

Susan Smith's

Review of

Interfaith Mission Service

History

1970 - 1975

From the Executive Director

In the past few weeks I have begun reading the minutes of the planning board that created Interfaith Mission Service. What fascinating reading, especially to someone who majored in history in college! On January 16, 1969, fourteen people met at Holmes Street Methodist Church, responding [we have to assume] to an invitation to combine the energies of their congregations to meet the social needs in our community.

Only a few of those present are actually named in that first set of minutes, but it is clear that Jewish and Christian congregations were represented. From the beginning, IMS established a link with the Huntsville Emergency Line (now HELpline), the Community Counseling Service (from which the Family Services Center grew) and the Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transit System (HIVTS, the forerunner of the HandiRide system).

In the first year, IMS marshaled the skills, energies and resources of congregations to help rebuild Antioch Primitive Baptist Church's building. [There is no mention of why it needed rebuilding. I assume that everyone present already knew the reason.] Interested individuals began organizing a coffee house/meeting place (eventually named "Agora") for youth. Some \$700 was raised among congregations to send a needy child to "a special camp for emotionally disturbed children". And the word was spread that "the men of St. Joseph Catholic will build outhouses for the needy."

The challenges facing these charter members

were much the same as the challenges facing us today:

- publicizing the existing social service agencies to the community
- figuring out how congregations can work with these agencies to meet social needs, and
- seeking financial support from congregations.

First Christian Church made the first financial contribution to IMS -- \$10 received in May. In June a contribution of \$15 is listed as being received from St. Luke's Methodist. In the whole first year, the only expenditures listed were \$1 per month to First Methodist Church for paper and mimeograph stencils and \$4.50 for coal for a needy family or families.

In May and June of 1969, the IMS Executive Committee met with a consultant from the Association for Christian Training and Service to examine Huntsville's needs and how IMS could effectively meet them. Together they determined that the needs were of three types: personal/individual, inter-faith, and communication, but the most fundamental need was "the restoration of hope, confidence, identity with the rest of the human community and dignity through accomplishment."

Almost thirty years later, we are still struggling with these same issues. If we were looking for a reason to be depressed or discouraged, I suppose we could say, "It's no use. We haven't made any

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Interfaith Mission Service in 1970

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The small group of Christians and Jews who first met in 1969 to establish Inter-Faith Mission Service was an active bunch of folks. Under the leadership of Chairman Charles (Chuck) Vedane, Vice Chair Ken Stephens and Secretary-Treasurer Sharon Rush, the board decided to try to "be a facilitating agency and help churches do what they feel they should do." They decided to start by supporting existing ecumenical activities.

Max Rosenthal (still an IMS Congregational Representative) coordinated the membership drive and publicity campaign. Financial contributions, typically ranging between \$5 - 10, were received from Temple B'nai Sholom; First Christian Church; St. Mark's Lutheran Church; Covenant and Trinity Presbyterian churches; and First, Holmes Street, Lakewood, Latham Memorial, St. Paul and Trinity United Methodist churches. Recognizing that they would soon need a full-time director for expertise and communication, the board was only able to fund a part-time secretary working in the office of the Community Counseling Center.

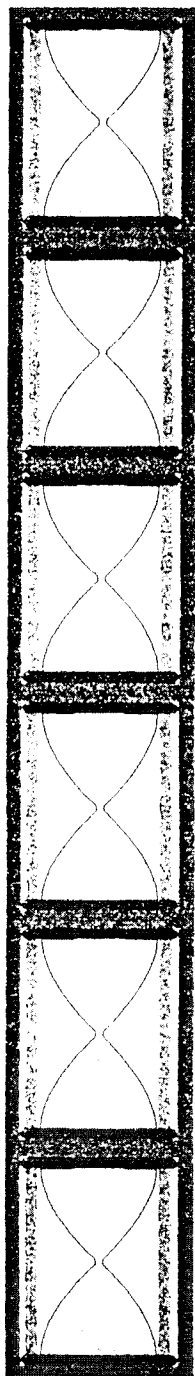
Madison County was growing rapidly in 1970. Considering the population boom and the demand for larger church facilities to accommodate new congregation

members, the fact that most could only provide very limited financial support to IMS is understandable.

