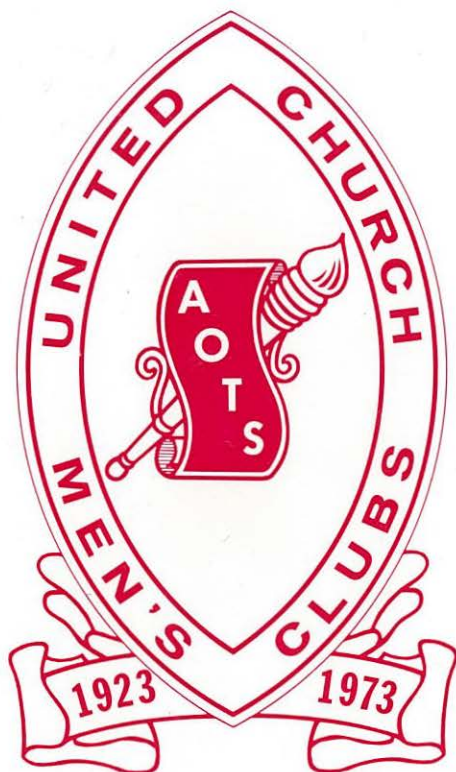


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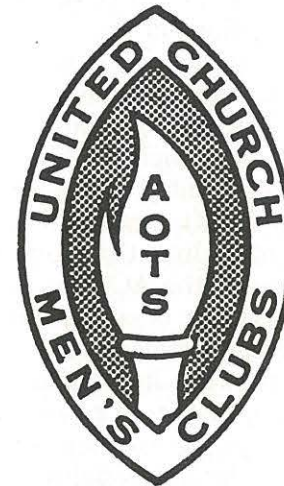


The First Half Century
of
UNITED CHURCH AOTS CLUBS

AS ONE THAT SERVES

A Short History of
AOTS Clubs
Their First Half Century

By W. Jack Banks



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The National Association of
United Church AOTS Men's Clubs

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FOREWORD

When it was my good fortune to be called to Ryerson United Church in Vancouver, I discovered very early that the congregation took great pride in the fact that the AOTS had its origins there. The name of Dr. Harry Grant was one to be conjured with, and there were many persons who recalled his deep commitment to his Christian faith and his concern for the welfare of people. As I moved out across the Vancouver scene, it struck me repeatedly, how broad was the influence of his early work and how meaningful the place of AOTS in the life of so many men and congregations in that area.

“As One That Serves” has its origin in the life and work of Jesus Christ; His life of serving condescension found expression in action in a foot-washing scene, and of course on a cross. These pages show the manner in which the life of our Lord is carried on, perpetuated, and represented in the lives of the members of this organization, over its fifty years of history, and service. No one can measure the other lives that have been affected by the witness of the members of the AOTS across this country.

Canada has known many organizations of a fraternal nature which have linked persons in humanitarian endeavor. At its best, the AOTS has done this; but it has also given evidence to the source of its motivation, that is, to a Lord who enables and empowers followers to live as He lived and look upon their fellows as creatures of God, worthy in His sight and theirs.

As you read the history of this great and unique movement, I hope that you will be inspired from the record of others, to live out in your life the same kind of self-giving interest and concern for others that was reflected there and which, itself, reflects the life of Jesus Christ. In so doing you will “re-present” Jesus Christ to Canada and a needy world. Good reading!

—Rev. Dr. George M. Morrison,
Secretary of General Council,
The United Church of Canada.

INTRODUCTION

At the 1954 Convention of the National Association of AOTS Men's Clubs in Calgary, the late Dr. Harry R. Grant of Vancouver accepted the responsibility of compiling a history of the movement. A charter member of the very first AOTS Club, he knew as friends and co-workers nearly all the men whose dedication to the concept of church-centred service clubs laid the firm foundations for rapid, and eventual nation-wide expansion. Dr. Grant himself served long and well in executive capacities at the District, Conference and National levels. He was therefore able to preserve, through personal knowledge and that of contemporaries, many early facts and facets of the movement which might otherwise have been lost to us.

The extent of Dr. Grant's research was evident in the document he presented at the National Convention in Saskatoon, 1958. In that same year the late C. W. (Bill) Ellis of Toronto, another AOTS stalwart, was asked to update the work. Three years later he had done so, and the typewritten record of the first 38 years of the AOTS story is on file at National Office in Toronto. It was however never published.

This booklet is an attempt to organize and summarize a half-century of AOTS history in convenient form for wide distribution. Without the work of Harry Grant and Bill Ellis, this would have been — at least for the earlier part of the story — a well-nigh impossible task.

Needless to say, a brief account such as this, in naming or listing for various reasons certain individuals, Clubs, Councils, projects and events, inevitably does injustice to countless other persons and groups whose contributions may, in their own ways, have been no less significant. The achievements of AOTS owe, and will owe in the future, much to top leadership. But essentially the success of the movement depends equally on those thousands who must remain unnamed herein, yet whose lives have received a new dimension through our men's club fellowship, and who consequently, in their church, home, daily work and community, have become more faithful and effective followers of the Man who came As One That Serves.

—W. Jack Banks.

I

IN THE BEGINNING

The First Club

In the fall of 1922 Dr. Herbert W. Riggs of Vancouver travelled eastward to attend a Kiwanis Convention in Toronto.

On reading the available records pertaining to the history of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, one might be tempted to say, "Had he not done so, there would be no AOTS today". But surely a movement so vital to the ministry of the laity, so rich in potential for the life and witness of the Church, would in any case have found, in God's own good time, some other way to be born. As it happened, however, it was that 1922 journey which initiated the chain of events leading to all that is recorded herein and establishing Herbert Riggs as the true founder of AOTS.

The good doctor was born (1872) in Colborne, Ontario, graduated from the Manitoba Medical College, and did post-graduate work in Edinburgh, Baltimore, Germany and Austria. Credited with bringing its first x-ray machine into British Columbia, he became President of the North Pacific Surgical Association. Equally prominent in the Kiwanis organization, he served as District Governor and International Vice-President. And, even more vital to our story, he was an active member of Kerrisdale Methodist Church.

At the Lakehead, Dr. Riggs boarded one of the steamers which, in those days before we discovered that our time is somehow so precious we must cross the continent in a few hours, presented the option of extending the four-day journey to a pleasantly varied five. On board also were a group of Presbyterian clergy returning to southern Ontario from an Assembly meeting in Winnipeg.

During the Great Lakes interlude, conversation dealt somewhat naturally with both churches and service clubs; and, perhaps not surprisingly, with their inter-relationships. There had been and still were, of course, "men's clubs" or similar groups in

many congregations of various denominations. But now Dr. Riggs, encouraged by his clerical fellow-travellers, began to develop a vision of a church-centred organization which would combine Christian witness and fellowship with the administrative know-how and efficiency, the every-member responsibilities, the dynamism and community outreach of the secular service club.

By the time he had returned to Vancouver, he had accepted this concept as a personal challenge. His pastor at Kerrisdale (now Ryerson United) Church lent a more-than-sympathetic ear. This was Rev. Dr. G. J. Brown, whose career also included service as Principal of Union College, Vancouver. It was he who unwittingly provided the inspiration for the name of the AOTS movement. One Sunday morning his scripture reading included the passage from Luke's Gospel in which (22:7) Jesus declared himself to have come "As One That Serves". After the service Dr. Riggs told his pastor: "I have a name for that service club we have been talking about".

Dr. Brown invited a few men of the congregation to the parsonage to hear Herbert Riggs outline his concept of a church-centred club which however would be independent of the denominational structures in its constitution and management. This he saw as a means of recruiting the tremendous potential of the laymen, so largely unused to date in relation to service and witness in church and community.

While patterned in many ways on Kiwanis, Rotary and other secular service organizations, the new club would differ from them in that every man in church or community, irrespective of vocation or religious denomination, would be eligible for membership. But like them, every member would be expected to become truly active on a committee. Fees would be minimal, as would be the cost of the monthly meal when the club met for business, fellowship and probably an inspirational address.

It is recorded that the meeting at Dr. Brown's home was "not enthusiastic". Yet the zeal and conviction of Dr. Riggs must have produced a powerful, if not immediate, effect. For when, early in the next year, the first-ever AOTS Men's Club was born, every man present at that informal gathering became a charter member. In addition to Drs. Brown and Riggs, they were Fred Cleland, Harry Colclough, Albert Cotton, George Emery and W. W. Wagg.

It was on January 8, 1923 that the inaugural supper meeting of that pioneer club took place in Kerrisdale Church hall, and a simple constitution was adopted. Speaker of the evening — appropriately enough, when that Great Lakes voyage of the previous autumn is recalled — was Rev. Mr. McGuigan of Chalmers Presbyterian Church, Vancouver. He declared he had heard that the men at Kerrisdale were "Rigging up" something, and he had come over to investigate. His theme, again appropriately, was "Working Together". Cost of the fine meal, incidentally, was 40¢. And it is hardly necessary perhaps to add that a certain Herbert W. Riggs was elected as the first AOTS Club's first President!

The 53 charter members at once set about ensuring that the *service* concept for their organization would become a reality. Though from the first the spiritual growth of the membership was emphasized, this was to find expression in outreach. Objectives as expressed in the adopted Constitution were replete in such phrases as "service in the church and community", "reinforce the standards of good citizenship", "broaden human sympathy", and "social service activities".

It was soon apparent to President Riggs and his associates that their concept was demonstrably valid, and that AOTS was too good an idea to be confined to one congregation. They set about assisting in the formation of clubs in other churches. Within a year of their own club's birth, others were active in Wesley, Marpole, Mount Pleasant and Dunbar Heights Methodist Churches, and in Chalmers Presbyterian.

The first District Council

The next logical step was to create a coordinating group for the clubs' mutual support and for the further promotion of the movement. On January 21, 1924, representatives of the above-mentioned clubs met, and the Vancouver and Lower Mainland District Council of AOTS Clubs was born, with Dr. Riggs as first President.

The Constitution adopted soon afterwards defined the Council's objective as:

"to promote united action of the clubs in the interest of better community life and better citizenship by practical application of the teaching of Jesus in the life and organization of the community".

The Council's running expenses — at least those not paid

from the members' own pockets — must have been modest in those early days, for they were met by a ten cents per member per annum fee from the clubs. But its achievements, or more properly those of the membership of all the clubs, coordinated by the Council, were indeed impressive. Many of the service projects carried out in those years when the movement was confined almost exclusively to the Vancouver area, represent truly remarkable achievement. Some of these will be outlined in a later chapter devoted to "What AOTS Has Done", there and elsewhere.

Suffice it here to mention but two or three early undertakings, not perhaps "projects" as such, but of significance in the development of various facets of the AOTS story.

* As early as 1926 an annual District Council Rally and dinner was instituted, and soon was attracting several hundred people. This later developed into the "Round-Up" which today in various parts of the country still brings men together, for a full day's program or in some cases for a weekend, to enjoy Christian fellowship and inspiration as well as to conduct AOTS business on a regional basis.

* In 1932 appeared the first issue of "The Handshake", initially a mimeographed, later a printed newsletter and promotional piece for the District Council and clubs. Its first editor, Council Secretary Tom Edwards, served faithfully for eight years. Long after AOTS became nationwide and served by other publications at that or at the wider regional level, The Handshake continued to make an invaluable contribution to the work in its own area.

* And in the 1934-35 year Charles Atchison, later National President of AOTS, presented the handsome "Travelling Gavel". To this day some clubs, notably in B.C., continue the practice of a group of men from the "visiting club" — who by usual custom provide the program for the evening — taking the gavel to the host club, which in turn takes it, as the visiting group, in another month to another club. With or without a travelling gavel, the concept of inter-club visits — for fellowship, mutual support and exchange of ideas and information — has been an important source of strength for AOTS.

By now of course The United Church of Canada was in existence. Kerrisdale Methodist Church had become Ryerson United. For more than two decades the AOTS movement developed largely within the United Churches — and within B.C.'s

lower mainland area — though it was declaredly interdenominational and without official relationship with churchly structures. During the early years, however, clubs flourished more or less briefly at Fairview, Kerrisdale and First Baptist Churches, in the Vancouver area, First Presbyterian in Bellingham, Washington, and Reformed Episcopal in Victoria, B.C.

By 1935, the District Council had 35 clubs on its roster, including Vancouver's Scandinavian Mission, Japanese United and First Baptist Churches. Further afield, with corresponding membership status, "AOTS" clubs functioned in such places as Petaluma, California; Everett, Washington; and even one in Belfast! How the AOTS concept found fertile soil for even temporary fruition in those fields no doubt would make interesting reading were the stories — involving we suspect individual enthusiasts who moved or travelled thereto — available to us.

The Central Council

On April 19, 1939 the first "District Council Convention", followed by a dinner and rally, was held at West Point Grey Church. And at the next such annual event, in April 1940, action was taken to form the Central AOTS Council. Though the movement was yet to crack the Rocky Mountain barrier it had begun to spread outward from the Vancouver area into other parts of British Columbia. It was hoped that the Central Council would act as an advisory, coordinating and promotional body for new Councils in various districts, and for clubs operating in areas without district organization.

The Vancouver District Council officers were to act, with some others, as the Central Council executive, J.A. Robinson of the pioneer Ryerson Club being listed as the first President. Two years later provision was made for a Second Vice-President, to be appointed by the incoming President from a club outside the Vancouver area. First such incumbent was H. Mitchell of Kelowna.

The Central Council period lasted officially just seven years, but saw developments of great importance to our story. It covered of course most of the World War II era — a time of problems which doubtless inhibited growth of the movement, but also a time of great challenge for the still-young, church-service club concept, a challenge nobly met. Some of the remarkably ambitious and successful projects carried out by the numerically small organization will be recorded in the previously mentioned later chapter.

Probably the most far-reaching action taken during these years, however, was the employment in 1946 of D.R. Poole as part-time Secretary. Some time later, he assumed full-time duty as Executive Secretary. Unquestionably the experience and ability in promotion and organization, the enthusiasm and consecration, and the personal charm of this remarkable man provided the principal thrust in the rapid postwar expansion of the AOTS movement across Canada to the Atlantic seaboard.

Delbert Russell Poole was born in 1882 on a farm near Woodstock, Ontario. As a youth he responded to the call of the church for assistance on the prairies, then being opened to settlement and cultivation at a rapid pace. He served as a student minister in Saskatchewan, and attended Brandon College. Instead of pursuing theological studies to ordination, however, he joined the Y.M.C.A. staff and in 1926 became National Boys' Work Secretary, succeeding Taylor Statten. Later he was General Secretary of the Religious Education Council of Canada, and then pursued a business career for some years, becoming sales manager for a large food products company in Vancouver.

Obviously Central AOTS Council could not pay a salary commensurate with the ability and experience of its first Executive Secretary; but such considerations failed to lessen the all-out dedication and effort of D.R. Poole. Within two or three years of his employment, AOTS had become a truly nation-wide movement.

We have seen that "AOTS" clubs operated, for a time, during the 1920's and '30's in at least a few churches beyond B.C. borders. California, Washington and Northern Ireland have been mentioned above; but not, thus far, other Canadian provinces. It has been authoritatively stated that in the mid-thirties Bill Jones of Moose Jaw visited Ryerson club on a trip to Vancouver, and on return home was instrumental in establishing an AOTS club in Zion United Church there. In may well be that other such clubs were formed in various parts of Canada calling themselves "AOTS", or at least patterned on the AOTS concept. If so, there seems to be no word of their affiliation with the District or Central Council in the latter's records, or of their continued existence in the late '40's when D.R. Poole began his safaris east of the mountains. He therefore was entering, for all intents and purposes, virgin territory insofar as the AOTS organization was concerned.

Meanwhile, at its west coast base, the Central Council was

preparing to meet the challenge of nationwide growth. In May, 1947 it changed its name to the National Association of AOTS Clubs. At first, admittedly, there was little real change except in name. George C. Skinner, who had been President of the Central and Vancouver Councils, became the first "National" President for an interim period. All other officers and directors were B.C. men. Charles Atchison succeeded to the Presidency in 1948. Until 1952 "national conventions" were held in Vancouver, attracting few delegates from other provinces. With the preponderance of clubs still west of the Rockies, no other course would seem to have been practical.

By July 1948 however, there were 31 affiliated clubs in other provinces, and 47 in B.C. The annual meeting of the National Association in May, 1949 re-elected Charles Atchison of Vancouver as President. But it was now possible to facilitate Canada-wide development by electing Vice-Presidents from Alberta (Allan R. Jones), British Columbia (Gordon Mercer), Manitoba (A.A. Sykes), New Brunswick (M.W. Chepesuik), Ontario (W.R. Lett and David J. Sherwood), Quebec (H.A. Bragg) and Saskatchewan (Hon. Justice H.F. Thomson).

