Because AOTS has a vital interest in the lay movement of the United Church of Canada we have brought you this address on pages 10 to 16 of this Newsletter, exactly as printed in Laity Exchange\*. We believe you will find it of very great interest.

The status of the laity in the United Church of Canada appears to be very similar to that of the laity in the United Methodist Church. We too say (see The Observer, October 1980, page 13, for a report of General Council's discussion of the report of Project: Ministry) that the ministry of Christ is one to which "the whole people of God are called", and that although we are called to serve in different ways we are fundamentally equal in such service. Yet this equality is not reflected in our language, our structures, and our rights; we seem to be unable to take this further step. So the position is (says the writer of the Observer article) that "as a Church we are still on our journey toward a more complete understanding of ministry". A long journey it is.

\*For readers who may wish to have more information about Laity Exchange: write to Laity Exchange, Vesper Center, 311 MacArthur, San Leandro, California 94577, U.S.A.

Second Mile Support

"And if any one forces you to go one mile go with him two miles." Matt. 5:41

That we would be prepared to "go the second mile" for AOTS was the high expectation that persuaded the 10th Biennial Convention, meeting in Halifax in 1977, to adopt Brydon MacCrae's proposal for the Second Mile plan. The \$5-per-member fee was the "first mile" of AOTS support, established at the 9th Convention in Ottawa in 1975; our further gifts would constitute "second mile" support. Many have gone "the second mile". Thus, in 1979 Second Mile Support totalled just under \$2700 from 37 donors. To October 31st this year it was over \$3600 and the number of donors was also up. The nine clubs of Vancouver Island, alone, are responsible for \$1445, or 40% of this figure, in the form of a \$5 donation on top of the \$5 fee (and not including any additional individual gifts) --- a wonderful example for all of us. And so Second Mile Support is taking hold, slowly but firmly, and some foresee the day when it will become our primary means of support.

If you too would like to participate in this further support of men's work in the Church, send your donation to the National Treasurer: Mr. Robert Lewis, 1286 Landfair Crescent, Oakville, Ont. L6H 2N3. Bob will send you a receipt for tax purposes. Let this become an essential part of your annual giving program.

\* \* \* \* \*

In connection with banners (page 8), you know, of course, that such things as stationery, crest stickers, lapel pins, badges, etc., can be obtained from the Executive Secretary, Al Smith. Write him at: Apt. #602, 70 Baif Blvd., Richmond Hill, Ont. L4C 5L2. A one-page catalog of the various items available was sent to club secretaries in September. If you can't locate your copy send for another one.

BULLETIN - National Treasurer Bob Lewis reports that he received a very pleasant surprise in the mail recently: a cheque for \$25 from President Barry Ennis of the Langley UC AOTS Men's Club in B.C. to help meet postage costs for the Newsletter. This was a very thoughtful and generous act. Thank you very much.



## THE LONG JOURNEY: LAITY IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Editorial Note: At the recent General Conference of the United Methodist Church in the USA there was presented for the first time a Laity Address as well as the usual Episcopal Address from the Methodist bishops. It was very well received -- and an informal newsletter Connect ! wrote the next day "Thank God for the Laity Address" and again "a superb first installment of a new tradition. We give an A..."

I think it will interest many more than Methodist readers. M.G.

### A Statement of Faith

#### The Long Journey: Laity in The United Methodist Church

#### The Human Situation As We See It

#### The Church As We Know It

#### We Call the Church to:

- I. Use the strength of connectionalism in times of change
- II. Broaden its understanding of evangelism to include an emphasis on: bringing people back into the church school; and using our connectionalism to find and keep lost church members
- III. Heal the divisions within the church
- IV. Be the Servant Church

### A Statement of Faith

We, the laity, would like to explain who we believe we are. We do not use Webster's words, "the people, as distinguished from the clergy." We do not use the common understanding; that is, the unauthorized amateur, a part-time Christian whose task is to help an over-worked minister. Rather, we use the biblical authority and think of ourselves as the Laos: the people of God; bishops, deacons, deaconesses, elders, whatever the title, all of us here and in other communions and around the world, all of us together, the Laos, the people of God. Though some are set apart for special function, each of us is called to participate corporately in Christ's ministry for the world.

Christians are called to become witnesses of Christ's saving grace. We are not of one mind about the world. We are not of one understanding concerning the nature of our witness to the world; yet, we reaffirm the conviction of the early Christian community that the people of God are one people. We, the laity of The United Methodist Church, are many millions in number—youth, children, women and men. We come from varied origins, from many different backgrounds, ethnic, social, economic, and political.