The creation of a Council separate from the Board seems to have occurred in 1970. Meetings were held in various churches, the public library, the Kings Inn, the home of a board member and in the IMS-sponsored Agora Coffeehouse, which opened at the corner of Oakwood Avenue and Jordan Lane in June 1970. By November some 150 young people were enjoying the coffeehouse atmosphere on Friday and Saturday nights, though volunteer adult supervisors were always in short supply.

IMS was already involved in a variety of community services. The Community Counseling Center was composed of seven local ministers who offered free counseling, referring serious problems to other appropriate professionals. A group of ministers also operated a Night Ministry answering service for counseling. Plans were in the works for a 24-hour phone service in the Mental Health Center, with funding from IMS for volunteer training and a part-time secretary. Food pantries were operating at St. Thomas Episcopal, Monte Sano Methodist and Trinity Presbyterian churches, with First Christian Church organizing a computerized (in 1970!) client file. The Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation Service provided 300 trips to and from medical appointments in its first year, using some 40 drivers. Project Discovery, which provided after-school and summer day-camp experiences for children in low-income families, became IMS's first "ministry", retaining its existing board and funding sources. Moreover, the effort to find volunteers to drive a child to Memphis once every six weeks for leukemia treatments was answered by the Red Baron Flying Club.

In December, the board reported that IMS had received firm commitments from congregations for \$4850 in funding for 1971, with program and administrative expenses projected to be \$13,370. Some things just don't change over time!



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progress in all these years.” BUT WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS! It's true that there are still many needy people in our community, but we have many more agencies and organizations to provide help. It's true that we need to find more ways for congregations to work together, especially across faith boundaries, but this is happening more and more, through IMS and several other formal and informal groups. And, yes, it's true that we still need to seek financial support from our member congregations to continue the work of IMS.

Our work is not yet done. The problems which necessitated the creation of IMS had existed for much longer than thirty years, so it should not surprise us that it will take longer than thirty years to “solve” them. Actually, they aren't really “solvable” in mathematical terms, because individual economic needs, the lack of interfaith understanding and the need for communication are ever present. Let us thank all those individuals of vision who helped create IMS and pledge ourselves to continue their good work. Our work will never truly “be done”.

Interfaith Mission Service's Past

Susan Smith's Review of Our History

1971

Interfaith Mission Service Board members spent a lot of 1971 figuring out what role this two-year-old organization was going to play in the community. Efforts were begun early in the year to obtain non-profit status from the Internal Revenue Service. An initial brochure was written to describe IMS's functions and a document was drafted to describe the relationship between IMS and the various projects with which it was associated. The newsletter began to be published on a regular basis, with the name *The Bridge* being used for the first time mid-year.

The first set of Bylaws established a Council and seven-member Board, with the same person to be chair of both. Board officers included Chuck Vedane, Maurice Belrose, Sharon Rush, Helen Smith, Bob Rathbun, Rabbi Michael Eisenstat and the Rev. Joel McGraw. Committees established during the year (and their chairpersons) included Communication (Hans Sitarz), New Ministries (Ken Stephens), Action Training (John Hubbard) and Administrative (Bill Wallace). A Budget Committee, chaired by the Treasurer, was added to the structure mid-year.

In an effort to encourage participation by Congregational Representatives, each CR was expected to serve on a committee. If a CR missed more than three consecutive Council meetings, he/she was expected to ask his/her congregation to name a new CR. The need for more clergy involvement is a refrain that runs throughout the year's records.

Early in 1971 the Board hired Velma Eason as part-time secretary, and in May they established the half-time position of Urban Coordinator and hired the Rev. Bob Gonia, with the understanding that he be an "enabler" rather than a "director". His job was considered three-fold: public relations, administration and consultant.

With a variety of organizations and causes asking for support from IMS, the March Board minutes reflect the decision that "IMS should act as an agent of reconciliation and avoid actions which polarize the community or represent IMS as identifying with a particular political point of view." It was stressed that IMS was to help churches carry out their ministries, not just get the churches' help with IMS ministries. It was further noted that "the role of reconciler is not passive". The records from that year attest to the fact that IMS was anything but passive.

With the Board meeting primarily in members' homes, most of the Council meetings were held at Agora, the coffeehouse in northwest Huntsville that IMS had opened the previous June. Particularly oriented toward young people, Agora provided musical entertainment and speakers on Friday and Saturday nights, though a chronic shortage of adult counselors kept it closed one weekend a month.