A new era in the AOTS saga had truly begun.

II THE EASTWARD MARCH

For convenient reference, it seems in order to summarize the growth of AOTS during the early "National Association" years region by region, rather than in strictly chronological sequence. Needless to say, this must indeed be only a summary, and a brief one, it being impossible here to give adequate credit to more than a few of the many individuals, or to all the clubs, Councils and other groups who played significant roles in this chapter of AOTS history.

Manitoba

It has been mentioned that prior to 1952 annual business meetings or conventions of the "National Association" were held in Vancouver. In that year, however, what has come to be regarded as the first truly "National Convention" convened at Knox Church, Winnipeg. This choice of venue was well-founded, for the early growth of the movement in Manitoba Conference area had been truly remarkable. And so, rather than following the obvious geographical sequence, we leap over two provinces to begin our story of the AOTS movement's eastward march.

In October 1947 D.R. Poole brought the challenge of his cause to some 150 men, representing 31 churches, gathered for a supper meeting at St. Stephen's-Broadway United Church in Winnipeg. Some came from rural areas. Their response to the Executive Secretary's inspiring address, and to the question-answer period following, resulted in some amazingly rapid developments. The following day a dinner meeting for men from several interested congregations set up a Provisional Committee chaired by A.C. Garvin. Within weeks this led to the establishment of the first District Council east of the Rockies. The prediction that within a month there would be a dozen clubs organized in the Winnipeg area proved to be no idle boast.

In addition to the St. Stephen's-Broadway meeting "D.R." addressed two church services on this pioneer visit, had a special

meeting with a number of ministers, and before he left the Winnipeg area, actually presented a charter to Manitoba's first AOTS Club — at St. Vital United Church. And he had spent just three and one-half days in Winnipeg!

He then moved on to meet with men at Portage La Prairie, Roblin, Virden, and Souris. In each case, the decision to form a local club was quickly made.

In addition to Winnipeg, District Councils were established in due course in the Superior, Kenora — Rainy River, and Western Manitoba areas of the Conference. First of these was Superior (1950). One of the several key men responsible for the formation of this Council, and of the eight clubs it at one time comprised, was Phillip H. Spence of Fort William, who was to become Mr. Poole's successor as Executive Secretary.

Next came (1954) the Western Manitoba Council; then Kenora — Rainy River, formed at a district Round-Up at Dryden, Ont., in 1957. The Dryden Club had its birth as a result of a stop there by D.R. Poole in 1950, and for years was one of the movement's largest and most active, with some 100 members at one time. (At this writing, the Dryden Club is reportedly being reactivated.)

National Association structure soon provided for wider regional, or Provincial Councils to coordinate and assist the work of the district bodies. Manitoba's held its first Round-Up at Westminster Church, Winnipeg, in 1952. Its first President was D.G. Mackenzie. By June 1953, there were 32 active clubs in Manitoba.

Little wonder then, in view of this rapid growth and Winnipeg's central position for delegates convening from coast to coast, that the 1952 National Convention met there on May 30-June 1; or that G. Brydon McCrea of that city became the National Association's first President outside of B.C. He had been a stalwart of the movement since D.R. Poole's first visit; as indeed he is at this writing.

Saskatchewan

On his return from that fruitful 1947 journey to Winnipeg, the Executive Secretary stopped off at Regina and met with a gathering of men at Metropolitan Church who were interested in reviving a men's club which had been active previously there, but had not recently operated. How, or on whose suggestion D.R. Poole came to be invited to address this meeting, we are

not aware. In any event, those in attendance immediately decided that AOTS had the potential for the successful club which they had been seeking. The next evening, in the office of Mr. Justice Harold Thomson, a committee was formed to nominate officers, and within a month Metropolitan Club had been chartered — the first in Saskatchewan. This club had been a tower of strength to the movement throughout the half-century.

Men of other Regina congregations were impressed with Metropolitan's early achievements, and in 1949 Mr. Poole was again invited to the Queen City. He addressed a series of meetings in various churches. Lakeview, Carmichael and Westminster Clubs were soon organized, and that fall a District Council was formed with Harold Thomson as President. Until his passing a few years ago he was a tireless supporter of the movement, and its leading expert in constitutional matters.

In May 1950 eight clubs were represented at the Council's annual meeting, and in October D.R. Poole again came to the province, visiting, with Harold Thomson, not only the clubs in Regina but churches in Moose Jaw and other towns in the general area. The Executive Secretary also travelled further afield, conferring with men in the Yorkton, Melville and Saskatoon regions. As a result, several new groups were chartered. By 1952, there were 17 clubs in Saskatchewan.

For a time the Regina-centred group called itself the Saskatchewan District Council, but following establishment of Councils in the Saskatoon and Prince Albert areas its name was changed to the Regina District Council (1955) and a Saskatchewan Provincial Council was formed for better liaison and mutual support between the various areas. Other District Councils were formed later.

While 17 clubs chartered in the five years following D.R. Poole's 1947 visit may be regarded as a solid beginning, the growth of AOTS in Saskatchewan during the following four years was more spectacular. At the 1956 National Convention the Provincial Council reported 59 active clubs.

At the 1952 conclave in Winnipeg Harold Thomson had reported that there appeared to be, among a few clergymen in the Saskatchewan Conference, a feeling that there was some "conflict between AOTS and United Church Men". It should be recalled that at that time AOTS still had no formal connection with the courts of The United Church of Canada while United Church Men's groups were affiliated with the Church

through its National Committee of United Church Men (later to become the Board of Men).

The whole matter of AOTS relationships to the Church and other men's groups therein will be reviewed later. Suffice it here to say that steps to clear up any such misunderstanding as to possible conflict of interest, which Mr. Justice Thomson suggested might be inhibiting growth, had already been taken. In the spring of 1952 Mr. Ralph Young, Secretary of the Committee of United Church Men, met with District Council executive members in Regina, as he was doing with other AOTS groups at that period, to seek closer cooperation between the two organizations. The active support and cooperation of the pastor has always been a "must" for the successful AOTS club, and needless to say this had been generally forthcoming from the first in those congregations where clubs had already been established.

Distances between centres of population in Saskatchewan are large, and men like Harold Thomson, Fred Saunderson (National Vice-President for Saskatchewan, and later National President), Frank Hill (Provincial Council President and National Vice-President, 1956) and others travelled far and often to achieve the remarkable growth from zero to 59 clubs in less than a decade. By the end of the period dealt with in this chapter, Saskatchewan was truly one of the bastions of AOTS.

Ontario

Sometime shortly before the spring of 1947 Colin B. Mooney, an active AOTS member in Vancouver, was transferred by his employers to Toronto. He joined High Park United Church in the city's west end, and there told the story of the virile church-centred service club movement back home. High Park's pastor, Rev. F.E. James, had realized the need for an effective men's organization in his growing congregation and gave enthusiastic support. In March, '47, they succeeded in forming Ontario's first AOTS club. Gil Lister of Hamilton, a Past President of the Vancouver District Council, and of the Ryerson Club, installed the officers.

At St. George's United, Rev. Dr. Willard Brewing recalled the successful club at his former charge, St. Andrew's — Wesley, Vancouver. With the assistance of the High Park men, the second Toronto club was established in January 1948. For many years this was one of the largest in Canada, with nearly 200

members at one point in time. And in the fall of that same year, Rhodes Avenue Church in Toronto's east end called to its pulpit Rev. Harold Frid of Winnipeg. He too was acquainted with the AOTS movement in the West, and brought the matter before his Board. About this time also, Executive Secretary D.R. Poole visited Toronto on his second eastward mission; and Rhodes Avenue became the third club to be chartered in the area. No. 4 followed soon at Chalmers Church in suburban Mount Dennis.

These clubs had no formal inter-relationship until 1950 when they formed Ontario's first District Council, with David J. Sherwood as President. On a trip to the West he had observed the work of Councils and felt that this was the best method of promoting the growth of AOTS. At the time of the 1952 National Convention, however, he could report only six clubs operative in the region. This comparatively slow initial growth in Ontario may have been due at least in part to the stronger position, as compared to the West, of United Church Men's groups. To some churches, AOTS still appeared as an "outside", perhaps even a competing organization.

Soon, however, this picture was to change.

In 1952 Eddie Ross, a member of the Rhodes Avenue Club, was transferred to Paris, Ont., and was instrumental in forming a club there, as well as assisting in the establishment of others in the area. He became the first President of the Grand Valley District Council.

Then in 1953 an event of great significance to all United Churchmen, including AOTS, took place in Muskoka. This was the first Elgin House Conference of United Church Men. It pioneered the men's weekend Conference Movement which spread from coast to coast and has brought a renewal of faith and purpose in the lives of countless individuals. Though of course not specifically "men's club" events, AOTS men have played from the first a major role in practically every such Conference, large and small, from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island.

"AOTS" was an item on the first Elgin House agenda, and was ably represented by D.R. Poole and National President Brydon McCrea. Many men there caught a vision of the potential of the men's club movement. The National Executive of AOTS was requested to send the Executive Secretary on an extended journey through the province. This effort has been credited with the birth of no less than 22 new clubs! In May,

1954 the first all-Ontario Round-Up was held at Sparrow Lake, an annual event still of major importance and value.

By 1955, there were 50 chartered clubs and five District Councils in the province, and a year later (June 1956) 74 were reported at the third National Convention held at Muskoka Beach. No man had contributed more to this amazing growth from four to a half-hundred within two bienniums than Dave Sherwood, who was the logical choice to become, at the Muskoka Beach conclave, the first "down east" National President.

Quebec

The first club to be organized in La Belle Province was that of Chalmers United Church in the Montreal suburb of Verdun, with Harold Bragg as President. This was in November 1947. At this writing we have been unable to uncover the story of how it came into being. For some years Chalmers carried on alone in the area and apparently no others were enrolled until 1953.

In June of that year Art Sykes, the National Association's Expansion Committee Chairman, visited Montreal and met with men of several churches at a luncheon rally. In October, Executive Secretary Poole spent a week in Montreal, conferring with pastors and laymen of various congregations and addressing Presbytery Court. Several clubs were now organized, and within weeks the Montreal and District Council was formed with Gerry Palmer, formerly of Winnipeg, as its first President. In 1954 its member clubs were the pioneer Chalmers, Queen Mary Road, Montreal Rosedale, Valois, and St. Andrew's in Lachine.

An Extension Committee headed by Allan MacLaine of Queen Mary Road, who also served as National Vice-President for Quebec, was now in operation. A few more clubs were formed in the province; but of course the number of United Churches there are comparatively few in relation to total population.

When the National Association became more closely affiliated with church structures, of course, its organization was based on Conference rather than provincial boundaries, and Montreal area clubs were grouped with those in Ontario within the Montreal-Ottawa Conference area. Though never large in numbers, Quebec clubs have played a significant role in the AOTS story. For years the largest rural AOTS group, with a brilliant record of service and achievement, was that of the province's Wakefield-Alcove-Rupert charge.

Alberta

Though next door to the natal province of AOTS, Alberta's first club was not established until after those of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. But once the seed took root, growth soon became as vigorous as in the province's two sisters of the plains.

It was during D.R. Poole's 1948 journey across the prairies and into Ontario that he took the AOTS story to Alberta centres, and the first club came into being at Gaetz Memorial Church, Red Deer. Central United, Calgary, followed that same year as Alberta's Number Two. During the next year several others were formed in the latter city and its environs, and the Alberta Council — renamed the Calgary District Council later — was formed. Its first President (later National President) Allan R. Jones ranks with such as Fred Saunderson, Brydon McCrea and the late Dave Sherwood as key leaders in the development of the movement in their respective area as well as at the national level.

The Council worked hard, through its officers and Extension Committee under Chairman Doug. Agnew, to spread the good word and organized several clubs in various areas of the province. As late as 1952 however, Edmonton and Lethbridge regions were still without AOTS clubs. Several trips by the Calgary "missionaries" were made to the capital, including one in January 1953 (temperature minus 20) to a successful rally in Metropolitan Church with D.R. Poole as speaker. At this meeting the Edmonton area's first clubs — Avonmore, Jasper Place and Wesley, were chartered and their officers installed.

A committee to investigate the formation of an Edmonton District Council also was appointed at this rally. It soon came into being with Arthur Gregg as President, and went about organizing several additional clubs in the area. Meanwhile (March '53) a club was formed at Southminster Church, Lethbridge, followed by several others in the southwest of the province, and the Lethbridge District Council was organized under President Phil. King.

By 1954 there were 30 active clubs in Alberta, up from 16 as reported at the 1952 Convention in Winnipeg. The strong leadership and virility of the movement in the province was now recognized as Central Church, Calgary, became the site of the second truly National Convention of AOTS Clubs in June, 1954. The Calgary District Council accepted full responsibility for

promoting and organizing this gala event, with Al. Jones as Chairman of the Convention Committee.

Bryon McCrea was relected President. He reported a total of 215 clubs now enrolled across the nation. AOTS was still, however, a predominantly western organization. Ontario listed 32 and Quebec 7 clubs, but none were reported then active in the Atlantic region. And of some 200 delegates at Calgary, only three came from east of the Lakehead! The movement was none the less on the verge of a real breakthrough in the east, and the momentum engendered by the 1954 Convention was a contributing factor.

By 1957 Alberta's fourth District Council had been formed in the Lloydminster-Vegreville area, and at the 5th Banff Conference of United Church Men that fall, an Alberta Provincial Council was organized to coordinate the now formidable efforts of the district bodies. This followed the formation of similar Provincial Councils, in or about 1955, in Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

The Atlantic Provinces

During his 1948 journey to the east D.R. Poole spoke to 140 men at a dinner meeting in Moncton, New Brunswick, on invitation of Michael W. Chepesuik of Central United Church. Through the further efforts of the latter, truly the pioneer of AOTS in this region and its first National Vice-President, a club was soon formed at Central.

This club, however, ceased at least for a time to function after some four years. The slow start of AOTS expansion in the Maritimes apparently was due at least in part to the already stronger position of men's clubs within United Churches there as compared with most other parts of the country. The Lay Association of the Conference had been particularly supportive of this trend. Once AOTS had become officially linked with the church at the national level, however, the picture changed rapidly. In the later 1950's and through the banner years of the '60's, the Maritimes — and Newfoundland — became true strongholds of the movement.

Following the first short-lived club in Moncton, meanwhile, Mike Chepesuik, Art Sykes, D.R. Poole and others continued their valiant efforts. Allan MacLaine from Montreal visited Moncton and Amherst, Nova Scotia, in June 1954, speaking to men's groups there. That same summer Mike Chepesuik pre-

sented the AOTS challenge at the second Berwick Conference of United Church Men. Executive Secretary Poole also came to the Maritimes again in '54, and as a result of his efforts then a club was organized at Centenary-Queen's Square Church, Saint John; and, soon after, another at Gunningsville, near Moncton.

At the third Convention of the National Association, 1956, Mike Chepesuik was able to report new clubs at Shediac, Lakeville and Scotch Settlement charges. That spring, Board of Men Secretary Ralph Young convened a meeting of key men in the Maritime Conference at the Atlantic Christian Training Centre, Tatamagouche, N.S., and told of the new relationship between AOTS and the Board. Next year, at the AOTS National Association annual meeting, Mike Chepesuik reported new clubs at Pugwash, N.S., and at Cornerbrook and Curling in western Newfoundland. Previously, the latter province's first club had been formed, apparently through correspondence rather than personal visit, at Burin. The seed had now taken root down by the sea, and the time of vigorous growth there was at hand.

III

GROWING TOGETHER

Our first chapter carried the AOTS story through its initial development, largely within British Columbia, and to the threshold of the "National Association" years. The summary of its spread through the rest of the country was told from the regional viewpoint, but contained a few brief references to events of national scope some years beyond those covered in Chapter 1, including the first three "National" Conventions, as well as the "marriage" of AOTS with United Church structures. We now take up again the tale at the national level, from where Chapter 1 left off, covering the whole period of "The National Association of AOTS Clubs". This ended in 1959, with another change in name and, more importantly, in the movement's relationship and scope.

As previously mentioned, the new name of "National Association of AOTS Clubs" was adopted in 1947, with Charles Skinner as its first President. He was succeeded the following year by Charles E. Atchison, also of Vancouver, who served in that capacity until 1952. Mr. Atchison had the qualities of leadership required to guide AOTS through this critical four years of Canada-wide expansion. He travelled extensively and, with the support of Executive Secretary D.R. Poole, Treasurer Jack Robinson and other officers, established the National Association as a viable, largely self-supporting structure.