We, the laity of The United Methodist Church, aware of our diversity, believe that we must be of one spirit in caring about the world and the church. We pray that we may be of one spirit in our commitment to God as revealed in Jesus Christ. To this commitment we bring searching minds and hearts. We recognize that our faith must continue to grow just as God continues to create and as the world continues to change.

At the outset we reaffirm John Wesley's belief in the catholic spirit that allows diversity within unity and the expression of the many different gifts of the (Holy) Spirit. We have many avenues for serving God, but it is the One Lord who is served by all.

At the center of our common faith, we acknowledge our belief in the Triune God. We believe in God as Creator, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We believe in the centrality of Jesus Christ as the incarnation and revelation of God's love. We believe in the Holy Spirit as God indwelling in persons and in groups to inspire, energize, and motivate.

We believe in the Bible. We reaffirm that scripture, tradition, experience and reason provide the testimony to God's works. We believe that Jesus Christ is the unifying principle in the Bible because He is the incarnation of God's word and the Bible is the unique deposit of that word.

We believe there can be no real spiritual life outside of a community. We reaffirm our belief that the Church is that community through which Christians share their faith, praise God and find a place of service.

We believe that conversion is a part of our Methodist heritage. A change in the human heart through grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit is a precious gift.

We believe in the sacraments of the church. These outward symbols that cause an inner response remind us of our covenant relationship with God.

We know through personal experience the power of prayer. We believe also in the power of prayer in the life of our communities as we watch over one another in love.

We believe that faith and good works belong together. We reaffirm the belief that committed service will be the outward sign of an inner faith. Jesus went about doing good. He would have us do the same.

Our faith in eternal life is deep. The Creator, who brought us into this world, will not forsake His children so long as we are truly His children in faithfulness.

Finally, we reaffirm as a simple vow our commitment to an abiding faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world—a world which, indeed, is our parish.

Thus, we the laity of The United Methodist Church, our common community of faith, come to you.

### The Long Journey: Laity In The United Methodist Church

Affirming our full participation as a part of the whole people of God, we express our deep appreciation for the growing recognition of this fact in the history of



the Methodist movement. That recognition is evidenced in these words from The 1976 Discipline "... all Christians are called to ministry and theirs is a ministry of the people of God within the community of faith and in the world."

We are a part of the whole people of God who have traveled a long journey of faith. In that journey, lay people have over and over again assumed key roles of leadership. Amos was a herdsman; Lydia was a merchant; Philemon was a slave. The Twelve Disciples were likewise lay people engaged in the various occupations of their day. Christianity began as a movement with no ordained ministry. As Paul makes clear, early Christianity used "gifts" as the basis for ministry. Most early Methodist preachers, beginning with John Thomas Maxfield, were not ordained. There is an endless line of dedicated people—lay men, lay women, lay preachers. Francis Asbury, later a bishop, was a lay preacher until his ordination at the Christmas Conference of 1784. The advance of the Methodist movement along a broader front was due largely to the efforts of involved and dedicated lay persons. They helped to scatter the seed of the gospel, at first in the British Isles, then in the Americas, and finally throughout the world.

The organization of the Methodist Church in the United States created an ordained ministry; and lay people were excluded from its formal leadership. This also held true for the United Brethren Church and the Evangelical Association, but lay people were not satisfied to be outside the structures of the church. So these institutional designs were soon challenged, at first on the impetus of the founders (both lay and clergy) of the Methodist Protestant Church. In 1812 they began stirring the waters for a responsible role in church conferences on the part of the laity. Eventually, in 1830, and chiefly on this issue, the Methodist Protestant Church was founded. In its institutional design lay representation was firmly set.

From that date in 1830 through the following 138 years, until the unifying conferences of 1939 and 1968, the principle of greater participation on the part of the laity became a growing reality in the various branches of the Methodist movement:

- in 1842, The Wesleyan Methodist Church was formed to permit lay representation.
- in 1870, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the first time admitted lay delegates to its General Conference.
- in 1872, The Methodist Episcopal Church seated lay delegates in its General Conference for the first time.
- and beginning in 1892, and continuing through 1918, there was a gradual granting of lay rights to women.
- in 1889, The United Brethren lay men became voting members of Annual and General Conferences.
- in 1893, The United Brethren lay women were granted similar rights.
- in 1922, when The United Brethren and United

Evangelical Church reunited as The Evangelical Church equal lay representation had been achieved.

