

Susan Smith's

Review of

Interfaith Mission Service

History

1981 - 1984

Interfaith Mission Service in 1981 -- Susan Smith's Review of Our History

With Bob Loshuertos as the recently hired Executive Director, Interfaith Mission Service spent much of 1981 examining its current structure and programs. The committee structure was changed to include Personnel, Public Relations, New Ministries, Liaison and Evaluation committees. The financial statements were streamlined to give a better picture of IMS' financial situation, and Council meetings were changed mid-year from monthly to quarterly.

The Executive Committee leading this restructuring was composed of Roger Thompson (President), Harry Thayer (Vice President), Dot Barr (Secretary), Harold VanderVeen (Treasurer), Neal Roberts (Past President), Grace Johnston (Lay Person-at-large), and Clergy-at-large Max Haskett, Robert Marsicek and Julius Scruggs. Also on the Executive Committee were committee chairs Marc Brown (Evaluation), Bob White (Liaison), Paulette Haywood (New Ministries) and Joe Estes (Personnel). The Public Relations Committee chair remained unfilled all year. Also much involved in these efforts was Mae Ledford, the secretary for both IMS and CASA.

The operating plan adopted early in the year indicated that efforts would be directed towards:

- * studying community needs
- * building and maintaining programs which meet those needs
- * generating the resources (volunteer and financial) to ensure the success of those programs, and
- * fostering ties of interfaith understanding.

The **Care Assurance System for the Aging (CASA)** continued to operate under IMS, though CASA's funding was primarily from government sources. CASA Director Pat Hair reported directly to the IMS Executive Committee, and the two agencies shared an office at the city-owned Friendship Center on Fairbanks Avenue. While the Executive Committee was searching for funding to replace cutbacks from the Appalachian Regional Commission, Larry Maines was chairing a task force to determine whether CASA ought to become an autonomous agency.

IMS' relationships with other community agencies were divided into four categories. At the beginning of 1981, the **established ministries**, begun by

Continued Next Page

Continued from page 6

IMS but now independent, included HELPLine, Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation Service (HIVTS), Family Services Center and the Agora coffee-house. Over the course of the year Stop Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) and Campus Ministry Association joined the list of established ministries. An Evaluation Committee was established to "define IMS goals relative to each project and to determine the validity of our continuing involvement". By year's end, this committee had recommended that IMS discontinue funding for Agora, since its organization was slowly dissolving.

Ongoing ministries were those which IMS managed on a day-to-day basis. They included the food pantries at Holmes Street Methodist, Prince of Peace Lutheran, St. Joseph's Catholic and St. Thomas Episcopal churches; the Institute for Public Life; and forums on interfaith and community issues. Also listed in this category were the distribution of emergency/discretionary funds on behalf of the member congregations and the ministry of the Executive Director to other clergy (e.g., the first Clergy Luncheon in August) and to community agencies.

Developing ministries in the IMS Operating Plan of 1981 were those like CASASA -- directly under the IMS umbrella at that time, but with a long range plan to become independent. IMS also had **liaison relationships** with the Community Action Agency, Legal Services of North Alabama, Hospitality House, the newly formed hospice program and Huntsville Association for Pastoral Care (HAPC). Liaison relationships included having an IMS representative on the other agency's board for communication purposes and, in the case of HAPC, providing a small amount of funding.

The Bridge was produced bi-monthly in 1981, with each issue carrying articles about one of the established ministries and one of the faiths or denominations represented within IMS. There were regular comparisons of IMS income to expenses and of actual income to commitments for support. Other articles included a description of the needs of the food pantries and reflections on religious social consciousness.

Thirty-five religious congregations -- Protestant, Catholic and Jewish -- provided financial support for IMS, as did the Jewish Community Council and Church Women United. The 1981 budget was divided into Level I (fixed) expenses of \$63,713, and Level II (additional funding opportunities if income

Continued Next Page

Continued from page 7

proved sufficient) of \$12,400. The year-end financial statement shows income of \$62,700 and expenditures of \$65,000. The form filed with the Internal Revenue Service also shows \$45,000 from government grants, all of which supported CASA.