Early in the period, annual national dues to be paid by all chartered clubs were set at \$1 per member. "The President's Letter" was instituted; originally a mimeographed message, with some news items from clubs, which later became a printed monthly publication with a circulation, in 1956, of 12,500.

The first truly "National" Convention of AOTS Clubs in Knox Church, Winnipeg, May 30-June 1, 1952, also has been mentioned, as has something of the key role played by G. Brydon McCrea in the establishment of the movement in Manitoba. He was chairman of the Convention Committee, and was

there elected to succeed Charles Atchison as President. The Executive, now centred in Winnipeg, requested that an Advisory Committee be formed in Vancouver since the men there had carried, up to that point, the chief responsibility for the movement. This committee, with its wealth of experience, worked in close harmony with the National Executive, though in a purely advisory capacity.

"Marriage" with the Church

Like his predecessor, Brydon McCrea travelled far and often in support of AOTS during the two bienniums of his incumbency, and contributed greatly to its further growth. It was also his task to preside through another critical period, leading to, and developing, new relationships with The United Church of Canada.

The original inter-denominational nature of AOTS had changed long 'ere this. After some two decades of its history, clubs in congregations other than those of The United Church of Canada had fallen by the wayside, or at least were no longer enrolled with AOTS. But there was still no official connection with the Church's national or regional structures. In fact the Central AOTS Council — and later the National Association of AOTS Clubs — were incorporated under the Societies Act of British Columbia.

True, the Courts of the Church had expressed some interest and approval from time to time — as early indeed as the first General Council following the Union of 1925. In connection with a discussion on the need to develop more effectively the tremendous potential of the men of the Church, its Record of Proceedings noted that AOTS — then of course confined to the Vancouver area — was proving "a most valuable men's organization for Christian work". The British Columbia Conference, among other Courts, had also commended the movement to its congregations. And of course many Ministers had learned how valuable an AOTS club could be to the life and witness of their charges. Few clubs, indeed, have been founded and prospered without the active support of their pastors.

As has been noted, however, the early growth of AOTS, at least in certain areas of the country, appeared to encounter difficulty due to the feeling on the part of some, both clergy and laity, that it was in competition with established men's groups in their churches.

For their part, many AOTS members themselves had begun, long before the 1952 Convention, to feel that a "marriage" with The United Church of Canada could in many ways strengthen the movement. Contrary to earlier views that this might impede cooperative effort with men's groups in other denominations, the "pro-amalgamation" people now suggested that ecumenical action — then and always an AOTS objective — might indeed be easier to achieve were AOTS able to approach such groups through official church channels. As early as March, 1942 the Vancouver District Council passed a resolution urging that the Central Council seek affiliation with The United Church of Canada.

And by 1946, the Central Council — later the National Association — had begun negotiations with the Lay Activities Committee of The United Church of Canada with a view to this end. At the 1952 Winnipeg Convention, much time was devoted to discussing the matter. A resolution accepted in principle a Constitution, to be finalized by Mr. Justice Thomson and D.R. Poole, to provide a basis for closer relationship with the Church through its National Committee of United Church Men — successor to the Lay Activities Committee. That fall, the General Council approved this official status for AOTS.

In the previous year Ralph Young had been appointed Secretary of the Committee of United Church Men. We have mentioned previously his support for the AOTS movement and his desire to strengthen its newly developing relationships. The national Church, through Mr. Young's Committee, now made an annual contribution to the budget of the National Association of AOTS Clubs.

The 1954 General Council raised the status of the Committee of United Church Men to that of a top-rank administrative unit — The Board of Men. Ralph Young remained as Secretary. And the National Association of AOTS Men's Clubs became a Department of the Board.

For a "Unified Program"

The stage was now set for negotiations and planning, which soon began, leading toward another significant development in our history. This was the establishment of a single program and purpose for all men's clubs within The United Church of Canada. It envisaged an invitation to all such local units — including AOTS, the many United Church Men's Clubs enrolled with

the Board, as well as unaffiliated clubs, fellowships, etc. — to become part of a united movement, benefitting from the strengths of a wider fellowship and nationally developed resources.

Support for this concept was given at the 1956 Convention, held for the first time outside of western Canada at Muskoka Beach, Ont. As we have seen, David J. Sherwood, a pioneer of the movement in Ontario, there succeeded Brydon McCrea as President. A Toronto business executive with wide experience in the sales promotion field, his know-how and dedication were now at the disposal of the Association at the nation-wide level.

And in that same year, another change in personnel of prime importance to AOTS took place. At the aforementioned 1956 Convention it was already known that Delbert Poole was on the point of retirement after a decade of service the value of which was truly beyond compute. A committee to choose a successor examined many possibilities for his replacement and finally recommended a man who was to accomplish what at the time must have seemed all but impossible — namely, to prove himself in every respect a worthy successor to D.R. Poole!

Philip H. Spence was born in Kansas of Canadian parents, and was educated in Saskatchewan and Ontario. After teaching school for five years, he entered the industrial field, and became Production Manager of an important Fort William plant during World War II — as well as serving as the first President of the first aircraft workers' union in Canada. Phil later operated his own construction business, was in charge of aircraft contracts in western Canada for the Federal Government, and then became a regional manager for the Wells (church fund-raising) Organization.

Always an active churchman, his interest in AOTS dated from its first expansion into northwestern Ontario. He was first President of the first club in Fort William, and served as President of the Superior District Council.

The Board of Men unanimously endorsed the recommendation of the special committee. And so, in September 1956, the "D.R. Poole era" in the story of AOTS came to an end. He handed over to his successor a vigorous, now fast-growing organization listing some 300 active clubs from Newfoundland to Yukon Territory (Whitehorse), and 22 District Councils. Many testimonial dinners and other events were held in Delbert Poole's honor, and messages of appreciation for his unstinting

services poured in from all areas. Since he was not officially a church employee participating in the pension plan, a retirement fund had been instituted some time before, with an objective of \$10,000.

With Phil Spence's assumption of office, the national headquarters of the Association moved from 1012 Nelson St., Vancouver, to that of the Board of Men, at United Church national office, 299 Queen St. W., Toronto. In this milieu, progress now quickened toward the unification of the Church's men's club program.

An Integration Committee including representatives of AOTS, United Church Men's Clubs (numbering over 200 at this time), as well as local groups not affiliated with either of the main bodies, was appointed by the Board of Men. It held its first meeting at Banff following the second annual Men's Conference there. From AOTS were five men already familiar to our readers as stalwarts of the movement: Brydon McCrea, David Sherwood, Harold Thomson, Phil Spence and Delbert Poole — who in retirement continued his active participation and support.

"At no time was there any diversity of opinion as to the need of a (unified) program," the then-new Executive Secretary later declared. "The only discussion was to find the best means of arriving at that end. The Committee suggested that the name be 'United Church AOTS Men's Clubs', incorporating the names of the two major bodies. They also laid down the fundamentals upon which they felt the program should be based."

The following Aim and Objects of the new organization were approved by the 1957 Annual Meetings of the Board of Men and the AOTS National Council:

The aim of the United Church AOTS Men's Club is to promote Christian fellowship, to deepen the spiritual life of men, and to develop an effective program of Christian service.

The objects shall be:

(a) To help the men of the Church and the community to grow in knowledge and love of God as we know Him in Jesus Christ, and in devotion to Christ and His way of life.

(b) To increase their knowledge of, interest in, and loyalty to the Church and its mission.

(c) To develop consecrated and effective leadership.

(d) To encourage and give practical assistance to Boys' and Youth work in the Church and community.

(e) To participate actively in the Church's efforts to strengthen Christian family life.

(f) To develop programs, projects and activities that will both interest and men of the Church and community in becoming active Club members and aid in achieving the aim of the Club.

(g) To sponsor United Church AOTS Men's Clubs in neighboring churches.

Meanwhile a sub-group of the Integration Committee had been developing a men's club Executive Handbook and program materials. Some 200 clubs across Canada — about half of them AOTS — were asked to become "Corresponding Members" of the Committee. Supplied with the materials, they were requested to "study, try out and criticize". Many obviously carried out this assignment assiduously, and came up with valuable suggestions for improvement.

The 1958 Annual Meeting of the Board of Men accepted the principles put forth by the Committee, and authorized distribution of an experimental edition of the Handbook. The Integration Committee had completed its task. The Board now established an Interim Committee to direct men's club work during the transitional period. This was chaired by Arthur Blair, an insurance executive from Simcoe, Ont., with Fred Saunderson of AOTS as Vice-Chairman. The AOTS National Executive were members.

Conventions — "Last" and "First"

The stage was now set for action at another historic biennial Convention of the National Association of AOTS Clubs — its fourth and last. This met at Saskatoon, June 13-15, 1958, with Torie Tollefson of that city as Convention Chairman. And there the proposal for the new unified program for men's clubs was strongly endorsed, along with plans for putting it into effect.

These provided for the National AOTS Council to suspend its operations as of January 1, 1959, and place its responsibilities in the hands of the Interim Committee. The National AOTS Executive, as a part of the latter body, was however to carry on the task of "keeping all phases of the AOTS organization intact and serviceable". Similarly, at the Provincial or Conference, and the District Council level, AOTS Councils would assist in establishing Interim Councils which would seek to bring into fellowship all types of local men's clubs or fellowships in the

area. These were now urged to enroll under the new program as United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, and by April 1959, 323 had done so.

This was the year of "Growing Together". Such was the appropriate title of the lead article, by Dr. L. H. Cragg, Chairman of the Board of Men, in the inaugural issue of "The Bridge Builder" that February. This took the place of the AOTS "President's Letter" and the "National News", which had been issued in the interest and support of men's work in the Church generally, by the Board of Men. The new publication was edited throughout the 13 years of its life by W. Jack Banks, a Toronto journalist who in May 1959 — when national headquarters moved to the new United Church House, 85 St. Clair Ave. E. — joined the Board of Men staff on a part-time basis.

Now the event which would bring to fruition the hopes and efforts of so many men over the previous years, was approach. In September, at Canadian Keswick Conference Centre, Muskoka, the first Biennial Convention of The National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs took place.

We might best convey the spirit of the occasion by quoting directly from the report on the Convention in the October 1959 Bridge Builder:

"CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY"

"Those two words, spoken by Mr. Justice Harold Thomson of Regina in the lovely chapel of Canadian Keswick on the afternoon of Saturday, September 19, marked the climax of an historic Convention, and the culmination of years of prayer, planning and selfless effort by many dedicated men.

"The words thrilled 314 representatives of men's clubs, and wives, from Vancouver Island to Bermuda there assembled. The hoped-for unity of clubs of different traditions and backgrounds, but with the same essential purpose of fellowship and service in God, now became reality.

"The resolution adopting the recommendation of the Interim Committee to constitute the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, and to accept its proposed Constitution, had been moved and seconded, significantly, by Osborne Crowell of Halifax and Charles Atchison of Vancouver. Major Crowell is a veteran stalwart of the United Church Men's Club movement; Mr. Atchison a past National President of AOTS. Indeed a happy augury!

"Truth to tell, probably no one present had had the slightest doubt concerning the outcome of the vote. But when delegates stood as one to vote, 'Yes,' and not a single 'No' was recorded, the community of spirit and purpose was indeed an inspiring thing to behold and experience."

It was perhaps fitting — certainly and especially for those with an AOTS background — that the first President of the new National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, elected at the Keswick Convention, should be from the Vancouver area. Charles Collins Burritt, born in that city and a resident of nearby South Burnaby, is a well-known business man who had served as a Vice-President of the former AOTS National Association. "Charlie" remains today active in the movement — as indeed does every one of his successors!

IV

THE EARLY SIXTIES

Buoyant Hopes

These indeed were years of rapid growth and buoyant hopes for the now unified men's club movement. As of December 31, 1959, 425 clubs had enrolled in the National Association. Within less than two and a half years, the total had grown to 650, with 55 District Councils. Some of these clubs no doubt did not continue in operation — or at least in affiliation — for long. In early 1963 there were 582 listed as formally chartered. Church statistics indicated another 255 local men's groups not affiliated with AOTS.

This, incidentally, is an "AOTS" history. We have mentioned only briefly to this point the former United Church Men's Clubs and other local groups which had contributed greatly in service to church and community, and in fellowship and inspiration to countless men, previous to 1959. And if for convenience we may refer hereinafter to the unified movement or its clubs, after that date, as AOTS, this is not to minimize in any way the tremendous part since played by groups and individuals formerly affiliated with "U.C. Men's Clubs" or other local groups.

Phil Spence, like his predecessor in office, travelled extensively, meeting with regional or local groups, Round-Ups and Rallies, attending Church Courts and other events to tell the story of AOTS, and nourishing the growth of the movement at every opportunity.

One of his trips, in the 1959-60 season, perhaps bears special mention. In Bermuda, where the Methodist Churches form also a Presbytery of our Maritime Conference, he found a total of seven men's clubs in five pastoral charges (one of which has three Congregations). Of these, four were enrolled United Church AOTS Men's Clubs. Bermuda men had shown keen interest in the AOTS concept for some time. Dennis Busby of Grace Club attended the Convention at Keswick in 1959, and

delegates from our "farthest south" Presbytery have continued to make the overseas trip to subsequent biennial conclaves ever since: just one of the ways in which the Bermuda clubs, still active in their local area of service, have contributed to the strength of the movement. At this writing Bermudian Alex Darrell, now living in Toronto, is a member of the National Council Executive, and supplies a valuable direct communications link between national and the clubs in his native land.

The assumption by the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs of responsibility to serve and support — and if possible enroll — all men's clubs and other local men's groups, and the now closer relationship with the Board of Men, meant that the full resources of the Board and its staff were available to the movement on a much wider basis. In addition to Secretary Ralph Young and Associate Secretary Ralph W. Wilson — always strong supporters of AOTS — executive staff included Field Secretaries Fred G. Holberton and Allison MacKinnon. Mr. Holberton, a public accountant and income tax consultant in Lethbridge, joined the staff to serve the western Conference areas in September, 1959. In February 1961 Mr. MacKinnon, who had been Director of News for radio and television CFCY in Charlottetown, assumed similar duties in Eastern Canada.

Executive Secretary Phil Spence — who was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Board of Men by General Council in 1962 — also became responsible for field work in connection with all men's work in Toronto and Bay of Quinte Conferences and throughout Northern Ontario, thus reducing to some extent the time he had available for AOTS work on a national scale. On the other hand, the advantage to the latter in having national staff members available to assist clubs and Councils in their respective areas of responsibility, was substantial.

We would be remiss here in not mentioning also Miss Isabelle Amos, who served as office secretary to Phil Spence from the time of his appointment to her marriage in 1965. AOTS has had no more dedicated servant. The value to the men's club movement of her knowledge of its work, and personal acquaintance with countless members throughout the country, was beyond compute. The other ladies of the Board of Men office, notably Mesdames Ruth Petricek, Mimi Mikulecka and Marion Crawford of lengthy service, as well as the several others who were employed for shorter periods there from time to time, all

contributed to the ongoing, day-to-day duties supportive of the cause. The three named are still (in 1974) employed at United Church House, Mrs. Crawford with the present Executive Secretary.

Successive Chairmen and members of the Board itself — laymen and clergy — also now had a more direct interest in, and responsibility for, the work of the men's clubs.

But on with our story. We can mention here only a few further specific events of the early '60's. In 1960, the first Francophone AOTS Club, at L'Eglise Unie du Sauveur, Montreal, was chartered, with Alphonse Langlais, a World War II RCAF veteran, as President. Franco-Canadian AOTS men have been comparatively few; but the late Louis Foisy-Foley, Editor of the United Church French language publication, CREDO, was a strong supporter of the movement. He in turn received backing from our clubs in the Montreal area for his successful efforts to further ecumenical dialogue and cooperation in community service between churchmen, Roman Catholic and Protestant.

We have seen that in its earliest years AOTS was international and interdenominational in scope — and that the international aspect at least, reappeared with enrolment of clubs in Bermuda. Their Churches, however, were and are a part of our denomination as well as of the Methodist. In the winter of 1960-61, then, new ground was broken and the ecumenical nature of AOTS enhanced when Associate Secretary Ralph Wilson and Mrs. Wilson spent two weeks in Trinidad with the hospitable people of the Presbyterian Church there.