- in 1939, with the union of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Protestant Church, lay representation to the Annual Conference from each pastoral charge became a reality.
- in 1946, The Evangelical United Brethren began with equal lay representation.
- in 1968, The United Methodist Church, which came from the unification of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church, brought lay representation to most levels of church structure.

This brief summary suggests that the impact of the laity upon The United Methodist Church and all of its antecedents has been positive and greatly significant. This is also true in the area of the church's world mission. Methodism in the United States of America has been slow in accepting the principle of equality of representation in the governance of the institutional life of the people of God. The autocratic spirit of both Wesley and Asbury extended into the 19th and even the 20th centuries. However, there has been a continuing increase in lay involvement in the structures of the church as lay people have sought to express their ministry through its organized life. The growing influence and effects of lay involvement are seen today in every sphere of The United Methodist Church's interests, spiritual and material.

At this point, we believe it is particularly relevant to call to the attention of this General Conference the significant development of the leadership of the laity in the overseas Methodist churches.

The new autonomy of the Methodist churches overseas during the last two decades has meant less dependency on the mother church. This has led to a more decisive and deep involvement of the laity in the ministry, and in the financial and administrative responsibilities of the overseas churches. In this trend toward independence, the overseas churches and their laity have become more sensitive to the movements of liberation of the peoples of the third world from foreign domination. A new vision of a theology committed to the integral liberation of persons and structures is now being developed as the people struggle for a free expression of their own lives, personally and as nations. They are more conscious of human rights and of holding economic, social and political systems and their injustices up to the judgment of God. Methodist lay people all over the world are participating in this struggle.

At the time of the revolution in Cuba, for example, the Methodist Church was unprepared to face this new challenge. With the departure of all but two Methodist ministers by 1960, the responsibility for leadership of the thousands of church members in that nation was left to the lay members. They bravely and courageously supported the church in the midst of changes never



before seen in that country. Similar challenges have faced the laity in other third world countries in the midst of radical moves toward political and economic liberation.

Methodism is growing faster in Africa than anywhere else in the world. A great part of its growth is due to the effective participation of the laity, a laity that refuses to identify itself with a culture that denies human rights to persons and reduces their sense of self-worth.

In South America, the laity of Uruguay are a part of an autonomous church whose constitution calls for a president who can be either a minister or a lay person. Since Uruguay's autonomy, four persons have been elected president: the first a lay man; the second and third, ministers; and the fourth, just elected in August of 1979, is a lay woman. This choice of a lay woman is symbolic of the emerging role and significance of women in the overseas churches.

The laity is being educated theologically in a growing number of countries of the world, a fact that gives confidence in the future of these churches. They are forging a theology relevant to their situation, a theology committed to the liberation of both persons and structures. In ever-growing numbers, the laity of the churches overseas have realized that in the struggle for human rights, in which most of the third world countries are involved, they have a great task to accomplish — to be witnesses to the Christian faith as a relevant expression of liberation, justice and true peace.

A great deal has been done in the area of human rights. But we realize that there is much more to do. It is the task of the laity as a part of the people of God to make the gospel meaningful to all people. We, who call ourselves United Methodists, out of whatever secular culture we come, are called today to examine the human situation as we see it and the church as we know it — to examine critically, but always in love.

### The Human Situation As We See It

In 1976 the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church were revised to keep abreast of the changing concerns and needs of the world. In that document we acknowledge that "Secure in God's love, we affirm the goodness of life and confess our many sins against God's will for us as we find it in Jesus Christ. We have not always been faithful stewards of all that has been committed to us by God the Creator . . . grateful for God's forgiving love . . . and affirming our belief in the inestimable worth of each individual, we renew our commitment to become faithful witnesses to the gospel not alone to the ends of the earth, but also to the depths of our common life and work."

In view of such a faith, we look with seeing eyes and sensitive hearts at the human condition. Our world is in danger of irreparable pollution; the air, the seas, space, and the soil are threatened. The appetite for energy and material things seems impossible to satisfy. We, especially in the developed countries, cannot con-

tinue to consume the world's resources disproportionately and still claim to love our brothers and sisters.