Saturday paper drives were held in February and April, but it was soon realized that the meager income did not justify the tremendous effort involved. So paper bins were set "permanently" at Lakewood Presbyterian, Epworth Methodist and First Christian churches, with proceeds of the recycling sale supporting IMS. Using the professional services of Horton Auction again, the second annual auction raised some \$3000 in November.

Just weeks after Ronald Reagan took office as President, he announced a \$49 billion cut in federal spending compared to the FY82 budget proposed by former President Jimmy Carter. Much of the reduction in funding was aimed at social services, so the agencies affiliated with IMS were facing anxious times. The program at the April Council meeting included a panel of local agency directors describing the impact that they expected government funding reductions would have locally. Together they explained that more support (financial and volunteer) would be required from congregations if the needs of the Huntsville community would continue to be met.

As 1981 progressed, the Executive Committee and Director realized that AIMS would need to move to a new office soon. Giving up rent-free space was hard, but the City of Huntsville leased space to IMS in the Dental Arts Building at 201 Sivley Road for \$235 per month. The move was completed just before the end of the year.

There's a pattern here: The arrival of a new Executive Director provokes a top-to-bottom look at IMS' structure, programs, finances, etc. Those of us who have been involved in the 1998 examination of IMS can identify with Bob Loshuertos and Executive Committee members who conducted the 1981 review. May we do as good a job of preparing the organization we love to



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January 1982 found IMS newly settled into office space on Sivley Road, in a building located where the Blackwell Medical Tower is now. It would prove to be a very temporary location, but Huntsville Hospital (our landlord) permitted the free use of an adjacent suite to store items collected for the fundraising Auction in November. The office had sufficient space for IMS activities (including Executive Committee meetings) while housing the directors of CASA and the Campus Ministry Association.

With the addition of First Presbyterian Church in April, IMS had 36 member congregations of the Christian and Jewish faiths. Nineteen member congregations responded to the request to schedule an "IMS Sunday", with IMS Director Bob Loshuertos speaking or preaching at 13 of them.

During 1982, IMS developed new bylaws, new personnel and administrative policies and new job descriptions for its two staff positions. The elected members of the Executive Committee which led IMS through these changes were Roger Thompson, Joe Estes, Ruth Howell, Harold VanderVeen, Neal Roberts, Fred Carodine, Bob Marsicek, Marvin Kirkland, Rusty Goldsmith. The new bylaws added committee chairs Mitchell Williams, Harry Thayer, Larry Curry, Marc Brown, Grace Johnston, Ed Bosworth and Ginny Cummings to the Executive Committee. When the Methodist Conference moved Roger Thompson out of town in June, Joe Estes became President and Carolyn Edwards assumed the Vice President's position. Mae Ledford was the secretary for both IMS and CASA until September, when she was succeeded by Nancy Morgan.

At the beginning of 1982, five self-managed "ministries" were affiliated with IMS. Congregations were encouraged to channel their contributions to HELPLine, HIVTS, Family Services Center, Campus Ministry Association and SCAN through IMS, where a committee also conducted annual evaluations of each agency. During the course of the year, HOPE Place (Huntsville Offers a Protective Environment) and Pathfinders (a half-way house for recovering alcoholics) also became IMS ministries. But when HIVTS (Huntsville Interfaith Volunteer Transportation Service) entered into a contract with the Senior Center and became financially independent, it ended its ministry status. As the three-year federal grant which had created the Care Assurance System for the Aging (CASA) neared its end in October, that agency also became independent of IMS.

Publication of the *IMS Journal* had ceased in 1980, but it was revived in 1982, with Frank Broyles as editor. The nature of the *Journal* offered more space than *The Bridge* could provide for articles on topics such as "People of Faith and Nuclear Weapons" and "Voluntarism in the Face of Reaganomics". Each 1982 issue of *The Bridge* carried articles on one of the Christian denominations represented in IMS and on one of the affiliated ministries, with frequent submissions by lay individuals and clergy concerning their views on social ministry.