Ralph found two "AOTS" clubs already active, helped to encourage the formation of others, and attended a successful Men's Conference at Naparima College, somewhat similar in format and purpose to those of our Church back home. When he made another visit two years later, ten clubs were in operation or in the process of organizing. He recommended the formation of a Board of Men of the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Grenada. This, on a purely voluntary basis without paid staff, indeed became a reality. Its Secretary, Mr. Harry Noonoo, attended the 1973 Biennial Convention in Winnipeg, and reported seven AOTS clubs still active.

The Second Biennial Convention of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs was held on the University of British Columbia campus, Vancouver, August 25-7, 1961, with Dr. Bill Hastings as Convention Committee Chairman. It was attended by 325

delegates and some 125 lady guests. Fred D. Saunderson, then a dairy company executive of London, Ontario, became the new President. Born and educated in Winnipeg, Fred had served as President of the Regina District and Saskatchewan Provincial Councils, and as Chairman of the National Council's Constitution Committee. Like his predecessors, he travelled extensively in promoting the AOTS movement, and provided strong, dedicated leadership during — and indeed since — his term of office.

Simplified Structures

Ralph Young's outstanding leadership in the lay movement — not only in our own Church but in ecumenical and international fields — was recognized in his appointment as Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches' Department on the Laity. Since this appointment was for a three-year term and it was not known at the time whether Mr. Young might return to the Board of Men, he was given a three-year leave of absence by The United Church of Canada. On Ralph's departure for Geneva in the fall of '61 Donald S. Cameron, long a prominent member of the Board, turned over active operation of his business to his sons to assume the Acting Secretaryship.

During Mr. Cameron's term in that office, a structural reorganization of men's work in The United Church of Canada took place which of course involved changes in the organizational pattern of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs as well.

For some time many men working at local, regional and national levels had suggested a "less complicated, more flexible" pattern which would eliminate duplication of lines of communication (UCM and AOTS) and, hopefully, lighten loads for willing workers in many cases. Members of the AOTS National Council took part as corresponding members at the 1963 Annual Meeting of the Board of Men which, after frank discussion and some minor amendments in the proposals for a simplified organization, gave unanimous approval in principle to the plan.

This envisaged a single two-way line of communication between the Board of Men at the national level, and the men of every pastoral charge. At the Conference and Presbytery levels, the dual, and to some, rather confusing set-up of Conference/Presbytery United Church Men and Conference/Presbytery AOTS Men's Club Councils would be combined in Conference and Presbytery United Church Men's Councils. These would be fully responsible for all men's work in their respective areas,

and for providing the channel of communication to and from the men of the local congregation.

Club work would become the responsibility of Men's Club Committees of Conference and Presbytery UCM Councils respectively. At the national level the AOTS National Council would become in name what it indeed already was, for all intents and purposes in fact, the Men's Club Committee of the Board of Men. The autonomy of the local club would be fully maintained, with the right to nominate a member of the Presbytery Men's Club Committee and maintain a voice in the selection of members of the National Committee.

The final link with the local charge, something formerly lacking in a majority of congregations, was forged by action of the 1962 General Council which listed as a duty of the Official Board the appointment of a Chairman of "the Committee of United Church Men of the Pastoral Charge". A representative of the men's club where such existed was — and is — a "must" member of this Committee.

The local Committee of United Church Men was defined not as "another organization, to add to in-church business." Its role is to "study and recommend", to support the minister and other boards and committees in the total work of the local Church, and to seek fuller and more efficient use of the vast potential of United Church Men — meaning "all men of the community for whom the United Church accepts responsibility". A survey of the manpower of the congregation and of its present involvement in Christian ministry was recommended as an early responsibility, in cooperation with the pastor, of the C-UCM chairman. In some cases this, when conscientiously undertaken, resulted in the formation or revival of a men's club as one means of activating the vast potential of this previously largely passive manpower, in terms of service and witness.

The AOTS National Council recommended acceptance of the new organizational pattern and the suspension of the Constitution of the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs for a two-year period to provide for experimentation and flexibility during the activation of the new simplified structures. The Third Biennial Convention, on Dalhousie University Campus, Halifax, Aug. 16-18, 1963, discussed the matter exhaustively in groups and plenary session. There was some opposition, mainly it seems from those who felt that the changes might in some degree weaken the independence and internal

structures of AOTS. The recommendation to suspend the Constitution, however, passed by a vote of 150 to 15. The "nays", in true AOTS tradition, accepted their defeat gracefully and the Convention closed with a strong sense of solidarity and determination to go forward in unison "As One That Serves." Each men's club was urged by the Convention to accept as its primary responsibility to be "an arm of the pastoral charge reaching out in Christian fellowship to *all* men".

In special session at Halifax the Executive of the Board of Men formally constituted the newly elected National Council (now technically non-operative as such, of course, with the suspension of the Constitution) as the Men's Club Committee of the Board. Mr. Jack Dawson of Orangeville, Ont., who had served the AOTS movement long and well in many capacities including that of National Treasurer, was its Chairman for the next biennium. Though — again technically — he was not AOTS "President", he fulfilled the usual onerous duties of that office during the full biennium. His outstanding leadership was indeed recognized a few years later when, in a most critical period in the history of United Church Men's work, Dr. Graham Pincock came to the end of his term as Chairman of the Board. His successor: "our man", Jack Dawson!

Changes in Board of Men activities and staff now, of course, were of more direct concern to the men's club movement. During 1963 it became evident that Ralph Young's involvement with the World Council of Churches was to be of longer duration, and he resigned as Secretary of the Board of Men. Don Cameron was asked to continue as Acting Secretary until September, 1964. In April of that year, however, he ceased full-time active service, though available for consultation and committee work until completion of his term. Meanwhile Associate Secretary Ralph Wilson assumed administrative direction of the work; and in September he was appointed by General Council as Secretary of the Board.

This meant inevitably that for some time head office full-time professional staff was reduced to two — with much heavier workload for Assistant Secretary Phil Spence in areas outside his duties as AOTS Executive Secretary. It is not within the purview of this short history to assess the responsibility — if any — of the national Church in the matter of providing administrative staff for AOTS, or any other organization or group: a matter unresolved indeed at this writing. It can hardly be questioned,

however, that difficulties for the men's club movement compounded since the time when it no longer had a full-time Executive Secretary — whether self-supplied or provided by the Church — at its disposal.

In any event, Board of Men staff was restored to full complement in August, 1965 with the appointment of a second Assistant Secretary in the person of Donald G. Smith: a name, any reader with AOTS connections need hardly be told, which will figure prominently later in our story.

"A New Image"

That month of August saw another event of import to AOTS — the Fourth Biennial Convention at Queen's University, Kingston. Main item of business was the adoption of the new Constitution as developed by a committee chaired by James Beatty, a Brampton, Ont., lawyer. This of course followed the principles of the "simplified organizational pattern" as previously outlined. Predictably, it encountered some opposition, as had the new concept at Halifax; and a group presented an alternative "Laymen's Constitution". The latter received 19 votes, and the new Constitution as approved and proposed by the National Men's Club Committee was thus overwhelmingly adopted. "The whole debate", reported an observer at the time, "was conducted in the spirit of brotherhood and mutual respect for opposing opinions which has become a familiar hallmark of our men's club conventions . . . Those responsible for preparing and presenting (the Laymen's Constitution) received high praise for their concern and painstaking efforts."

AOTS Biennial Conventions have been marked invariably with challenging, inspirational theme addresses by outstanding speakers. Unfortunately it has not been possible here to give most of these the recognition they deserve. But at Kingston the message delivered by Rev. Dr. Rex Dolan may be regarded as of more than usual historic importance, in view of the challenge it posed to AOTS to re-examine its role and purpose in the light of current concepts of the ministry of the laity, and of the role of the church in community.

Dr. Dolan, now returned to the pastorate, was then a Professor of Worship and Homiletics at United Theological College, Montreal. He is author of "The Big Change", a significant little book about the then relatively new "ferment in the Church", "the new theology", and the challenge of change.

It might be noted here that men's clubs, like many congregations and other groups within them, were by those mid-sixties beginning to experience a reversal of the strong growth and seeming "prosperity" of previous years. The heady days of "church extension", with new congregations being formed at a rapid rate and established ones adding expensive facilities, were largely over. Statistics for men's groups in The United Church of Canada had begun to reflect the trend. The number of enrolled AOTS Clubs were listed as 596 in 1963, 575 in 1964, 526 in 1965. Corresponding figures for total membership in men's groups (from the U.C. Year Book) also showed considerable decline.

Delegates at the Kingston Convention, therefore, were in a receptive mood when challenged to adopt "A New Image" for their movement, defined by the speaker as "a training centre for Christian laymen serving in the world". No one could present such a challenge with more authority and effect than Rex Dolan — not only because of the qualifications above-mentioned, but because he was regarded by most of his hearers as "one of our own", having long been a strong supporter of the laymen's movement. For a number of years he served as a member of the Board of Men.

While paying tribute to its accomplishments since AOTS began "as a community service club in a church context", Dr. Dolan noted that when obvious projects associated with buildings, etc., were completed, many clubs found it increasingly difficult to maintain a high level of programming and the loyalty of members loaded with other in-church and family responsibilities. The "new reformation" and exhaustive self-examination had brought to many within the Church the belief that it had, as an institution, "done a poor job of getting the Gospel into the markets of the world", Dr. Dolan declared. "We have been too concerned with building up the institution . . . and thought in terms of club membership, church attendance, the elegance of our buildings . . . We've been unnecessarily rigid in doctrine, woefully wooden in format and organization . . . Through a re-examination of the servanthood of Jesus, we are coming to see that the world, more than the Church, is to be the target of service."

AOTS, then, should be regarded "not as a 'station' in the Church where the service is performed, but a training centre so that service might be done in the world. Men will attempt as

a result of their AOTS meetings to infiltrate their homes, vocations, the structures of public life, with the Gospel of Jesus, primarily through loving and personal involvement with the people they meet each day." Dr. Dolan saw the typical AOTS club program, if it was to support this concept, as distinctively "not monologue, but dialogue", with discussion on community and national problems.

And as a "second purpose" for AOTS, he suggested that it might become "an interpretation centre, interpreting the world to the Church, informing members, and through them the Church, of the real concerns of the present-day world".

Allan R. Jones, Director of Development at the United Church's Alberta College, Edmonton, was elected President at the Kingston Convention. Dr. Dolan's "new image" for AOTS, he declared, "breathes vitality and new meaning into the responsibility which we accepted two years ago, to be 'the arm of the Church reaching out in Christian fellowship to all men. It creates an exciting provocative challenge to every Club to find, through careful research and self-examination, a unique place in its own Church and community.'" The essential "service" function of AOTS is maintained, the President stressed, with its primary target now being not the Church, but the world.

V

NEW AND CHANGING HORIZONS

"Ups" and "Downs"

At the 4th (Kingston) Convention support for Operation Crossroads Africa was adopted as a second "national" project (the first: Boys' and Youth Work) for AOTS. In order not to interrupt unduly the running narrative form of this history, the subject of programs and projects — "What AOTS Does" — is dealt with in a separate chapter. Those readers, however, with even a minimal background in any phase of United Church men's work, will no doubt be sufficiently familiar with "Crossroads" to recognize that this exciting experiment in interracial brotherhood and intercontinental communication (already, since 1960, supported by many Clubs and Councils) fitted in perfectly with the "new image" of service in and to the world. Its adoption as a nation-wide project was seen also as a means of renewing the clubs' sense of unity of purpose and corporate strength, through a project equally acceptable in all parts of the country, promoted and coordinated nationally.

In a further move to increase the participation of AOTS men across the continent in national-level decisions and action, the 1965 Convention elected National Committee Chairmen from Conference areas other than that of the head office in Toronto. The three Committees and Chairmen involved in this change were:

Boys' and Youth (Gordon Allen, Vancouver);
Program (Taylor Franklin, Belleville, Ont.); and
Projects (David Campbell, London, Ont.)

Taylor Franklin (who had so capably chaired the Kingston Convention Planning Committee) and his co-workers immediately began the development of a new series of "Programs with a Purpose" which zeroed in on the "nitty-gritty" of the problems and concerns of men in their daily life and work. The format involved some role-playing and dialogue, and the content was in line with the "new image" also. After testing by individual

clubs or at Round-Ups, workshops, etc., these were published and became widely used from coast to coast. Some indeed require little updating to be pertinent and timely for use today.

At this period also, the National Men's Club Committee produced an entirely new Manual for Men's Club Executives — as a part (Section VI) of the Board of Men's United Church Men's Work Manual.

The return of the Presidency to Western Canada in the person of Allan Jones was another incentive to renewal and progress in that area, particularly since the next (1967) Convention was scheduled for Banff. Al Jones already has been mentioned as an outstanding leader of the AOTS movement since its inception in Alberta.

We have minimized reference to constitutional detail, but one change in executive structure under the 1965 Constitution may be pertinently noted at this point. This was provision for a single "National" Vice-President rather than the former regional Vice-Presidents for each Conference area (whose equivalents under the new structure were now called Chairmen of the Conference Men's Club Committees). The Vice-President, of course, would normally be expected to succeed to the chair for the next biennium. This proved to be a fortunate circumstance when, a few months after his election, President Al Jones was incapacitated by a heart condition. Vice-President Lorne Thornley, a Toronto insurance executive, was available to assume most capably the overall executive responsibilities pro tem, and of course was more free to do so than a regional Vice-President, with his other duties, would have been. Fortunately Al's recovery was not so long delayed as at first thought possible. The Vice-President, however, was of course also available throughout the biennium to chair Executive meetings, normally held in Toronto, and to act on the President's behalf in such day-to-day duties and contacts with the national office difficult to carry out from a distance.

The report of the National Men's Club Committee to the Board of Men's 1967 Annual Meeting showed a further drop in the roster of active affiliated AOTS Clubs to 416 — though the Committee felt that this was a more realistic figure than previous ones which probably listed a number not actually operating. In any event there was no lack of confidence as Chairman "Cy" Perry of Calgary and his Committee prepared for the 5th Biennial Convention at the Banff School of Fine Arts (Univer-

sity of Calgary), Aug. 26-28, 1967. Unfortunately Cy was unable to attend the event itself due to illness; Jim Anderson was his capable deputy.

The theme was "New Horizons". Those two well-chosen words indeed underlined the wider concept of what it means to be "As One That Serves" which many clubs and individuals had been seeking since the challenge of the New Image presented at Kingston two years before. These men had accepted the "why" of a change of emphasis, of call to wider service, to be in fact the Church in the World. But many had been asking, "How?" The 5th Convention was planned to seek some answers.

Keynote speaker at the event, which brought over 300 delegates and guests from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland and Bermuda together amid the grandeur and beauty of the Rockies, was Dr. Robert E. Hatfield, a Calgary physician widely known for his leadership in Church and community. Hon. Grant McEwan, Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta, was banquet speaker.

Dr. Hatfield challenged men to ask themselves such questions as, "What, for me, is the most important thing in life?" and "What am I doing about it?" Men's clubs, similarly, must have the courage to seek an honest answer to "What is most important in men's work?" and to focus on the emerging essentials. By Resolution of the Convention, clubs were urged to review their aims, objects and overall program; assess facts so revealed; and implement plans to correct weaknesses and shortcomings.

As expected, Lorne Thornley was elected President for the 1967-69 Biennium. In his "President's Message", then a regular feature of the Bridge Builder, he stressed that each Convention delegate who had voted "Yes" to such Resolutions had in effect declared, "I'll see that *my* club does something about this." He then outlined his personal proposals to his own local club that a special committee be appointed to "review, assess and recommend" as per the Resolution, and to bring in specific, written recommendations for prompt and definite action after due consideration by Executive and membership. It was the kind of personal involvement, clear thinking and incisive action which have marked Lorne Thornley's leadership through long years of devotion to the AOTS movement.

A good number of clubs, available reports indicated, did respond to the call and conducted serious self-examination, seeking renewal of purpose during this period when church organiza-

tions generally were continuing to experience fall-off in attendance, shortage of leadership and other apparent reverses. The "New Reformation" of the '60's, with its challenge to the Churches everywhere to reassess their ministry and relevance in and to the world, had indeed brought anxiety to many. But also it brought new, brighter and wider horizons for all professing Christians with minds open to the challenges of sometimes bewildering change, and with unfaltering purpose to be "As One That Serves".