The long struggle for equality for women, ethnic minorities, and all persons continues to accuse us because of our support of systems and cultural biases that subordinate one person to another. We must be no less careful in our sensitivity to the needs of those with handicapping conditions.

Human rights extend to the unborn, for whom we affirm concern. Respect for the human potential is in accord with loving God and our neighbor as ourselves. We acknowledge the conflicts of life in which, in reverence for one life, we must consider the loss of another through abortion. As a church we should support family planning that will keep such conflicts to a minimum.

As we respect the unborn's right to live, we also affirm a person's right to die. We do not believe that prolonged efforts to sustain life in cases of terminal illness always add to the quality of life. They may just prolong living. The church must be more assertive in its spiritual role in dealing with these and all new moral questions in which medical, ethical, and legal consequences arise.

Life is precarious for many. Child abuse appears even more grim than previously estimated. Spouse abuse and abuse of the elderly are surfacing as critical problems. The abusive use of alcohol and other drugs is increasing at an alarming rate. These abuses, both legal and illegal, affect individuals — living an unborn — and families. Teen-agers are increasingly the victims of such problems. Crime increases, not only in the crowded urban centers, but in the suburbs and rural areas as well. Evidence is growing that these acts of aggressive behavior are, indeed, related to television viewing.

Pervasive racism continues to encircle education, housing, job opportunities, the delivery of justice, participation in the political processes, and still demeans the lives of millions of God's children. The world is threatened by a creeping atheism, not in terms of profession of faith but in terms of living as if God did not exist. Hunger stalks many parts of our world. As the arms race accelerates, we must continue to deal with the adequate production of food and its proper distribution. Peace hangs in a precarious balance. World peace has always been fragile and easily shattered. Today, no less than in the past, peace is not simply an absence of war. Rather, it requires an aggressive pursuit in the spirit of Jesus. The displacement of people as refugees, political exiles, the victims of persecution and the political prisoners cry out to the church for the development of a new type of ministry for which the church is unprepared.

We invite your special attention to the institution of the family. We are called in The Discipline to strengthen this "basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect and fidelity."<sup>2</sup> The family is under extreme stress today.

Divorce is increasing. Out of every two marriages one



ends in divorce. "Four out of ten children born in the 1970s will spend part of their childhood in a single-parent family, usually with the working mother as head of the household. Remarriage (throughout the world) currently blends about 180 million stepchildren from the remnants of what used to be called 'broken' families into new family units."<sup>3</sup> Illegitimate births are reaching, in some areas, epidemic proportions. Various alternatives to marriage are being practiced in today's society. There is an ever-growing assault upon our traditional social conventions. Young people struggle to know from what standards to choose since their peers and society fail to give firm evidence of the worth of enduring relationships based on love.

Spiraling suicide rates, especially among youth, reflect frustration and despair with the life offered by secular society. Some of the factors in this frustration are family disintegration, lack of integrity in commitment, moral confusion, lack of genuine caring, exploitation of people in themes expressed by movies and television. The church must call out loudly and clearly, "Listen, there is a better way."

The goodness of human sexuality is diminished through society's acceptance of casual sex. There is increasing evidence of adverse psychological consequences evident in young people due to the pressures of so-called sexual liberation. "There is a great need to re-enforce the judgment of a growing number of persons who believe that the ability to say 'no' to casual sex is the only rational course to prevent a profound accentuation of symptoms such as anxiety and diminished self-esteem . . . On many college campuses there is . . . a return to spiritual values and awareness of the fact that transient sexual relationships do not lead to satisfactory or permanent arrangements. The absence of a commitment is now being recognized as one of the many weaknesses in so-called liberation."<sup>4</sup>

Human sexuality, as it deals with homosexual orientation, is even more complex. So much emotional content is associated with the term homosexual that the open acknowledgment of one's homosexuality often makes a caring relationship with others difficult.

Always, however, our concern for the problems which plague the home and family are seen within the context of the strong affirmation that the family is, after all, the best situation we have for the nurturing of human beings. The family will prevail.

This brief look at the human situation and at humanity's need for meaning and fulfillment requires us to examine the biblical answer to our dilemma. This points to our need for God's forgiveness and grace offered in Christ and made known in and through the new covenant community, the church.

We ask, then, what of the church as we know it?

### The Church As We Know It

We know our church to be a congregation of faithful men and women in which our grasp of God's love in Christ can be renewed and in which our faithfulness to its application to the ceaseless crises of human exist-

ence is constantly challenged. Given human existence as we perceive it, we are forced to re-examine the quality of our life together as United Methodists.