The Community Action Coalition transferred responsibility for Project Discovery to IMS, making this program for 400+ children from low-income families our first "ministry". Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation System (HIVTS) had 110 volunteer drivers and its own bylaws by now, and had added transportation to the Department of Pensions and Securities (now named the Department of Human Resources) to its former emphasis on medical appointments. In order to apply for a federal grant, HIVTS was permitted to use the IMS corporation seal until they could become incorporated separately.

The Huntsville Emergency Line Program (HELP), just begun in July, was averaging 78 calls per week by November. The Community Counseling Center had become incorporated and was now planning a program

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of prevention and rehabilitation for alcoholics.

Other programs with which IMS had close ties included the Huntsville Housing Authority, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Christmas Charities, Huntsville's Opportunity Program for the Elderly (HOPE), the Volunteer Bureau, the Detention Home, Jail Ministry and Night Ministry.

There was significant racial unrest in Huntsville during 1971, especially during a strike by sanitation workers over pay and working conditions, and members of their union were invited to address the IMS Council in April. IMS also joined with the Huntsville Civic Coalition in encouraging the City Council to appoint the first Black person to the City School Board. IMS was also vocal in its support of the police and firemen's union's efforts to improve their retirement benefits.

On September 16, 1971, an IMS Birthday Dinner was held at First United Methodist Church. Designed to inform the community about IMS, the dinner featured entertainment from Agora and speaker Ted McEathern from the Association for Christian Training in the Southeast (ACTS). The cost for the turkey and dressing dinner, speaker and entertainment was \$1. While some of the issues and concerns of 1971 are still with us in 1997, food prices have certainly changed!

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By late summer, there were food pantries at St. Thomas Episcopal, St. Joseph Catholic, St. Paul Methodist, Trinity Presbyterian, Prince of Peace Lutheran, Lakewood Methodist, Weatherly Heights Baptist, Lakewood Presbyterian and Emmanuel Lutheran churches. Other IMS congregations had begun donating food to one of these pantries, and the first Food Sabbath was organized. In October, IMS began paying for a telephone Emergency Food Line in the Christmas Charities office, where volunteers screened requests for food and referred callers to one of the nine pantries.

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Congregations that belonged to IMS in 1972

- Church of the Visitation
- Covenant Presbyterian
- Emmanuel Lutheran
- Episcopal Church of the Nativity
- Epworth Methodist
- Faith Presbyterian
- First Christian
- First Methodist
- Holmes Street Methodist
- Huntsville Conservative Synagogue
- Lakewood Methodist
- Lakewood Presbyterian
- Latham Methodist
- Prince of Peace Lutheran
- St. Joseph Catholic
- St. Luke's Methodist
- St. Mark's Lutheran
- St. Paul Methodist
- St. Stephen's Episcopal
- St. Thomas Episcopal
- Temple B'nai Sholom
- Trinity Methodist
- Trinity Presbyterian
- University Methodist
- United Church
- Valley Methodist
- Weatherly Heights Baptist

Other Organizations Providing Financial Support:

- Church Women United
- Ecumenical Fellowship
- Methodist District Board of Extension
- North AL Methodist Conference
- Southeastern Lutheran Synod

The second IMS Annual Dinner was held in September at Holy Spirit Catholic Church. Dinner consisted of turkey and dressing from Britling's Buffet, with slaw from Kentucky Fried Chicken and dessert provided by the women of Temple B'nai Sholom and St. Mark's Lutheran Church. Women's groups from the various IMS congregations combined to pay for the food, so tickets were given away free!

The various IMS-supported programs flourished during these days. The Huntsville Emergency Line Program received 8,000 calls in its first year of operation. A grant from the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare funded the salary of Director Bill Frazier. HELP's cadre of telephone volunteers included youths as young as 16. The Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation Service nearly folded in June 1972 when the whole board resigned, but IMS appointed a new board and kept operations going until a federal grant permitted the hiring of a full-time director. The Community Counseling Center had 14 active clergy-counselors who assisted 70 individuals during 1972. They began providing team counseling with agencies like the Department of Pensions and Securities and Vocational Rehabilitation Services and started organizing a hospital chaplaincy program.

The Rev. Bob Gonia resigned as IMS Urban Coordinator in August 1972 to accept a position with the Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG). For the last four months of the year, Shirley Mohler, who had been chair of the Communications Committee, coordinated the IMS efforts 20 hours a week for \$50 per week.