A Happy Union

Our "United" Church hopefully continues to be a "uniting" one. This was at least so in 1967 when negotiations were completed for its merger with the Canadian Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren. The latter Church too was indeed union-minded, having been formed as recently as 1946 with the coming together of the Evangelical and United Brethren denominations. And now the main body of the EUB and the Methodist Church in the U.S.A. were ready to form, in April 1968, the new United Methodist Church. The Western Canada Conference of the EUB decided to go along with their American brothers; but the Canada Conference — with some 60-odd congregations largely concentrated in two regions of Ontario — opted for merger with The United Church of Canada.

This was indeed a happy event for all of our Church, and specifically so for AOTS. Both the Evangelical Church and the United Brethren had been among the pioneers in men's work on this continent, starting to organize their men for effective witness and Christian service in the early 1930's. By 1967, there were about 1400 men's Chapters, as their local groups were called, throughout North America.

"The purpose and objectives of EUB Men and United Church Men are almost identical," declared the late Norman Draker of Hamilton, who had served as President of the Canada Conference Men's Executive. He outlined these as "to challenge men to be the Church in the World; to take their faith and desire to serve Christ into politics, business, social action, etc., bringing Christian action to bear under every circumstance and making their impact felt as individuals and as a group; to serve effectively both within and without the framework of the church program; and to deepen the spiritual life of men through study and fellowship."

Mr. Draker now became a most valued member of our national Men's Club Committee and its Executive. Other former EUB men have made their mark as UCM and AOTS stalwarts, not only at the local club but at the regional and national levels of activity. To name just two: Charles Forbeck, who has served as a member of the Board of Men and later of other decision-making bodies of our Church; and Gordon Hall, who at this writing continues as the dynamic President of combined UCM and AOTS forces in Hamilton Conference. For the men's work of The United Church of Canada, the Union was indeed a real "shot in the arm" at a time when new strength and encouragement were just what the doctor prescribed!

The Quickening Pace of Change

For AOTS and United Church laity in general, the year 1968 was one of eventful change and decisions, some of which would prove of even greater import than was, perhaps, realized at the time.

At its Annual Meeting, the Board of Men expressed concern that all structure and organization within the Church be kept at the minimum required to meet the needs of people and maintain communication between the local congregation and all other levels. Such structure should be flexible, easily adaptable to change, and constantly reviewed and evaluated through competent research.

In view of this concept, the Board recommended to General Council — as did others similarly involved — that the component Boards and Committees of the Division of Congregational Life and Work become "an integrated entity, with staff reorganized into task forces oriented to various needs and demands." The Division had to this point operated in effect as a coordinating body, with the component Boards retaining a high measure of autonomy. The proposal, then, was that the Board of Men, along with those of Women, Christian Education, and Evangelism and Social Service, would cease to exist as such, their work to become the direct responsibility of one of the five Divisions which were to comprise the entire organizational structure of the Church, according to a previously adopted master plan.

In August 1968 General Council, meeting at Kingston, adopted these recommendations. An Integration Committee to

plan the organizational and staff set-up for the new Division was to be appointed with instructions to make its report to the Executive of General Council within a year.

Changes and decisions in this period relating to staff were perhaps of equal significance. General Council at Kingston also appointed Ralph Wilson as Secretary of the Department of Pensions. Men's work therefore lost the services of a man whose dedicated leadership and support had greatly benefitted the AOTS movement throughout his 14 years with the Board of Men. The latter's Executive complied with General Council's request that staff replacements not be made pending Divisional reorganization. Associate Secretary Phil Spence assumed senior staff responsibility, thus greatly adding to his workload and consequently reducing the time he could devote to the duties of AOTS Executive Secretary.

And because of this added workload, Associate Secretaries Spence and Smith were relieved by the Board of specific responsibility for field work in the central Conference areas, which they had shared previously with Ralph Wilson. Almost at the same time, the Board of Men lost the services of Allison MacKinnon, who resigned as its Field Secretary for the eastern Conferences due to ill-health.

By then, also, the Church's entire field staff was in the process of reorganization into teams on a regional basis. Individuals in most cases were to be responsible for the work of more than one national Board or Department in their Conference area. Fred Holberton, for instance, who had covered British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan for the Board of Men, now could devote only one-third of his time specifically to men's work, but in Alberta only. By early 1969, the Board of Men was so served, on a 1/3 time basis, by Alan Martyn (British Columbia), Rev. Donald Pipe (Montreal-Ottawa), Rev. Al LeGrow—later succeeded by Rev. Levi Mehaney (Newfoundland), and Rev. Stewart Bell (Northern Ontario).

It was hoped at the time that similar joint arrangements could be made for all areas. But, due largely to further changes and delays in policies and planning over which men's work leadership had little or no control, such nation-wide field staff coverage for that work was to prove a dream long unfulfilled. Meanwhile, with the increased workload for Board of Men national staff, most parts of the country remained largely without direct staff support for local and regional men's work.

"Officers of Conference and Presbytery UCM Councils and of Men's Club Committees," remarked the Bridge Builder, "face the necessity of assuming responsibilities, particularly in regard to coordination and communication, formerly carried out at least in part by staff. Their willingness to do so, and their acceptance of the challenge of great changes ahead, was particularly in evidence at the 1968 Annual Meetings of the Board of Men and of its Men's Club Committee."

Though of course supporting the concept of Divisional integration which it had itself recommended, the Board of Men at its 1969 Annual Meeting recognized the need to preserve, following its own demise, an identifiable though flexible organization for men's work, and also to ensure the continuance of those aspects of the work which had proved their validity. A Task Group headed by Board Chairman Jack Dawson was appointed to develop recommendations to the General Council Committee on Integration, as the latter had requested the various Boards involved to do. The Task Group, after lengthy discussion, saw as essential, "whatever form Integration may take", a number of points, including

- an *identifiable group* within the body of the Church speaking for and to lay people (as the Boards of Men and Women had done);
- autonomy and flexibility at the local level, enabling men to engage in various patterns of groups and activities;
- provision for a wide variety of Conferences, forums, etc., to meet the needs of all laity;
- laity to be involved fully in policy-making and service to congregations and society.

In June, the Executive of the Division of Congregational Life and Work as it then existed, met for two days with the Committee on Integration. AOTS President Lorne Thornley and Executive Secretary Phil Spence were among those who presented the concerns of United Church Men, including the above recommendations and those passed at the 1968 Annual Meeting of the National Men's Club Committee. These also included an organizational pattern flexible, simple and broad enough to include all types of men's groups in the local church. The concept and name of AOTS should be retained by those clubs wishing to do so, under the general term of "United Church Men" for all groups, as well as a channel whereby clubs can maintain their identity through the various levels of organi-

zation within the Division. The principle of biennial Conventions should be maintained. And liaison with local and regional men's club organizations should be designated specifically as a duty of field staff as the new area team concept was developed.

"Man's Choice Tomorrow"

Such was the theme of the 6th Biennial Convention of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, August 22-3, 1969, on the University of Western Ontario campus, London, with Past President Fred Saunderson as Chairman of the Planning Committee. "This Convention, more than any other," remarked a veteran observer who had seen them all, "looked forward and outward, rather than backward and inward." Resolutions passed by the 200-plus delegates mirroring that look, included one urging all clubs to raise \$5 per member, in both 1970 and 1971, for the Missionary and Maintenance Fund of the national church (soon to be renamed the Mission and Service Fund); this to be over and above the regular M. and M. allocation for the local charge.

A highlight was the presence, as banquet speaker, of the first layman to be Moderator of General Council, Dr. Robert McClure, who also spoke at the Board of Men Annual Meeting earlier that year. Surely no individual in the history of The United Church of Canada has more vividly personified its increasingly "forward and outward" orientation, more effectively challenged its laity to ministry in a changing world, or more faithfully exemplified, in his own life, that of He who came As One That Serves.

Needless to say, the pending structural changes and their possible effect on men's clubs were much in the mind of those at the Convention. But in spite of continuing decline in the number of enrolled AOTS clubs reportedly active (to about 270 at the end of 1969) leadership remained optimistic and dedicated to a renewal of the movement's purpose and vitality. "Now", declared newly elected President John C. Cleave of Sarnia, Ont., "as we venture forth on the uncharted paths ahead, we must not get bogged down in structures and organization, as these are only tools to help us do the job, and they will develop as the need arises. Rather let us grasp the hand that God has extended to us, and so go forth to serve this world, remembering what eleven frail humans were able to do when they made their will subservient to His."

VI THE NEW DECADE

Change Accelerates

The new decade was not long in bringing the "future shock" of impending change for men's work into the present, accelerating its pace, and compounding its impact. An unexpected development hit early in 1970 with the announcement that Phil Spence had been appointed to the Department of Stewardship Services. His decision to accept this position had not been an easy one, knowing as he did that further staff shortage would increase the problems faced by the Board of Men and the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs in a crucial period. He felt however that with his background in fund raising, leadership coordination and training he could be on balance of greater service to the Church at large in this field, at a time when it was facing the crunch of rising costs with static or decreasing revenue.

At the end of April therefore, Associate Secretary Donald G. Smith was called upon to assume senior administrative responsibilities for the Board of Men as Acting Secretary. Since the Constitution called for one of the Secretaries of the Board of Men to be Executive Secretary of the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, there was no choice but for Don Smith to assume this heavy responsibility as well, since he was now the only General Council Officer on the Board's staff.

Not that he had any hesitation in doing so, or that the Association was unhappy in the arrangement. For he had been for many years an enthusiastic and highly effective leader in the area of men's clubs, as in all phases and levels — from local to national — of men's work. Born and educated in Hamilton, Ont., Don Smith was first President of the Centenary AOTS Club there, and an executive member of Presbytery UCM. He served on the Board of Men's Christianity and Daily Work Committee, for a time as Chairman. In 1961 Don was moved by

his employer, the CUNA Mutual Insurance Society (serving Credit Unions and their members) to head office at Madison, Wis., as Director of the Policy-Owner Relations Department. There he became President of First Methodist Church Men's Club, First Vice-President of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, and Chairman of the Methodist Men's state-wide Conference. In 1965, as previously mentioned, he returned to Ontario to enter full-time church service as Assistant Secretary of the Board of Men.

General Council Executive authorized the Board to employ a qualified person on a temporary basis to assume part of the heavy load carried by the badly undermanned national office staff — then reduced at the executive level to the Acting Secretary and (on a 2/3 time basis) Editor Jack Banks. Not surprisingly, it proved far from easy to secure a man with the necessary qualifications for, and the freedom to accept, this post. It was not until the fall of the year that James M. Pollock, with wide business and administrative experience, as well as long years of leadership in many phases of men's work, was appointed as "Special Assistant", and assumed duties comparable to those of an Associate Secretary.

In addition, the part-time services of T.R.S. (Stan) Jones, a recently retired business executive and (like Jim Pollock) a Past General Chairman of the Elgin House — Keswick United Church Men's Conference, were secured. Working largely from his Brantford, Ont. home, he gave valuable support to UCM and AOTS in Hamilton and London Conferences, and to the Keswick Conference Planning Committees. At this writing he continues to do so on a voluntary basis.

These staff reinforcements were particularly welcome due to the amount of time that staff, as well as volunteer men's work leaders — including of course the National Men's Club Committee — were obliged to spend during 1970-71 in connection with the developing plans for what was by then referred to as "The New Division" — as yet unnamed. The original concept of an integrated Division of Congregational Life and Work had now been expanded to include the Board of Home Missions, and the "New Division" Committee of General Council was preparing a proposed design for presentation to the 24th General Council early in '71.

At the Board of Men Annual Meeting in April, 1970, representatives of this Committee indicated that its current

thinking would relegate a unit for "lay adult activities" to a more subordinate position in the Divisional structure than the full-fledged Department on the Laity — or some comparable primary component — which had been consistently recommended by the Board. The latter reiterated its conviction that there must be such an identifiable, effective structure to replace the Boards of Men and Women which would

- (i) hear what the laity are saying
- (ii) speak on their behalf
- (iii) investigate new ideas and concepts
- (iv) initiate new programs.

The National Men's Club Committee, at its Annual Meeting in September, firmly backed the concept of a "Department or Council on the Laity, its governing body comprising direct representatives of the lay networks rather than appointees of Conference Courts and/or the Division."

Meanwhile indeed the point seemed to have been won. The New Division Committee set up a Task Force on the Laity, comprising representatives of the Boards of Women and Men on its membership. In June, an unprecedented joint meeting of the Executives of the two Boards unanimously approved positional papers by Don Smith and Rev. Margaret Errey, Associate Secretary of the Board of Women, both favoring such an identifiable body speaking for the laity as such in the new structure. The Task Force too achieved consensus on this point and made a unanimous recommendation for a Department on the Laity in the New Division. And the full Committee promptly approved a design concept including a "Laity Council".

The National Men's Club Committee action in Annual Meeting, mentioned above, therefore was in the nature of approval and backing for a principle thought at that time to be ready for presentation to General Council with every prospect of acceptance. It came therefore as somewhat of a shock when, following a series of consultations between members of the New Division Committee and some Conference-related persons across the country, the Committee in September reversed its previous decision, recommending elimination of the Laity Council and dispersal of the functions of the Boards of Men and Women into the two main Departments of the new "Division of Mission in Canada" — to be called the Departments of Christian Development, and of Church in Society.

At the 24th General Council in January, 1971, Don Smith, as a member of the New Division Committee, submitted a "separate statement" which was appended to the Committee's report, expressing reservations about the proposed Divisional design, particularly regarding lay representation and support for the lay networks, and recommending a Department on the Laity related to General Council office. Mr. Leonard Milne, the Church's Director of Planning Assistance, also submitted a separate statement with very similar concerns and recommendations. General Council however accepted, subject to a few provisions, the design concept as presented by the New Division Committee. It rejected the proposal of its own Sessional Committee, to which the Report had been referred, for a "standing committee" on the laity to be appointed by the Division largely from lay members of its Departments. Also rejected was a proposal from the floor made by a group of young Commissioners for a standing committee on the laity, consisting of ten people representing "the broadest spectrum of Canadian society", to work with the Division on a consultative basis.

The design, however, did provide for a stronger lay representation on the governing bodies of the Division and Departments than had been proposed at an earlier stage. As finally adopted, it called for eleven members of the Division to be appointed by General Council from nominations submitted by the lay organizations. The Division then would appoint eleven lay members similarly nominated to each of the Departments.

As the only organization with a national structure, the National Association of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs was able to feed in, through the Board of Men, a number of such nominations for membership on these bodies. It can be said therefore that AOTS was (and at this writing still is) well and strongly represented on the Division and Departments when these formally took over from the former Boards on January 1, 1972. Among "our men" so appointed was Jack Cleave, the Immediate Past National President, who became Chairman of the Department of Christian Development. At this writing he still serves with distinction in that key post.

Meanwhile, as plans developed during 1971, some of the anxieties regarding experienced staff support for the lay groups were dispelled with the appointment of Don Smith as one of the Associate Secretaries of the Division, relating to the Department of Church in Society. The corresponding position relating

to the Department of Christian Development went to Miss Ferne Graham, who forms with Don the Division's "laity team".

Don's portfolio lists among his responsibilities that of relating to "the lay structures and networks in such a way as to retain what is valid, to create and communicate what is new, and to enable the laity to bear witness when they are the Church in the World." Other heavy duties however were included, and it soon appeared inevitable that the portion of his time which could be devoted to the Executive Secretaryship of the National Association would be extremely limited. At its final Annual Meeting in April, the Board of Men expressed among other concerns the need for supporting staff for the laity team. It was hoped for a time that Jim Pollock might receive one of the Special Assistant appointments on Division staff, with his time devoted to men's work.

This, however, was not to be, and at the end of August Jim left the Board of Men staff to return to the world of business. At this period, moreover, there was uncertainty as to whether Don Smith would be able to continue as AOTS Executive Secretary. Division staff, it was indicated, would be regarded as resource for the lay organizations, but not as administrators.

"The Challenging C's" at Charlottetown

The 7th Biennial Convention, August 20-22, 1971, met therefore amid considerable uncertainty as to the future of the movement in relationship to The United Church of Canada. Indeed, some were asking, could AOTS continue to function, at least at the national level, if staff and budgetary support similar to that enjoyed under the Board of Men were not to be continued by the Division? The National Men's Club Committee, Convention Chairman Dave Murphy and his Committee were heartened, however, when delegates and guests totalling nearly 500 — a new high record — gathered on the University of Prince Edward Island campus at Charlottetown. They heard Roy Bonisteel of TV fame present "The Challenging C's of the 70's" — Crisis, Clubs, Congregations, Church, Community, Conferences, and many others — but in particular the challenge to strengthen and adapt their ministry of service to a world in revolutionary Change.