As we have considered some of the successes and failures of The United Methodist Church and have tried to review the State of the Church, we are moved to raise four questions about which we have grave concern and a clear responsibility.

#### FIRST:

Can The United Methodist Church continue to be a centrist, Christ-centered movement embracing a wide variety of viewpoints when it is strongly challenged by forces both from the extreme right and extreme left?

One of the distinguishing marks of Methodism has been its catholic spirit. Can this catholic spirit continue in the presence of increasing demands that The United Methodist Church express its life in some particular manner? John Wesley put it this way. "I will not quarrel with you about any opinion. Only see that your heart be right toward God, that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor, and walk as your Master walked; and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions: I am weary to hear them." How shall we sustain our heritage of examining every issue from the point of view of scripture, tradition, experience and reason — and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, move from spiritual discernment into social situations and actions?

We offer no answer, but urge that we work together to find the answer.

#### SECOND:

Is The United Methodist Church alienated, separated from the society in which it exists to such an extent that it cannot see the human condition? Is the distance too great? Or, is The United Methodist Church so closely identified with that society that in its closeness it cannot see any differences? Is the distance too small?

In whichever state the church exists — too alienated from, too identified with society — there is revealed a deep crisis with regard to the nature and mission of the church in the modern world.

#### THIRD:

Can The United Methodist Church with its diversity become again as it was in Wesley's time a prophetic voice with regard to the enormous problems that plague both individuals and society? The problems in Wesley's day included such issues as prison reform, humane working conditions, slavery, education and medical care for the poor, and alcohol. The human situation today cries out with equal urgency for a voice, a strong vocal conscience out in front of the big problems from which persons as well as societies suffer.

#### FOUR:

Can The United Methodist Church regain its concern for individuals of all classes and groups so that it can make a clear call to persons for a strong commitment to the God of Jesus Christ? For over a decade, the membership of both The United Methodist Church and the church school has declined significantly. Numbers, however, are not the primary issue. Rather, this declin-



ing membership points out the failure of the church to reach out and deal with people in terms of their needs.

We come to you as the laity of our common faith community out of a lay movement with a long history of involvement in witnessing to a faith that must be relevant to the lives of people. We have defined the human situation as we perceive it. We have looked at some serious questions about The United Methodist Church and its mission to the world today.

In the concluding section of our address, we would like to offer FOUR SPECIAL CALLS to this General Conference for The United Methodist Church during the coming quadrennium, 1980-1984.

### I. WE CALL THE CHURCH TO UTILIZE THE REASSURING STRENGTH OF CONNECTIONALISM IN TIMES OF CHANGE.

The United Methodist Church, by 1984, will have tested for two centuries the premise that its institutional structure can respond to change with energy and cohesiveness.

It is common knowledge that John Wesley was an authoritarian leader, benevolent, but reserving every decision for himself. It brought him acute distress when Francis Asbury insisted that he would become superintendent only if elected by his fellow preachers. Thus began the history of democratic decisions in Methodism in the United States.

Initially our connectionalism arose from the appointment process and was a reflection of the collegiality of the clergy. It was exemplified as they met in conferences to consider their work of mission and ministry. It was enhanced as the years passed by the actions of successive conferences to improve the ability of the church to reach out and expand its ministry, both to increase its scope and to serve specific causes. All of these efforts through the centuries strengthened the connecting links unifying congregations around the world. The inclusion of laity at the General Conference level more than one hundred years ago worked to make members of every local church a part of the connectional system and finally made it possible for the total church to have the feeling that we are all in this great ministry together.

Out of, and closely related to, connectionalism grew the structure of our church. To minister to one another and to establish missionary, publishing, and educational programs required more than a parish minister could accomplish alone. A national annual meeting of all pastors soon became difficult. There developed then the yearly meeting of the ministers in a geographic area. This meeting became the Annual Conference, the basic unit of our church.

What have two centuries of church life and membership growth meant to our connectionalism and the church's structures? Contrary to some critics, we do not believe it has been a Topsy-like growth. Our growth process instead has supported the dictum that form follows function. The General Conferences have continued to look at every aspect of our connectional system and the agencies through which our work is accom-

plished. Changes have been made when change seemed best. The democratic processes we employ, even though they sometimes move more slowly than some of us would prefer, have served us well.