Preserved copies of the 1972 Bridge show a strong effort to be a communications link in the city. Articles ranged from information on how to register to vote to Trinity Presbyterian Church recruiting men to work with young boys in Project Discovery to a plea for someone to help repair radios and record players in the Prince of Peace Lutheran Thrift Store.

One of the informational pieces which IMS prepared during 1972 referred to a desire that still influences our actions today-finding unity among God's people by focusing on responding to human needs.

Interfaith Mission Service's Past -- 1973

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IMS began 1973 lacking a paid director, but guided by part-time coordinator and former board member Shirley Mohler. It was not until mid-March that James Tuohy, a former Catholic priest and assistant pastor at Our Lady Queen of the Universe, was named as the new IMS Director of Urban Studies and Program Development. The building into which IMS had moved in September 1972 was sold in the summer of 1973, so another move was required. The new office at the Cavalry Hill Neighborhood Center was both air-conditioned and furnished! The City of Huntsville, using funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, provided this new space without cost.

The Board elected at the January 18 Council meeting consisted of John Hubbard, Paul Byrley, Barbara Lucero, Al Norman, Leon Hastings, Grace Johnston, Chuck Vedane and the Rev. Larry Dill. In an attempt to increase contact with congregations, a by-laws change in June increased the number of clergy-at-large positions on the newly named Executive Committee (formerly the Board) from one to three.

Council meetings drew an average of 25 Congregational Representatives and Board members. Responses to a survey of CR's indicated that they frequently felt ill prepared to vote on the issues brought before them at the monthly Council meetings. Representatives of the IMS projects were encouraged to have brief

written reports available at each Council meeting to help CR's and their congregations become more informed. Noting that the goals of both groups were similar, IMS invited the predominantly black Huntsville-Madison County Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance to join IMS and send representatives to the Council.

The 1973 budget of \$34,256 showed the addition of Central Presbyterian, North Hill Christian, Grace Lutheran, Fellowship Presbyterian, Holy Spirit Catholic, St. Christopher Episcopal and the Unitarian Universalist churches among congregations providing financial support. In addition to IMS staff and office functions, the budget supported the Community Counseling Center, Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation Service (HIVTS), Huntsville Emergency Line Program (HELP), the Community Umbrella Program (CUP) for youth services and the Northwest Community Development Association.

By 1973, it was apparent that some form of coordination was needed among the congregations and organizations providing emergency funds and food to individuals. Christmas Charities began to keep such records and encouraged assistance providers to coordinate through them. The demand for the services of HIVTS and HELP rose every month. A \$5000 donation from the Boeing Good Neighbor Fund assisted with the purchase of a bus for HIVTS. Despite its chronic shortage of adult volunteers, the Agora

coffeehouse provided a place to go for 60-70 young people each Friday and Saturday night.

A new Jail Ministry was adopted as an IMS project in 1973. Pairing trained volunteers with county jail inmates nearing their release date, the Jail Ministry's goal was to prepare the inmate for employment and to "establish a creative system of moral values".

In May, CUP opened the YES Clinic on Monday and Tuesday evenings to treat youths ages 14 and older who did not have a private physician. Staffed by volunteer physicians, nurses, lab technicians and counselors, the clinic was housed in the new Family Practice Center at 810 Franklin Street. In its first two months, the YES Clinic saw 71 youth for suspected sexually transmitted diseases, suspected pregnancies, drug-related conditions, dermatology problems, infections and other medical conditions.

Growing from a CR's idea, work began on establishing a day care center for elderly individuals, to be called the Sunshine Club. IMS and the local Council on Aging combined efforts on proposals for Model Cities and state funding.

Partly in response to a resolution encouraging IMS projects to consider mergers for economy of operation, the Community Counseling Center and the Family Counseling Agency had merged by the end of 1973.

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1973 was a year after the break-in at the Democratic headquarters at the Watergate Hotel in DC. It was the midst of the Vietnam War, and a brief but costly war between Israel and her Arab neighbors was fought in October. Locally it was a time of tremendous population growth and an undercurrent of racial tension. Heavy rains in the spring brought devastating flooding to low-lying sections of downtown Huntsville (which have since seen drainage improvement), especially impacting low-income families who lived in those areas.

To respond to some of the issues of the day, IMS developed the Interfaith Mission Study and Action Program (IMSAP). Under this program, congregations and individuals were urged to speak to local, state and national legislators about issues as varied as flood plain zoning, revenue sharing, proposed cuts in Social Security spending, and adding ambulance transportation (averaging \$35 per trip) to the list of Medicaid-covered costs. IMS also exerted pressure for the appointment of the first black person on the Board of the Huntsville Housing Authority.