Most importantly perhaps, in view of the hard facts of the current situation, delegates came to at least one vital decision: namely, that come what may in structures and budgets of The

United Church of Canada, the Men's Club movement, as a national organization, CAN, MUST and WILL continue.

If some undoubtedly travelled to the Garden of the Gulf wondering if they were indeed attending the last national AOTS Convention, few, we believe, left in a pessimistic frame of mind. The Convention did not solve all problems, or give all the answers some had hoped for. Rev. Dr. Clarke MacDonald, already appointed as Deputy Secretary of the Division of Mission in Canada with responsibility for the Department of Church in Society, attended both the Convention and the Annual Meeting of the National Men's Club Committee which preceded it. He discussed the coming set-up with relation to the lay networks in particular, and indicated his sympathy with concerns expressed by the men. It became clear that those responsible for shaping the new structures were sincere in their desire to provide for those concerns, and that support for lay activities would be substantial. But some present still felt that practical requirements for serving the lay networks and other aspects of work for and with the laity had not been fully understood, particularly regarding staff time, in developments announced to that date.

Vital resolutions passed on recommendation of the Men's Club Committee

(a) called on men of the Church to deepen their commitment to, and understanding of, all phases of their ministry in the world, to further the aims of AOTS, and to establish specific objectives for the biennium including: an increase in affiliated groups to 500; in individual memberships to 10,000, and in total annual dues to \$6000; and

(b) reaffirmed the validity of UC-AOTS-MC and spelled out the support requested from the national Church including office facilities, clerical staff, etc., similar to that then presently available; funds for regular meetings of the National Committee and its Executive; and — more controversial — a full-time Executive Secretary in accordance with agreements at the time of the incorporation of AOTS into the Board of Men, or an equivalent financial grant.

A third Resolution was proposed from the floor by two stalwart veterans of the movement — Brydon McCrea and Fred Saunderson. It reflected the change from confusion and pessimism to determination and self-confidence during the Convention, and underlined what had been said more than once over the weekend: that the future of AOTS depends primarily not

on what any other body decides, but on the validity of the movement and the will of its own members.

Noting the overwhelming conviction that the movement should remain "within the United Church", this key Resolution empowered the Executive to take all necessary steps "to continue the AOTS Men's Club structure" including the assessment of Clubs for dues sufficient to maintain such structure, and for support of the 1973 Convention where decisions as to the future of the Association as a part of the new Division could be constitutionally made.

Other Resolutions urged all affiliated Clubs to help meet the needs of the Association by contributing \$2 per member in addition to the \$1 affiliation fee, \$1 of this to be used for work in the Conference area; and again asked each Club to raise \$5 per member in both 1972 and 1973 for the Mission and Service Fund, over and above the local Church allocation.

As expected Vice-President Douglas N. Phillips, a Toronto lawyer, was elected President for the crucial 1971-73 biennium. Summing up the renewal of confidence and determination engendered at the Convention, he declared during the closing session:

"Nothing stands still. We'll be the losers if we just try to protect what we have; we must decide to go ahead, making whatever changes are necessary. Statistics show that membership of local men's groups in the Church have dropped from 30,000 to 12,000. It seems we must strengthen those clubs we have, form new ones in Churches where they are needed, and so accomplish our aims . . . Brydon McCrea has said we must go to our local clubs and make sure that their support, so vital to the national organization, is forthcoming. With that support we can again become as strong as in 1955. Don't say we can't carry on if this or that does or does not happen. That's rubbish. Let's make the new structures work for us."

A New "Growing Together"

When, therefore, the Division of Mission in Canada formally came into being on January 1, 1972, some of the anxieties concerning the future of AOTS and of other areas of the former Board of Men's responsibilities had been eased, at least for the immediate future. Divisional budget provisions for the year appeared adequate for the support of the men's club movement and for United Church Men's activities in general. It had been

agreed that Don Smith continue as AOTS Executive Secretary, his "job description" having been altered to lighten somewhat his responsibilities in other areas in order to make this feasible. It was recognized however that this arrangement was subject to review and that the possibility of the men's club movement having to become more self-sufficient in the future, financially at least, was still strong.

As the year progressed one definite "plus" factor for the lay organizations began to evolve: namely the tendency under the Divisional set-up, with its staff organized in teams according to function and areas of responsibility, toward greater consultation and cooperation between the various lay groupings. This was — and continue to be — fostered by the Division's Task Force on Lay Involvement, consisting of representatives of UCW, UCM, AOTS, Couples' Clubs and youth groups as well as staff with responsibility in these areas. Its Chairman, Mrs. Grace McFadden, (who had been the last Chairman of the Board of Women) had attended the Charlottetown Convention and made many friends among AOTS and UCM membership. In 1974 the Task Force was to be expanded in membership and renamed as the Division's standing Committee on Lay Organizations.

In November, 1972, the Task Force Convened a Consultation on Lay Organizations, bringing together representatives of the various lay groups from each Conference area at the Cara Inn, Malton, Ont. These held joint sessions on Saturday, Nov. 18, with each organization conducting its own business on Friday and Sunday. These then were the dates of the National Men's Club Committee's Annual Meeting. The Consultation provided a valuable "growing together" experience, with the various groups learning of the others' concerns and aspirations, and sharing some preliminary thoughts and suggestions for greater men-women-young people cooperation, particularly at the regional level.

At its Annual Meeting, the National Men's Club Committee looked ahead with growing confidence to the coming Golden Jubilee Year of the AOTS movement, and discussed plans for its observance. A Committee chaired by Clare Boyd, past National Treasurer, was now at work drafting a revised Constitution for the National Association, made necessary by the demise of the Board of Men, the new relationship with the Division, and by other changing circumstances. This was dis-

cussed at the Annual Meeting and valuable suggestions made.

In his Report to the Annual Meeting, Executive Secretary Don Smith declared that "our most pressing challenge is a dynamic and enthusiastic campaign to build this movement. We must develop a workable growth strategy — new clubs, new members, rediscovery of purpose and more effective communication." In discussion it was emphasized that current uncertainties about financial and staff support must not distract from the vital questions concerning the purpose, validity and future direction of AOTS.

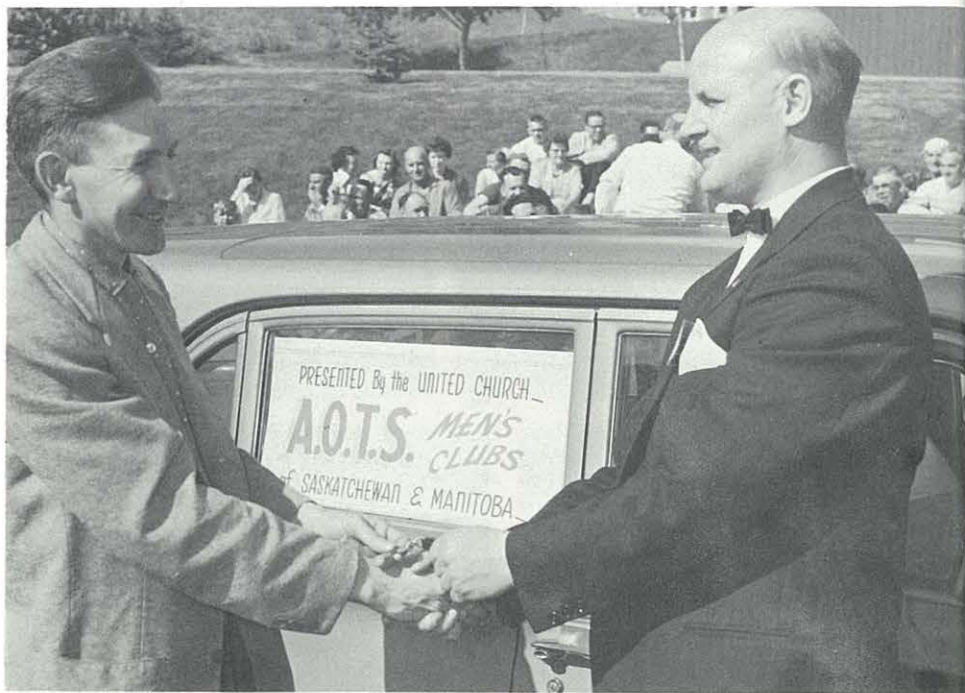
In that same month the last issue of *The Bridge Builder* appeared — a questionnaire distributed among readers of that publication and of the former Board of Women's Clip Sheet having favored the concept of a new joint publication for the lay organizations. This was to appear in the new year under the appropriate title, "COMBO". In the final *Bridge Builder* the lead article in the inaugural (February 1959) issue by the then Chairman of the Board of Men, Dr. "Laurie" Cragg, mentioned in Chapter 3 above, was recalled. It had been entitled "Growing Together". Now a new time of growing together had come, and Dr. Cragg's word seemed as appropriate in 1972 as they had nearly fourteen years before:

"In a Church for which its Head had prayed 'that all may be one', growing together is growing in the right direction

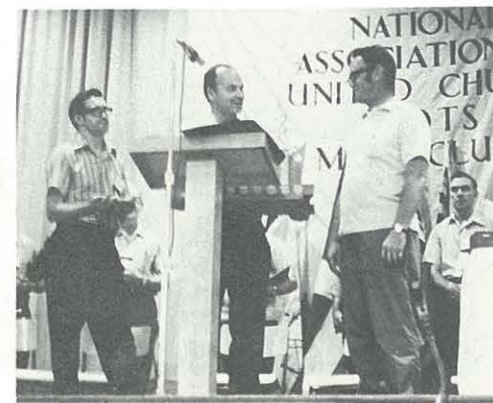
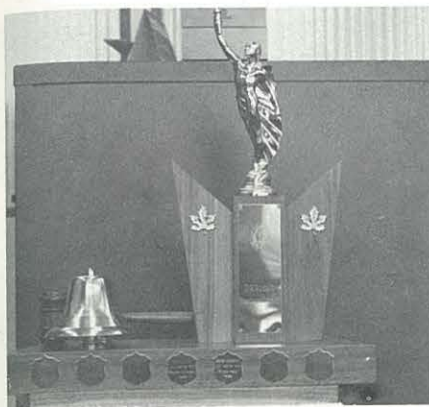
"We must continue to grow together. And we must never forget that all our growing should be the right kind of growing. We are all to grow up in every way into him who is the Head — into Christ."



Top: Nat. Ass'n. of AOTS Clubs Presidents Dave Sherwood, Brydon McCrea and Chas. Atchison; First Executive Secretary D. R. Poole and his successor, Phil. Spence. Centre: Burt Thornley speaks (Keswick '59) as President Sherwood presides at final meeting of the old National Association, making way for the new UC-AOTS-MC; National Council at Keswick Convention. Back row: Brang Upham, Ralph Wilson, Fred Saunderson, Phil Spence, Fred Holberton; Centre row: Jack Carter, Aubrey Oldham, Bill Ellis Torie Tollefson, Cy Perry, Lorne Thornley; Seated: Dave Sherwood, Charlie Burritt, Art Blair. Bottom: AOTS installations are significant occasions. Here Phil Spence installs Westminster Presbytery Men's Club Committee Executive, 1965.



Top: Art Couzens presents keys of station wagon, on behalf of Saskatchewan and Manitoba AOTS clubs, to Acting Principal Rev. Jack Paterson of Prairie Christian Training Centre, June 1960. Below: Director Sid Bagnall and the Scarborough AOTS Glee Club in action.



Top: D. R. Poole Memorial Trophy; Incoming President Doug. Phillips accepts the Trophy on behalf of his St. Paul's, Scarborough Club from his predecessor, Jack Cleave (centre) at 1971 Convention while Ken Lane, Youth Committee Chairman, looks on. Centre: Crossroaders lay bricks with their African work camp colleagues in Zambia; AOTS members have always attended UCM Conferences, such as this at Elgin House, Muskoka, in large numbers. Bottom: Maritime Conf. public speaking contest winner (junior class) Donnie Aitken addresses the Charlottetown Convention; Regina District Council chicken 'bar-b-q' at Indian Head; Roy Bonisteel presents the Challenging C's of the 70s at 1971 Convention.



Top: Discussion or task groups are an important feature of AOTS Conventions. Rex Dolan presents the "New Image for AOTS" at the 1965 Convention. Centre: President and Mrs. Al Jones in costume at the Banff Convention; Executive Secretary Don Smith and Harry Noonoo, who represented Trinidad clubs at Winnipeg, 1973. Bottom: President (1973-5) Bill Hastings and Vice-President Dave Murphy, who hosted the Charlottetown Convention; members of the National Council at Winnipeg.

VII THE GOLDEN YEAR—AND "NOW"

January Jubilee

President Doug. Phillips and Executive Secretary Don Smith inaugurated nation-wide observances of the AOTS movement's golden anniversary year with a trip to British Columbia, where it all began. They were accompanied by Murray Kerr of Winnipeg, Chairman of the Committee already hard at work planning the vitally important 8th Biennial Convention, scheduled for the University of Manitoba campus in August.

En route, the three "Wise Men from the East" (Murray Kerr was intrigued when referred to, in B.C. and Alberta, as one of the group from "down east") met at a dinner in Calgary with about 55 men, some from Edmonton and other areas of the province. They found continued enthusiasm for the AOTS concept, but also considerable frustration regarding difficulties in communication — compounded in Alberta, as in some other areas at this period, by lack of active Men's Club Committee structures at the Conference and/or District levels.

On Sunday, January 14, two events indicated the continued virility of the movement on Vancouver Island. In the morning Don Smith gave the sermon at an AOTS-sponsored service at Duncan United Church, followed by an informal luncheon with many of the Duncan Club members, and of the congregation, enjoying the fellowship. In the afternoon, B.C. Conference MCC Chairman Harry Colnett arranged a meeting with interested men from the Victoria area at Fairfield Church, which again provided a valuable opportunity for discussion and sharing of ideas and concerns with the President and his fellow-travellers.

The climax of the trip came on January 15 when some 200 men attended an anniversary dinner at Ryerson Church in Vancouver — just 50 years and one week after the first meeting of the first AOTS Club at the same (then Kerrisdale Methodist) Church. Greetings were received from Premier David Barrett of British Columbia, Mayor Art Phillips of Vancouver, the Moder-

ator and Secretary of General Council, and others. President Phillips addressed the meeting. He assumed responsibility for announcing that the first Life Memberships in the National Association would be conferred on five surviving charter members of the first-ever AOTS Club. Formal action on this could not be taken until the proposed new category of membership — distinct from any such honor conferred by individual clubs — was provided for in a revised Constitution. Four of the five — Milt Thorpe, Jim Lord, Mert Gordon and George Fountan, were present at the 1973 dinner, Judge K. Collins being unable to attend. The National Executive later confirmed the President's action.

On the return journey the President, Executive Secretary and Convention Chairman met with about 50 representative men from various areas of Saskatchewan at Regina, and again found deep concern for the men's club movement, along with some confusion as to the position and future of AOTS under the new Division. They were able to dispel the fears of some that the movement might be faced with an early demise, and were encouraged to hear — during discussion about the need to attract younger men to the membership — that the whole executive of one club represented at the meeting was under 30 years of age.

The next day, at Winnipeg, a dinner commemorated not only the 50th birthday of AOTS but another important event in its development. This took place at Knox United Church where, 21 years before, the first truly "National" Convention of AOTS clubs had been held. The occasion also served as a reunion of Past Presidents of District Council. President Phillips was the main speaker on this occasion, while Murray Kerr gave a brief outline of AOTS history and outlined plans to date for the 1973 Convention.

The Executive Secretary supplemented the President's report on this trip to the National Executive, expressing the view that there was great value in the opportunity it presented for the men of various areas to meet with the President, and for national officers to hear at first hand their needs and concerns. Similar journeys on a more regular basis to parts of the country far from the national office and/or the President's home base hopefully can be instituted in the future.

As the year progressed, a renewal of confidence in that future became increasingly evident. Though the possibility that

AOTS must become more independent, financially at least, of support from the national Church remained, some saw this as in fact a potential "plus" factor rather than a threat. They recalled the early days of a self-reliant, fast-growing and vital movement, before its official "marriage" with the Church.

Reports from various parts of the country gave the impression of a renewed interest in the revival or establishment of men's groups in local churches, with some clubs reporting good increases in membership. This upturn appeared to be confirmed later when United Church statistics for 1973 indicated an increase in membership of men's groups for the first time in more than a decade — though the decrease in some other local church lay groups continued.