When we consider the vast range of ministries to which our efforts are directed, it is no wonder that we hear criticisms. The criticisms, too, have a broad range. There are complaints about costs. There are accusations of lack of spiritual emphasis. There are charges against individuals for a variety of reasons. We are deeply concerned that some of these criticisms seem to be well-organized attacks on the very connectional system which has made our unique style of ministry possible. Sincerity of intention is not a sufficient basis for instituting some of the fundamental changes being advocated. Nevertheless, as has been the case from the earliest days, we put our trust in the legislative process.

It is from this rich history that we must claim our ability to change for the future as our common understanding of our mission in today's world evolves. We call the church to confirm its belief in connectionalism which gives strength in times of change and reassurance for the future.

### II. WE CALL THE CHURCH TO BROADEN ITS UNDERSTANDING OF EVANGELISM SO AS TO INCLUDE A STRONG EMPHASIS ON:

- A. BRINGING THE PEOPLE BACK INTO OUR CHURCH SCHOOLS!
- B. USING ITS CONNECTIONAL SYSTEM TO HOLD ON TO OUR MEMBERS IN A MOBILE WORLD SOCIETY.

Our United Methodist Church has a declining membership. What is more, there is a declining number of new converts coming on profession of faith. Data speaks to us very clearly.<sup>5</sup> Consider the children as an example. Between 1960 and 1976, the number of children enrolled in our church schools declined almost 42 percent. One important factor that has contributed to the decrease in church membership has been the declining number of professions of faith coming through the church school. Studies show that 75 percent of those who join the church on profession of faith are between ten and fourteen years of age. One reason we are losing church members is that we are losing the children from our church schools.

Equally distressing data could be given for all age groups. We must begin to utilize our connectional system to hold the members of our churches who are a part of the world's mobile population.

The majority of the members who transfer are adults. There is evidence that approximately one-half of United Methodist Church members who move are choosing not to transfer their church membership. They drop out either by intent or through neglect, and their names are eventually removed by charge conference action. It has been reported that if the number of charge conference removals can be reduced by one-half for the next ten years, church membership would be increased by over one million people. While we work to



make church membership more meaningful to all members, we must find our lost members! At a time when through technology no information need be lost and all information could be retrieved — surely, we in the church can find a way to retrieve lost church members. As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Sunday School movement, our church needs to take very seriously the distressing data on church membership and the fact that much of the potential for new church members lies within the Sunday School.

The major responsibility, however, will always rest with the local congregation. Here, alone, a member should find the supportive community, which embodies the love of God. The cultural shift, economically based, that has already created the double-income family, and the rise in divorce that has created the single-parent family — both have spawned the critical social question as to how our children are going to be reared. Families need support groups. Mid-life adults, single, divorced, widowed, and older persons — all need the love of Christ that is found in the local congregation.

We call The United Methodist Church to broaden its understanding of evangelism in order to bring the people back into our church schools and to use United Methodism's connexional system to keep its members. We call for a genuine all church priority to which money and leadership are assigned.

## II. WE CALL THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO HEAL THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH ITSELF.

We recognize with reluctance and shame the sinful divisions within the body of The United Methodist Church. Contrary to Jesus' example as a restorer of lives and mender of relationships, we are guilty of tearing down and rending apart, doing so falsely in the name of Christ. We presume to judge who is worthy of entrance into the Kingdom. We insist on the inerrancy of our own gospel. We indulge ourselves in the gratifying pastime of making careful diagnoses and prescribing radical treatments for the maladies which afflict our brothers and sisters, all the while ignoring our own.

We call for healing

- in theological differences, not by agreement but by understanding and respect;
- between clergy and laity, by recognizing our engagement in a common task, respecting our different gifts and graces, and identifying our roles and responsibilities;
- between old and young, through openness, warmth, listening and caring;
- between special interests and concerns, through a clearer perception of our unity in Christ and the nature of our common tasks;
- between differences that exist in our local congregations, through recognition and implementation of the principle of dialogue, especially in listening and speaking.

Like the disciples who were sent out to heal but came

back to Jesus confessing failure, we, The United Methodist Church, must ask, "Why have we failed?"

May God grant us forgiveness for not loving and healing one another. May we yet be one so that the "... world may believe. . . ."

In this unity, we will be better prepared to hear the call to be the SERVANT CHURCH.