The IMS Board declined the opportunity to take a stand on demonstration marches taking place on Sunday mornings, but presented position papers about inadequate media coverage of events in the black community and the impact that the construction of I-565 was expected to have on community stability.

To encourage involvement by congregations in social issues, IMS also instituted the Education Via Action Program (EVAP) to train the chairpersons of congregations' Local Action Committees. A two-day training session in the fall focused on involving congregation members, goal setting and program development.

The Third IMS Annual Dinner, held in October at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, featured Dr. Ernest Smith from the National Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church speaking on "The Role of the Church in Creating Community", a topic which needs to be re-addressed every few years. You are invited to the 28th Annual Dinner on April 27, 1998, at Holy Spirit to hear a similar topic addressed from the viewpoint of the late 1990's!



Interfaith Mission Service in 1974: Susan Smith's Review of Our History

The year is 1974. President Richard Nixon is caught up in the Watergate crisis, which will lead to his resignation in August, but his "revenue sharing" plan is beginning to return a portion of federal income tax revenues to state and local governments. James Allen and John Sparkman are Alabama's U.S. Senators and Bob Jones represents north Alabama in the U.S. Congress. Joe Davis is the Mayor of Huntsville, where the City Council and School Board are elected city-wide, rather than by districts.

Inflation is rampant worldwide in 1974. The oil-producing nations have recently begun to raise the price of oil, seriously affecting the supply and the cost of heating fuel and gasoline. Government figures released in February show that it costs at least \$43.10 to feed a family of four, \$8.10 more than a year earlier. Though the federal minimum wage was increased to \$2.00 per hour in May, many families are having a very difficult time providing for their basic needs.

In 1974 Interfaith Mission Service is being led by Executive Committee (Board) members John Hubbard, Jane Miller, Pat Mullin, John Hughes, Pauline Precise, Benny Rogers, Chuck Vedane, John Alter, Dick Marshall, Larry Parton, Al' Dodson and Taylor Wingo and IMS Director Jim Tuohy. While there is a strong desire to continue to provide direct services to those in need, IMS is beginning to see the need to work on the correction of the conditions which produce the

need. Currently housed at the Cavalry Hills Neighborhood Center, IMS is seeking a "permanent" location. Board meetings were held in individual homes, while Council meetings were at Cavalry Hills early in the year, moving later to St Mark's Lutheran Church. Board minutes of the time indicate slow progress being made in obtaining tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue System.

While many individuals are working in IMS-sponsored programs, there is also a desire to increase the number of people participating in IMS Council meetings. Member congregations are encouraged to consider all the members of their social action committees as congregational representatives to IMS, with two being designated as voting representatives. In an attempt to increase the financial resources with which IMS can address the needs of the community, there is a very organized effort to attract new member congregations. But in spite of the fact that the Speakers Bureau and Jim Tuohy make numerous presentations to local congregations, only one new name - Our Lady Queen of the Universe Catholic Church - appears on the list of financial supporters. Consideration is also given to making the monthly newsletter available by paid subscription or of asking IMS representatives to sell issues in their congregations.

Information on the various IMS-sponsored programs is shared in every issue of The

Bridge and at every Council meeting. The Counseling and Growth Center is serving 20-30 clients each month with clergy-counselors volunteering their time. Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation System (HIVTS) has some 35 volunteers providing transportation for 120+ clients to medical appointments and the Department of Pensions and Security (now Department of Human Resources). HIVTS is also trying to arrange transportation for an Athens resident to receive daily cobalt treatments at Huntsville Hospital. HELPLine is receiving over 900 calls per month for information, referral and counseling. The Community Umbrella Program (CUP) for youth has 20-30 clients in drug treatment programs and sees another 50 each month at its Youth Emergency Services (YES) medical clinic. In a typical month the Food Pantry system received 123 requests for food, 27 for utilities assistance, 22 for rent and 8 needing help paying for medications. Coordinating the efforts of 14 pantries in churches around the county, the Food Pantry phone line is located at Christmas Charities, with the cost being borne by IMS.

A series of tornadoes in early April 1974 struck Hazel Green, Harvest, Triana, Maysville and the Parkway City area of Huntsville. There were 18 deaths and more than 1000 homes damaged or destroyed. While providing what assistance

they could, IMS realized the need for establishing a plan to respond to similar emergencies in the future.