In July, consultations with Division representatives resulted in agreement that Don Smith would be allowed to continue as Executive Secretary at least for a further interim period, with overall responsibility for AOTS at national office — in effect being the "front man", with some time for travel in the interest of the movement, and providing the direct contact with the Division. The latter further agreed to meet the request of the National Association for more staff aid by employing a part-time Administrative Assistant. This man would relieve the Executive Secretary of many time-consuming duties, promote better communication throughout the organization, follow up promptly on directives of the Executive, correspondence and other day-to-day detail.

And So to Winnipeg

It was, then, with considerable more confidence than had prevailed en route to Charlottetown, that delegates from Vancouver Island to Bermuda convened at Winnipeg, August 24-26 for the 8th Biennial Convention. The theme was "Meeting the Challenge of Change", expounded in two outstanding addresses by Dr. Graham Pincock, Assistant to the President, the University of Winnipeg, and a former Chairman of the Board of Men.

Change, he declared, is an essential part of living. "AOTS must change. AOTS can change. But it cannot abandon the basic principles upon which it stands, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and service to its Lord and Master. Nor can it change until it is prepared to accept that there is nothing sacrosanct about its structures, its organization, or its relationship with the denominational Church. AOTS can move forward and will move forward

if the individual member is prepared to rededicate himself to the principle of AOTS and to fulfill it, both in his activities within the club and his activities in daily life. The basic function of AOTS is to be a witnessing arm of Christ's Gospel in the community and in the world."

Rev. Dr. Harold Bailey, Secretary of the Division of Mission in Canada, attended both the Convention and the Annual Meeting of the National Men's Club Committee which immediately preceded it. He confirmed the agreement concerning support for AOTS heretofore mentioned, while noting that this was an interim arrangement and would be reviewed prior to the 1975 Convention in Ottawa. Chairman Grace McFadzen of the Division's Task Force on Lay Involvement was again a welcome guest, promising that body's support for the newly elected President, Dr. William Hastings of Vancouver, and his Executive.

The Convention, as its main item of business, adopted the revised Constitution prepared, as previously mentioned, by a Committee consisting of Chairman Clare Boyd and the members of the National Sub-Executive. This was necessitated of course by the altered relationship with the national Church following the demise of the Board of Men. While recognizing the authority of the Division of Mission in Canada which had assumed the responsibilities of the Board, the new Constitution nevertheless reflected the realities of the present situation, reversing to some degree the trend towards greater integration with churchly structures which had prevailed for the past number of years.

Thus, while the 1965 Constitution called the National Association's administrative body the Men's Club Committee of the Board of Men, the earlier term "National Council" was now restored, though it was acknowledged to be also a Committee of the Division. Similarly at regional levels, Conference and District or Presbytery Men's Club Committees reverted to the names "Conference and District Councils of United Church AOTS Men's Clubs", being no longer subordinate to United Church Men's Councils in their respective areas, though charged with cooperating with the latter when and where they exist. The former Conference or Presbytery MCC Chairman now became "President" of the corresponding Men's Club Council.

At least as equally important a structural change was the provision for three National Vice-Presidents, one to reside in

the western region, one in the central area, and one in Eastern Canada or Bermuda. This was designed to increase support for, and better communication between, Conference and District Councils in the various regions through the presence in each of a national officer who could be expected to do some travelling and otherwise promote the movement within his area of responsibility. Already the 1973-75 Vice Presidents, Ralph Tennant of Lethbridge, Ken Lane of Oakville, Ont., and Dave Murphy of Charlottetown have, through their coordinating efforts, done much to prove the value of this innovation.

With the President situated some thousands of miles from national headquarters and the site of Executive meetings, it was agreed to set up on the west coast an Advisory Committee to work with Dr. Hastings and keep in as close liaison as possible with the Executive. The Constitution provided for two more members-at-large of the National Council in order to give that status to the men chosen to compose this Committee along with the President and B.C. Conference Council President Harry Colnett. At this writing Past President Charles Burritt and Reg. Attwell of Nanaimo are the capable incumbents.

Other constitutional changes included an increase in national dues payable by affiliated clubs to \$2 per member yearly, and the creation of the new categories of Life and Individual Memberships in the National Association. The first recipients of the former, to be conferred by the National Council or its Executive for outstanding service to the movement, have already been mentioned. Individual Memberships are available to men who wish to associate themselves with AOTS and its purpose, but for various reasons are not, or cannot, be members of a local club. Already at this writing, a goodly number of men obviously with much to offer to the strength and growth of AOTS have become Individual Members. Present annual fee is \$5. Distinctive lapel buttons are being developed for the new membership categories.

As the Jubilee Year drew toward its close, AOTS was involved in another Consultation on Lay Organizations, again held at Malton, Ont. in November. The previous year's event had provided a successful beginning to better understanding on the part of the various organizations of each others' problems, views and activities: a real "getting to know one another". The 1973 Consultation saw more progress toward active cooperation and joint action. Time was provided for representatives of all the lay

organizations within each Conference to meet together in area groups. In some Conferences this soon resulted in continued inter-groups consultations "back home", leading to a number of significant joint events and/or projects at the area or local levels.

In November also, the search for the best man to fill the new position of Administrative Assistant at AOTS National Office ended successfully. John Aspin of Aurora assumed these duties at the first of the month. He combines wide business experience with background knowledge of AOTS and other phases of United Church Men's activities as a long-time volunteer leader.

As This is Written

So the Jubilee Year ended for AOTS on a note of optimism and growing self-confidence. Having already poached on the "second half-century" by carrying this narrative beyond the first fifty years (which in fact ended in January '73) we compound the offence by extending it into the first half of '74.

A Long-Range Planning Committee of the National Council Executive, including the Sub-Executive and those Past Presidents available to attend, began intensive work early in the year. It was charged with producing concrete proposals for adequate support of the movement in view of the prospect of substantial decrease in such support — financial and staff-wise — from the Division following the 1973-75 biennium.

By early summer the Committee, working in liaison with the President's Advisory Committee and reporting monthly to the Executive, was preparing its realistic appraisal of the situation, and its proposals as instructed, for presentation to the Annual Meeting of the National Council in September. Believing that future support for the National Association sufficient to ensure its survival as such, from both the membership and the National Church, will depend essentially on the revitalization of AOTS and the establishment of its validity to the individual, the Church and the community, the Executive had already accepted one specific proposal of the Long-Range Planning Committee.

This involved development of plans and resources at the national level to assist Councils and clubs to choose and carry our projects challenging men to action in four areas of concern. These are (i) youth work — specifically sports; (ii) assistance for senior citizens — such as preparation for retirement; (iii)

prison reform and rehabilitation; (iv) "sex" — man-woman and family relationships, joint action with women's groups, etc.

Meanwhile, AOTS and UCM representatives on the Committee on Lay Organizations (formerly the Task Force on Lay Involvement) were finding this group, apparently now accepted as a permanent component of the Divisional structure, an increasingly effective voice for the lay groups of the Church. Its 1975 budget submission to the Division again provided for adequate support for AOTS activities. Though confined in membership to representatives of the various organizations from the central area, it promises to fulfil to some degree at least the role of a Council on the Laity such as the Board of Men had vainly advocated as an essential element when the "New Division" was being planned.

Another significant action by the Executive of National Council was the establishment of an International Committee, with Alex Darrell as Chairman. In addition to the affiliated Bermuda Clubs, this will maintain liaison with the AOTS fellowship in Trinidad — and, hopefully, in the Bahamas, where Alex found, on a recent visit, lively interest in the AOTS concept. Inquiries for information and resource materials have come from as far away as India, where a number of men with knowledge of United Church Men's work have served in the mission field — including AOTS stalwart Harry O'Dell, now returned and serving as President of Bay of Quinte Conference Council.

In Ottawa, Chairman Ed. Jones and his Convention Committee — including representatives of the Brotherhood of Anglican Churchmen — were hard at work already planning for the 9th Biennial on Carleton University Campus. August 22-24, 1975. It will no doubt face many problems and concerns; but no longer does one hear, among AOTS men, the question, "Will this one be our last?" All signals are "GO!"

VIII AOTS IN ACTION

To present adequately the achievements of the AOTS movement as it seeks to fulfil its philosophy of Christian service, and its accepted responsibility "to be an arm of the Church reaching out in fellowship to all men", is obviously impossible in one short chapter. Most examples noted herein are merely typical of countless others no less important or relevant to our story.

One might attempt to classify AOTS activities in various ways.

*There are, for instance, those planned and carried out by the local club on its individual initiative; those undertaken in conjunction with, or initiated by, the congregation as a whole and/or other organizations therein; those involving a number of clubs coordinated on the District or Conference Council level; and there are national projects in which all clubs and Councils are invited to participate.

*There are "in-church" types of activity, in support of the local pastoral charge as such; and there are those seeking to serve a wider community — whether it be the immediate parish, the town or city, the nation, or even people of other lands. Often, cooperation with secular organizations, official agencies, and/or other religious denominations is involved.

*And, of course, there are "money-raising" and "service" projects. The former, however, in the AOTS context, are undertaken to make possible the latter in most cases, and therefore need not be regarded as "second class" from the point of view of the movement's "service" concept.

Similarly, in-church projects, even the "housekeeping" jobs like painting the basement or paving the parking lot, may contribute to the local Church's ability to serve and witness in the community in a very practical way. Furthermore, one of the notable achievements of AOTS has been the involvement of men previously outside or "on the fringe" of the church family, in

the ongoing life and leadership of the congregation. It might be said that this in itself is "in-church". But the individual — and they have been many — whose faith is renewed and horizons widened by the AOTS experience will not in all probability confine his Christian witness within the walls of the local church. He will both strengthen the latter's corporate ministry and enhance his own — in his home, in his vocation, and as a citizen of the community and nation. The practical application of Christianity has been the dominant purpose behind AOTS program and project planning.

We make no pretense therefore of classifying, according to the above or any other categories, the examples which follow; except perhaps to note that for a good many years "boys' work" was recognized as the only national project of AOTS, joined later by support for Operation Crossroads Africa.

The Early Years

The early 1930's found the still-young AOTS movement ready and strong enough to extend its concept of service to the Prairies, where drought was adding to the hardships created by the great Depression. The Vancouver District Council took the initiative in organizing the Prairie Relief Committee. Help came from other organizations and Churches of several denominations. A warehouse was opened with largely volunteer staffing, where produce, clothing, etc., donated by people across British Columbia, or purchased by gifts of money, were collected for shipment to prairie communities. Fruit growers of the Okanagan, for instance, supplied great quantities of apples without charge except for loading. It was estimated that in all the Committee was responsible for distribution of 250 railway carloads of food and other relief goods.

The District Council was also instrumental in the organization of a "Polytechnic School", providing free instruction in trades and academic subjects for unemployed men. The Vancouver School Board and the British Columbia Department of Education gave generous support. Teachers were specialists in the various subjects, giving their time largely without remuneration. In February 1935 the first classes opened with some 50 students in the Scandinavian Mission, accommodation there being given by the United Church Board of Home Missions. After some three years the provincial Government took over operation of the school, AOTS clubs having raised some \$900 —

quite a sum in depression years — for the cause up to that time.

Another notable achievement for AOTS, this in the early '40's, was the "Search for Talent" program, conducted in Vancouver and vicinity. These contests attracted wide public interest, and support from many parents of the approximately 1000 children and teenagers who participated in the four divisions: vocal, dramatic, dancing and instrumental. Finals in the Georgia Auditorium attracted a full house and \$1200 was awarded in scholarships. Some of the contestants later became well-known Canadian performers. The Vancouver Sun commented editorially: "The community will be proud to watch the contestants' future progress. It will also be grateful to the members of AOTS for undertaking such a worthwhile and cultural work". The project was eventually taken over by a large international service club organization.

An item from the District Council's publication, *The Handshake*, in September 1935 indicates the extent and variety of community service and outreach which AOTS achieved when it was still confined almost exclusively to the Vancouver area.

"Sunshine Programs", the report reads, were provided free for the unemployed: concerts, athletic equipment, toys for children, two tons of magazines for relief camps, phonograph records, eye glasses, razors and blades, and many other items. A thousand books were collected for coastal missions, hundreds of Christmas hampers supplied. Scores of families were given clothing, coal and wood, and many helped in finding employment.

Over a period of time Council staged a Saturday night concert and a Sunday worship service for the New Haven young offenders' unit. Concerts were also provided later for service men during the World War II years on Sunday evenings. As early as 1938, AOTS clubs raised over \$800 to purchase a truck for Rev. Herbert Ashford, missionary in India.

This calls to mind many other similar projects, in all parts of the country, in later years; such as the gift of a station wagon to the Prairie Christian Training Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle, by the AOTS clubs of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, in 1960. The United Church Training Centres, indeed, have always received strong support from the men's clubs — who in turn of course have benefitted in many ways from the Centres' facilities and leadership. As this is written AOTS-UCM in Hamilton Conference have undertaken to meet the cost of a swimming pool at Five Oaks (Paris, Ont.) by raising some \$40,000.

Boys and Youth

Boys' and youth work was an obvious "natural" for local church men's groups from their very beginning. Most of the early clubs were not long in becoming involved with Sunday and midweek youth programs, supplying both funds and leadership personnel. As the movement grew, so did this involvement, and AOTS clubs in countless instances have been responsible for instigating or reviving such midweek programs.

An item in *The Bridge Builder* (1964) indicated that a church with a men's club was almost twice as likely to have organized boys' groups as one without such a club. United Church statistics showed that of the total 2720 pastoral charges, 1121 (41.2%) reported organized boys' work. But of the 568 charges then with active United Church AOTS Men's Clubs, 465 (81.8%) had such work. Of 293 churches with men's clubs unaffiliated with the National Association, 224 (76.4%) had boys' work programs.

It was not long indeed before projects for the support of such work were undertaken on a regional basis. During the Central Council period Rev. "Bob" McLaren, B.C. Conference Christian Education Secretary, inspired the Council to establish a fund for the promotion of boys' work and \$5000 was raised in less than three years. When D. R. Poole assumed his duties as Executive Secretary, his background in youth work of course ensured that his full support would be given to this area of endeavour. He did much to encourage AOTS involvement in it as the movement spread throughout the country.

As most readers are aware, the D. R. Poole Memorial competition is still held biennially, with the national trophy awarded at each Convention to the club whose record in youth work is adjudged the best of those submitting entries. Plaques are also awarded to the Conference area winners. That a club does not need to be big to accomplish a good deal for the young folks in its church and community is proven by the 1967 national champion — the 15-member Fort Massey (Halifax) United Church AOTS Men's Club. Among other activities reported the men

- arranged for the use of a woodworking shop and built 26 double bunks for the Halifax Presbytery youth camp;
- sponsored a number of boys at Camp Kidson and another camp in New Brunswick;
- introduced public speaking contests for boys in three age

groups, presenting trophies to each winner and mementos to all contestants;

- provided leaders for Scout troop and the Sunday School;
- supplied sports equipment for various youth groups in the church and Scout and Cub uniforms for boys requiring financial assistance.

In 1965 the Westworth (Winnipeg) Club walked off with the trophy. Of its 25 active members, 10 were listed as midweek youth work leaders, 8 as Sunday School staff, and 8 as coaches of boys athletic teams. Of 220 boys and youths (9 to 20 years old) enrolled in the Church School, 178 were involved also in midweek groups.

Harrow (London Conference) Club is among the many others with outstanding youth work programs, operating a wood-working shop in a separate building for local youth. From as far away as Trinidad came word of the San Juan — Santa Cruz Club's support of youth work, particularly vital in a land where a large percentage of girls and boys find difficulty in obtaining education beyond the primary grades.

These examples are cited only as typical of the dedication to youth work of hundreds of clubs throughout the whole period of our history, and of the wide variety of that work. They include also references to some types of projects which have received high priority across the nation, not only from individual clubs but on a regional basis:

(a) *Camping*: There can be but few, if any, District Councils which have not played significant roles, based of course on the support of their clubs, in the establishment, equipment and support of U.C. Presbytery or other camps in their areas. In most cases this involves not only raising substantial sums of money but supplying all types of leadership equally essential to the success of such enterprises, and work parties to build or improve and maintain facilities. Both Councils and individual clubs also sponsor camping holidays for young people, families, or senior citizens requiring such financial assistance. Though not always directly connected with youth work, similar support for conference and retreat centres might be mentioned here.

Again, a few examples but inadequately convey the tremendous effort of AOTS men in this field. The major part played by Montreal-Ottawa Conference clubs in meeting the \$55,000 objective to establish Upward Trail Camp, and providing leadership there, comes to mind. In one recent year Edmonton District

Council raised \$11,000, largely through the nut sales project, for camping. Newfoundland clubs have from the first been particularly supportive of such camps as Loon Bay and Burry Heights — where their members also attend Men's Conferences in substantial numbers. And Trinidad clubs, a few years ago, acquired a property which was developed, partly by AOTS work parties, as a conference and retreat centre. In Bermuda, Wesley Club took a leading part in the establishment of a youth camp and Christian training centre.