## IV. WE CALL THE CHURCH TO ACCEPT ITS MISSION AS SERVANT IN AND TO THE WORLD.

Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves. . . ." We often limit our understanding of the SERVANT CHURCH to acts of mercy to individuals — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison. Such remedial action is important in a world in which emergency food supplies are needed to keep nations from being obliterated by famine or political starvation. This understanding of the SERVANT CHURCH is not adequate for the complex world in which we live. Political forces in all nations tend to manipulate and dehumanize people. This reduces them to mere numbers and nothing more than pawns of production, consumer power, advertising and mass media.

Jesus said, "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." We cannot know precisely what this meant in the world of the immediate followers of Jesus. However, we know our world, the world which God loves, is a world of forces, evil as well as good. No simple understanding of what it means to be in but not of the world is good enough for our time. Nothing short of seeing the call of Christ as a call to liberation is adequate today. This liberation transforms men and women into human beings freed from the forces that bind and warp, control and destroy human life and dignity.

A Christianity adequate for our world recognizes that Jesus called for nothing less than the Kingdom of God as the solution to the human problem of community. Nothing short of a SERVANT CHURCH sent into our world, not the relatively simple world of Jesus' day, is adequate. We must be a church which is willing to walk the road of the cross and to have the spirit of the hymn: "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Jesus Christ. . . ."

The SERVANT CHURCH is called to new life through lay persons who are the front line of the church in the world and who live out the mission of the church in the world. This mission contains two main tasks: (1) to evangelize people and (2) to penetrate, purify, and transform the temporal order with the Spirit of the gospel. If the church fails to do this, it will lose its place in the world and will in the end be reduced to a ghetto of pious worshipers.

To be the SERVANT CHURCH, the church must be willing to lose its life as a church in order to become a pattern community of the Kingdom of God, the vanguard of the coming of the New Age which Jesus announced and lived. This means that the church must, even when it hurts, affirm the value and dignity of all human life as a gift from God in Christ. It means that



the church must be on the side of the lost of our society—the voiceless, the alienated, the exploited and dehumanized, the poor, as well as the affluent. This may even mean crucifixion. If the church is faithful, it will also mean the resurrection of the church to new life in the world.

To be the SERVANT CHURCH means also that it will be a reconciling force in life beyond the church itself. In light of the pervasiveness and the depth of sin, the church must resist the forces of evil.

In this task, we repeat, lay people are called to play a most significant role. As laity, we are, through our work and vocation, active in the world arena where political and economic decisions are being made and carried out. The laity has been and is called to purify and transform the temporal order with the power and the spirit of the gospel revealed through the crucified and risen Christ. We must be the church that not only denounces evil but fights for the eradication of evil structures. We must be the church that is not only on the side of the exploited, the downtrodden, and the poor but the church which also brings the liberating word to the oppressed and the oppressor alike, challenging them to participate in the liberating power of Christ and to perform signs of the Kingdom of God that remind the world that the Kingdom may be nearer to us than we think.

We have not come to you as laity who understand the task of the church to be either easy or always pleasant. In the Methodist covenant service there are appropriate words which place our task in perspective.

Christ has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honor, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations, and temporal interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is assuredly given us in Christ, who strengthens us.<sup>6</sup>

#### THEREFORE:

- I. WE CALL THE CHURCH TO REAFFIRM ITS CONNECTIONALISM.
- II. WE CALL THE CHURCH TO BROADEN ITS UNDERSTANDING OF EVANGELISM.
- III. WE CALL THE CHURCH TO HEAL THE DIVISIONS WITHIN ITSELF.
- IV. WE CALL THE CHURCH TO ACCEPT ITS MISSION AS SERVANT IN AND TO THE WORLD.

We do not know what the future has in store for us, but we believe the future, as the present and the past, is in God's hands. We do not lose heart for our hope is not in the temporal but in the eternal. We face the future with joy and confidence believing that in God's own time the kingdoms of the world shall become the Kingdom of our God and of Jesus Christ.

In the name of God;  
In the name of Jesus, The Christ;  
In the name of the Holy Spirit.  
AMEN

#### NOTES

1. The 1976 Book of Discipline, Para. 104.
2. *Ibid.*, Par. 71.
3. "Saving the Family, Special Report," "Newsweek," May 15, 1978.
4. Dr. Charles E. Millard of Brown University School of Medicine.
5. All data used is from Central Research, United Methodist Publishing House report prepared by W. J. Hartman.
6. The Book of Worship, 1964, "The Covenant," Page 387. .

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