The effort to establish a day care center for adults who need supervision suffered a temporary set-back in mid-summer when the Board of Adjustments refused to approve a proposed location in a residential district. By late 1974, though, volunteer efforts and donated money are fixing up the building used by the Agora coffeehouse so it might also accommodate the Sunshine Center. IMS pledges to underwrite the office expenses of this new program until it is able to manage independently.

Also receiving a similar pledge of support is the Jail Ministry, which links volunteer "partners" with city and county inmates who will soon be released. Local judges are enthusiastic about the program, and inmates are being assigned faster than volunteers can be recruited. While not solving the volunteer problem, a \$152,000 grant from the Alabama Law Enforcement Planning Agency provides financial support for a while. IMS' request that a local non-profit agency allow the use of its gym by Jail Ministry participants was denied.

In a major change of philosophy and legal conditions, mental hospitals nationwide began sending non-violent patients back to their home communities in the mid-1970s. Like most communities, Huntsville was ill-prepared to provide for these individuals. IMS was involved in efforts to establish a halfway house in

southwest Huntsville, but the plan met significant resistance from area residents. In an attempt to gain acceptance for halfway houses, the Committee for Humanities and Public Policy was created in Huntsville to educate the community about the need for such facilities. There was also discussion about establishing a "home for transients." When the city government later adopted regulations concerning halfway houses, some of the recommendations made by IMS were included.

Through The Bridge and Council meeting programs, IMS encouraged the community to contact Senators Allen and Sparkman about issues as diverse as revenue sharing, a nuclear test ban, the effect that the planned construction of I-565 would have on low-income residents living in the area, and the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (which was then seeking ratification by two-thirds of the States). The Bridge also reported the voting records of Alabama's Senators and Representatives on 11 bills ranging from military aid for South Vietnam to increasing the federal subsidy for school lunches.

Together with Church Women United, IMS sponsored a series of Candidates' Nights in April at which local candidates for the Alabama legislature presented their views on issues of the day. Similar programs in August and October for other candidates were sponsored by IMS, Common Cause, the League of Women Voters and the Alabama Conservancy.

A study by Ms. Sue Nemetz and distributed by IMS showed that of the 200 different individuals appointed by the Mayor and City Council to the various city boards and commissions, only one was non-white. In response to these findings, IMS presented a Citizen's Participation Plan to local officials and encouraged city residents to actively seek membership on such boards. IMS also supported the activities of a new group known as Citizens for Open Government (COG), of which Jim Tuohy was chair.

The efforts to inform the community about important issues were not without controversy. The April 1974 issue of the The Bridge contains two letters to the editor, one urging IMS not to "mix in politics," but to "stick to good works." The other expressed thanks for IMS' efforts to expose Huntsville's problems that needed correcting, since acknowledging of problems is the first step toward correction. The editorial policy of the time (which first appeared in the August 1974 issue) acknowledges the possibility for controversy or disagreements and states that the The Bridge had "no official editorial posture save ... that every contributor be fair and objective and acknowledge authorship...". Sharing information is one of the many ways that Interfaith Mission Service was living up to its 1974 vision of itself as "A Coalition of the Religious Community United for Training and Service."



IMS Logo in 1974

The Bridge

Interfaith Mission Service in 1975: Susan Smith's Review of Our History

In March of 1975, the United States began the official celebration of our country's 200th birthday. President Gerald Ford was dealing with an economy in disarray because of increasing oil prices and a population torn apart by the continuing war in Southeast Asia. Huntsville's population was 144,300, almost 9% of whom were living below the federal poverty level.

In this atmosphere IMS was pursuing two directions simultaneously: 1) supporting direct services such as HELPLine and the Agora coffeehouse, and (2) looking at "the big picture" of how our community and our nation make decisions and care for one another. A "Contemporary Issues and the Bicentennial" series organized by Frank Broyles was addressing issues such as Criminal Justice, The Nature of Public Assistance, and Open Government in a Democratic Society.