(b) *Sports*: Again, financial support and leadership for church, city or district sports leagues — hockey, baseball, basketball, etc. — have been and still are major projects of Councils and clubs from coast to coast. Outstanding examples in their own part of the country will come immediately to the mind of most readers. One "for instance": A 1968 news item noted the Regina District Council's long-standing sponsorship of Saskatchewan's largest basketball league — the Regina Church Basketball Association. Some 400 boys were then involved in junior, intermediate and senior divisions, with teams representing eight United Churches as well as those of other denominations. Several of the league's original players (1932), the item said, were in '68 still residing in Regina and themselves active in leadership of boys' and youth work.

An interesting development in this area of activity has recently developed in eastern Metro Toronto, where shortage of ice time resulted in church-sponsored boys' teams practising or playing on Sundays to the detriment of their church and church-school attendance. Men of the Wilmar Heights Club were instrumental in forming the Scarborough Christian Hockey Clinic, involving AOTS members, boys and their parents in a most beneficial fellowship, with Christian education plus hockey on Sundays.

(c) *Public Speaking*. The sponsorship by AOTS clubs or Councils of members of provincial Boys' Parliaments might be loosely included in this category. Another particularly successful ongoing project which has been from the first extensively supported by AOTS — along with Prince Edward Island's United Church Men's Council which inaugurated it — is the annual boys' public speaking contest. This has now expanded into a Maritime Conference event; and recently girls have been included, in line with the general trend towards extending the support of our men for youth work programs to feminine and/or "co-ed" groups.

The above categories, needless to say, do not begin to exhaust the subject. One area of activity which could be classed as "youth work" at least in part, is that concerned with help and rehabilitation for inmates of penal institutions, or those newly discharged. Winnipeg District clubs, for example, have been active for more than a decade in providing financial assistance to "half-way houses" in that area, and in developing person-to-person relationships with young residents therein. Some years ago also, George Street (Peterborough) Club began an annual visit with inmates of Millbrook Reformatory. Members of Bermuda's Grace Church Club frequently have conducted Sunday services in the penitentiary.

As previously mentioned, this is one of the areas of special thrust recommended by the Long Range Planning Committee of the National Executive (1974) for development on a regional basis. National Vice-President Ken Lane, an officer of the Ontario Department of Correctional Services, and his St. Paul's (Oakville) Club have been active already in seeking to develop plans for man-to-man encounter with inmates and those recently discharged with a view to assisting them in the rehabilitation process.

Again at least marginally "youth work" is the part long played by AOTS men in the establishment and support of Presbytery Lay Foundations. These help to recruit candidates for the ministry and other church vocations, and provide assistance during their years of study. Individual clubs of course have also directly supported such young men and women within their own congregation or community. Regina District Council instituted (1966) a scholarship fund as a memorial to Mr. Justice Harold Thomson, to aid a student in that area.

To close this "youth work" section, it might be mentioned that for AOTS the concept of service extends of course beyond our own land; and overseas projects often involve the young. Many clubs have "adopted" children under the Foster Parents Plan or similar agencies. Manitoba District Council lately has majored in this field. Holloway Street (Belleville) Club was one pioneer in the area of overseas youth work, some years ago making substantial donations to support the teaching of deaf children in Puerto Rico.

Crossroads Africa

The adoption of Operation Crossroads Africa as a second

"national" project by the 1965 Convention in Kingston has been noted in a previous chapter. In one sense this might be regarded also as "youth work" — for nearly all of the several hundred Canadians who have gone overseas in work camp, teaching, medical or other situations as part of this challenging experiment in interracial, intercontinental brotherhood and understanding, have been university undergraduate or graduate students.

When its founder and Director, the late Rev. Dr. James Robinson presented the challenge of "Africa at its crossroads of history" to the 1959 Elgin House — Keswick Conference of United Church Men, there were of course hundreds of AOTS members present. They, with United Church Men in general, took the message of the former pastor of Harlem's Church of the Master to heart. Soon clubs in all parts of Canada were contributing funds to the Canadian Committee for Crossroads Africa, which for years was a Committee of the Board of Men and received substantial grants from the Board of World Mission. Clubs also raised money to assist young men and women from their local communities who had been chosen as Crossroaders, and were responsible for part of the expense involved in their own participation.

On the latter's return to Canada, they were assisted by AOTS to tell their story to many groups in the churches and elsewhere — an essential part of their obligation as Crossroaders. And as the project became a two-way mission, AOTS clubs and individuals gave support to young Africans coming to Canada to study, work, and/or acquaint our people concerning the needs and aspirations of theirs. Some clubs, incidentally, already had similar projects in helping overseas youth in this country. Westminster, London, AOTS contributed substantially, for instance, to the support of two young Nigerians training for Christian service back home.

At the 1967 Convention in Banff, the first nationally planned and promoted fund-raising program, in which all clubs were urged to participate, received approval. This aimed at raising \$35,000 by selling 100,000 packages of tulip bulbs during the spring of '68, a sum which would send 35 Crossroaders to Africa in the following year. "Using bulbs to raise funds isn't new," wrote Don Williams, Chairman of the National Projects Committee which directed the effort. "But this is a tulip with a difference. It is our own — developed in the Netherlands and registered in the name 'Crossroads Africa'."

The 5-bulb package sold for \$1 of which 35¢ went to the Canadian Crossroads Africa Committee, 10¢ to the local club and 61¼¢ to the National Association. Though the project fell far short of its financial objectives — due largely to a disappointingly low percentage of clubs making an all-out effort, and certainly not to lack of hard work by the organizers — the National Men's Club Committee felt that the "plus" factors made it all worthwhile.

Some ten young people indeed went to Africa who would not otherwise have had the opportunity — which most Crossroaders have declared to have been the most valuable experience of their lives. Widespread coverage in the news media helped to enhance the public image of AOTS — and indeed of the Church at large — as outreach, serving organizations. And those clubs which did seriously participate achieved some amazing sales records, also finding new strength in purpose and enhanced fellowship. The trip for two to the Netherlands offered by the suppliers there to the club with the largest per capita sales was won by the suburban-rural King-Teston-Laskay (Ont.) club with \$51 in sales per member.

Subsequently, the Canadian Crossroads Africa Committee was succeeded by Canadian Crossroads International, independent of both church structure and the parent organization in New York. Its activities have extended to developing countries in areas other than Africa, and encompass many types of project in addition to the work camp pattern. In 1971 for instance it sent 85 selected volunteers into 32 different projects in Africa, India and the West Indies, a few in cooperation with Operation Crossroads Africa (U.S.) but most on individual or small group assignments, responsible for finding their own way into the local scene, living and learning in strange lands and cultures.

Canadian Crossroads, however, still seeks and receives support from AOTS and other United Church Men. Much of its income in recent years has derived from Miles for Millions Marches. AOTS men and their families have marched themselves or sponsored others, and/or aided local committees by supplying transportation, manning check points, etc. Revenue from this source for Crossroads has recently dropped off in some areas however, and at this writing support from such bodies as AOTS is still an important element in maintaining its programs.

Worship in Word and Song

Pulpit supply for their own or nearby congregations during the vacation, illness or absence for other reasons of the clergy, has long been a significant avenue of service by men's club members. Many District AOTS and/or UCM Councils have formed committees to coordinate such supply by laymen and to ensure that it is available throughout their area even at short notice.

Such gleanings from past news items as "seven laymen provide pulpit supply on 42 occasions in Fredericton Presbytery", or "Bermuda AOTS man fill pulpit supply assignments" are not hard to come by. Newfoundland laymen — and women — are among those particularly willing and able to perform this type of service to congregations, a fact perhaps not unrelated to the relatively high percentage of the charges in that Conference which are regularly served by lay ministers.

One thinks also of such individual laymen as long-time AOTS stalwart Val Roos, who as the Edmonton Presbytery officer responsible for securing pulpit supply, particularly for the scattered rural charges of that area, usually found it necessary to call on one Val Roos as well as other willing hands — or should we say voices — to meet demand. But very often he was unable to find an ordained minister to preside at communion, funerals, etc. That was one reason why Val, on retiring as a secondary school principal, went back to college himself, and, in his 70th year, was ordained by Alberta Conference.

What is now known as Laity Sunday has provided an occasion for laymen to bring a special message to the congregation. When Canadian churches first joined American denominations in observing what was then Laymen's Sunday, promotion and coordination of this event within The United Church of Canada fell naturally to the Board of Men. The men's club, where such existed, just as naturally was the group most often taking the initiative, or at least cooperating with the Minister and Session, in planning its observance locally. Indeed it was often, in many congregations, referred to in those days as "AOTS Sunday". The true purpose, of course, was never to promote the activities of any group as such, but rather to emphasize the call of the laos — the whole people of God — to His ministry in all areas of daily life.

In recent years, even when the Board of Men still existed and had primary responsibility to promote the event, our Church took the initiative in encouraging the participation of the ladies

and young people, and to our knowledge was the first to formally re-name it "Laity Sunday". Increasingly, also, its observance is not confined to the worship service but involves other happenings of the day or week — perhaps a congregational retreat or festival, in some cases involving also nearby churches of other denominations, or the community in general. The AOTS Club, however, still has an obvious and essential role to play in Laity Sunday activities.

The number of AOTS clubs which have organized men's choirs from their own membership or assisted in manning and supporting such groups in their local church, is indeed large. These groups in many cases not only lead their congregations in song during worship service on suitable occasions, and at various in-church events, but also provide such leadership or entertainment at community gatherings, hospitals, senior citizens' homes, etc., and in support of charitable causes.

Several prominent examples of such men's choirs immediately come to mind; the name a few here would be to omit others just as worthy of special mention. One exception, however, we feel must be made. The Scarborough Glee Club's contribution to the men's club movement, the Church in general, and many worthy causes is indeed outstanding and in some respects unique. Under Director Sid Bagnall, it has included men from a number of churches in or near the Toronto Borough of Scarborough. Probably most AOTS members who read this cannot remember a time when the Glee Club did not lead and entertain at our Biennial Conventions and other important national or regional gatherings. It cannot begin to accept all the requests received from across the country to put on concerts, usually to raise money for AOTS projects or other worthy causes. It has produced several recordings, profit from the sale of which have helped to meet its own expenses as well as raise funds for individual clubs.

The AOTS movement is deeply indebted to the men who have so generously given of their time and talent as members of the Scarborough Glee Club, as well as to its pianist, Ruth Butt, and contralto soloist Bette Davis. Both are wives of Glee Club members, and the former a daughter of the late David Sherwood, National Past President, who was himself a member of the group.

"It Works"

To adequately summarize here the myriad types of AOTS

club programming, and the topics examined and discussed therein, would be manifestly impossible. Widely typical of course is the monthly dinner meeting, followed by a program featuring a presentation by a member guest speaker, panel, etc., — and, most importantly, discussion. There are of course countless variations. A short devotional period, however, has always been regarded as an essential element, fostering Christian fellowship and action.

The contribution that UCW and other ladies' groups have made in providing good, low-cost AOTS dinners — on what must be tens of thousands of occasions — cannot be overestimated. And this is by no means the only way that they have been supportive of men's clubs. Many AOTS clubs of course have reciprocated by hosting the ladies from time to time. The increasing tendency for men's, women's and young people's groups in the local congregations to plan and work together is indeed one of the most encouraging developments in our churches during recent years.

Perhaps we might suitably conclude with an outline of the activities of the Wakefield-Alcove-Rupert (Quebec) Club — mentioned in a previous chapter as, at one time at least, the largest rural AOTS group. This may at least give some conception of the scope and variety of typical AOTS activities.

Some years ago Rev. R. Leonard Bacon, then W-A-R pastor, reported:

"Our club exists for three main purposes: Christian fellowship, Christian education, and Christian service. Our meetings include a brief devotional period, supper, a brief business session, a prepared program. We meet once a month during the fall, winter and spring seasons."

Mr. Bacon then listed typical program topics which had proved successful:

- Land Survey and Mapmaking (illustrated).
- A Visit to the South Sea Islands (illustrated).
- Laymen in the Christian Church.
- Panel discussion on alcoholism.
- Plans of the District Parks Commission.
- The RCMP Crime Laboratories.
- A Visit to the Holy Land (slides).
- Safety Rules in Industry (illustrated).
- Trends toward Christian Unity.

And sample projects of the club:

- Donation of an amount equal to the total membership fees to the Springhill (mine) Disaster Fund.
- Donations to a crippled man to help him begin leather work; to Christmas hampers for needy families; to a family which lost its home in a fire (members also cut and hauled wood for this family); and to other individuals in need of a helping hand.
- Planting of 1000 Christmas trees (planned as a yearly venture);
- Men's choir supplied music on special occasions.
- Nut-selling project; from the returns, a contribution made to District Council to establish a fund for expenses of delegates to the National Convention.

..... "It works!" Mr. Bacon concluded.

EPILOGUE

The AOTS movement is one more demonstration of the influence of the spirit of God on the lives of men and of the response men make to that influence. It is marvellous to consider the diversity of institutions and movements through which the truth and love of Jesus Christ are made manifest. Some of these are great and powerful, some are small and ordinary. Some of these have acquired international status and renown, some have been largely unknown outside a select and limited circle or area. The AOTS movement has never sought or achieved world fame or impact and yet it has been, and is, important in the rich mosaic of the Christian enterprise.

In a quiet way AOTS has touched and helped to transform the lives of thousands of men in Canada, Bermuda and other parts of the world. It has deepened the spiritual experience of men in every walk of life and opened up opportunities for them to discover and grow in the Christian experience. Churches have been enriched by the warm fellowship it has fostered, communities have been served by the concerned and concerted action of AOTS clubs and members. Some examples of AOTS in action have been cited in this brief historical account of AOTS in its first fifty years of existence. But AOTS is essentially an intangible. Statistics and case studies only reveal the surface of AOTS. Deep down at the heart of this movement there is an idea, a belief, a spiritual encounter which can't be measured. The influence and impact of AOTS is as broad and varied as the men who have been associated with it and whose personal lives, jobs, family relationships, church involvements and community service have been infected by the contagion of an insight which has informed and inspired them.

One reviews the AOTS record and recognizes with profound gratitude the men who have written it on the indelible parchment of their own personalities. Some are named but countless others are not. The AOTS movement has survived, succeeded and served because of the fantastic dedication of mind, heart, body, time and talent of so many leaders to the nurturing of AOTS and enthusiastic sharing of this exciting concept with other men. AOTS has a wonderful capacity to capture

the imagination of creative spirits. Over the years it has been blessed with remarkable leadership and one of its continuing contributions to church and nation is awakening and developing the hidden potential for leadership in men. Gratitude is also felt for the support of The United Church of Canada in helping AOTS to develop and spread.

What of the future? "The past is prologue" can be true for AOTS providing its vision is fresh and its sense of meaning and purpose is clear. The world does change and people change too. Thank goodness! What a terrible thing life would be if its central principle were unending sameness. Movements and organizations must change and grow — or else die! Even death is an opening to resurrection and new possibilities. AOTS must be prepared to change, adapt and innovate in anticipation of and response to new times and new circumstances, holding fast to the idea which is the heart of the movement — the challenge to men to commit their lives to serving God and serving others — to be like Jesus "As One That Serves". Loyalty is a rich gift but it must be not to organizational forms or programs or projects but to Jesus Christ and the AOTS concept. Each day, each year this seed must be planted anew in the soil of to-day.

If the AOTS idea is to be extended, there must be a willingness in its leaders and members to adventure, to explore, to experiment in the Christian faith. AOTS must be creative and must engage in risk. AOTS cannot hug the safe shore of the tried and the past but must launch out into deep and untried situations. The growing edge of any life or enterprise, if it is worthwhile, involves risk and calls for daring and boldness. It is also true that the rich resource of faith is most fully realized at the critical growth points of any endeavour.

The needs of men and the needs of the world are terribly complex but essentially they are probably not much different than they were fifty years ago when AOTS was conceived or two thousand years ago when time and human experience were pierced by the appearance of Jesus. The methods of meeting those needs undoubtedly must change but AOTS is a sound concept, and it is not only possible, but highly probable that a new generation of men, enchanted by the matchless example of the Master, will carry the torch of faith, fellowship and service forward into a future of AOTS achievement surpassing the splendid accomplishments to this point in time.

— Don G. Smith