The IMS Executive Committee was composed of Pauline Precise, Jane Miller, Benny Rogers, Patricia Mullin, Uell Boggs, Chuck Vedane, John Alter, John Hubbard, Charles Emanuel, Larry Parton and Taylor Wingo. Dick Titus and Bob Hamilton were successive chairs of the Education and Training Committee when Uell Boggs resigned. The additions of Holy Cross Episcopal, Lakeside United Methodist, Providence Presbyterian and St. John's AME churches brought the total number of IMS member congregations to 38, together supporting an annual budget of \$36,000. The IMS office continued to enjoy the free space provided in the Cavalry Hills Neighborhood Center on Fairbanks Street.

Two particular community needs received much IMS attention during the year: housing for the homeless and the community needs of 14-18 year olds. The rapidly rising price of oil products was having a very negative effect

on the nation's economy, greatly increasing the unemployment rate and straining many families' finances to the breaking point. Despite the fact that many housing units owned by the Huntsville Housing Authority were unoccupied, agency rules prohibited renting to individuals without a regular income from employment.

For several years, IMS had provided funding to the Agora coffeehouse through the Community Umbrella Program (CUP) for youth services. In 1975, however, CUP decided to use all of its IMS allocation as matching money for a grant supporting the Youth Emergency Services (YES) clinic, which provided medical treatment for drug and other youth-oriented problems. Agora had only been able to maintain minimal services during the months when their building was undergoing major renovations, so the funding change by CUP compounded an already precarious financial situation. But the IMS Executive Committee decided to provide some direct funding to Agora, and several of the organizations (like the Sierra Club and Chess Club) which had previously met there returned to the renovated building.

After a couple of years of planning and several months of renovating Agora's building to accommodate dual use, the Sunshine Club adult day care center finally opened there in late April. Unfortunately, an expected contract with Vocational Rehabilitation Services did not materialize and use by other clients was less than anticipated, forcing the program to close in mid-July. After-school day care for children was identified as a community need, so IMS began encouraging congregations to consider establishing such programs in their facilities.

Recognizing that adequate nutrition is a basic right, the US Department of Agricul-

ture had greatly expanded eligibility for the Food Stamp program in 1974, but local officials estimated that fewer than half the eligible persons in Madison County were using the system. The Social Action Committee at First United Methodist Church established a program to teach food stamp recipients how to use their stamps effectively, and IMS worked through all available channels to "get the word out" to eligible families. In August, the Downtown Rescue Mission assumed responsibility for coordinating the pantry system, which served as many as 200 families each month. Meanwhile, pantries in the various churches were frequently having difficulty maintaining their supplies, so congregations were encouraged to hold Food Pantry Sabbaths to replenish the shelves.

IMS continued to encourage members of the community to get involved in public policy decisions. The IMS Education and Training Committee spent many months working on a set of legislative recommendations, addressing issues such as criminal justice, transportation, strip mining and constitutional revision. Several 1975 issues of *The Bridge* referred to the Citizens for Open Government (COG) Citizen Participation Plan. There was still a great deal of concern about how the construction of the I-565 spur would destroy the homes of a disproportionate number of black, elderly and low-income families.

In April 1975, IMS Director Jim Tuohy attended a conference in Atlanta on prison reform. While the IMS Council declined the opportunity to make a statement against re-instituting capital punishment in Alabama, they did create a document encouraging the establishment of community-based detention facilities with rehabilitation, rather than retribution, as the focus. Conflict in the county sheriff's department was causing havoc in the Sheriff's Work

Release program, but judges continued to refer inmates to the Jail Ministry program faster than IMS could recruit volunteer "partners".

The Rev. Ernest Newsom spoke to the IMS Council about the under-representation of women and minorities hired by and seen on the local TV channels. In August IMS appealed to all Congregational Representatives to contact Mayor Joe Davis about appointing the first black member of the Huntsville Housing Authority board.

A goal-setting session in late October, led by the Rev. Charles Betts of the North Alabama United Methodist Conference, established the following year's priorities: advocacy for minority groups, continuing research on social issues, candidates' night programs for local elections, and more congregational involvement in existing social services.

The IMS-sponsored programs continued to grow in service. Despite gasoline shortages, HIVTS volunteers provided 350-400 trips to medical appointments and the Department of Pensions and Security each month. The YES clinic was treating as many as 500 patients per month. In addition to answering 12,000 calls in 1975, HELPLine began holding classes on topics such as Positive Parenting and Behavior Modification.

The Annual Dinner in September at Holy Spirit Church, at which the Rev. George Hrbek from the Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry of Greater Cleveland spoke, was a celebration of another year of IMS' active involvement in the community. ☸

Logo used in 1975