Continued next page

Continued from page 4

There were five IMS Council meetings held at different churches during the year, each including a business meeting and a program. Two of the programs were entitled "All you ever wanted to know about ... (three different Christian denominations each night)", while the others focused on the faith community's response to politics and to the cutbacks in federal funding to social service agencies.

For several years IMS had paid for a telephone line at Christmas Charities, available to people who needed emergency financial assistance for rent or utilities. However, a study conducted in the fall determined that the counselors at HELPLine were better able to handle and refer these requests, so the special phone line was disconnected. IMS congregations continued to be encouraged to send their direct assistance monies to the IMS Emergency Fund.

In addition to the administration of the Emergency Fund, IMS coordinated a special effort in March 1982 to raise money to purchase a ventilator for a teen-age muscular dystrophy patient who could not be released from the hospital until such equipment could be secured for his home. A total of \$12,000 was raised, \$10,000 of which was donated in a period of two weeks!

While IMS ended the year "in the black", there was a time during the fall when the Executive Committee had to establish priorities for payments while encouraging congregations to bring their pledges up to date. The year-end financial reports show income of \$83,000 and expenditures of \$88,000, including the ventilator fund. The annual Auction at Holy Spirit Church raised some \$3500, while a \$2500 grant from the Boeing Employees Good Neighbor Fund enabled IMS to produce an audiovisual presentation describing its programs.

There were many special events in 1982 -- a Seminar on Families and Violence in Society, sponsored with HOPE Place and seven other agencies; an Ecumenical Service for Peace at Trinity UMC; the annual Ministers Lunch, with the Rev. Craig Anderson speaking on "Current Trends in Pastoral Theology"; and a "Clergy and Cancer" workshop in May. But most exciting was the Interfaith Mission Service Community Awareness Week, proclaimed by Huntsville Mayor Joe Davis in October. A Sunday afternoon event at the Senior Center in Big Spring Park showcased 18 community service agencies, not all of which were affiliated with IMS. Open houses and other events at the various agencies during the week continued the effort to inform the community about available resources.

Hmmm.... Our new (1999) Strategic Planning Committee will soon be soliciting ideas for future IMS projects and programs. Maybe we should begin with some ideas generated in 1982!

Interfaith Mission Service in 1983 -- Susan Smith's Review of Our History

The beginning of 1983 found Interfaith Mission Service newly settled into an upstairs office suite at 2007 Gallatin Street. The new office provided space for Board meetings as well as Director Bob Loshuertos and IMS Secretary Nancy Morgan (through June, then Rosemary Jones). The 1983 IMS Board consisted of Joe Estes, John Jackson, Linda Gundlach McWilliams, Harold VanderVeen, Ed Bosworth, Fred Carodine, Ruth Howell, Callie McNeil, Bob Marsicek and Anne Walker. Mickey Hallum, Mitchell Williams, Kathy Wood, Barbara Lucero and Larry Curry served as committee chairs during the year. Anne Walker was also appointed as IMS' first representative to the Community Action Agency board.

The first attempt at holding an Annual Meeting and Dinner on January 20 was snowed out, but on February 3 at First Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Charles A. Thompson, Assistant to the Lutheran Bishop in the Southeast Synod, spoke to about 100 people on "Social Ministry in the 1980's." At this meeting, the 1983 budget was adopted, along with a set of "maintenance goals" and "mission goals" for IMS. "Maintenance" included increasing the number of IMS member congregations, increasing congregational participation in IMS, and an effort toward greater community awareness. Possible missions that would be discussed during the year included assisting the local American Red Cross chapter in times of disaster and presenting community forums on "hot issues" of the day.

There were three other Council meetings during the year at Faith Presbyterian, Holy Spirit Catholic and the United Church, during which Congregational Representatives and others heard programs about the Alabama Rural Council, a drug rehabilitation program for youth, and the SCAN puppets which teach school children about child abuse.

With a budget of \$71,600, IMS operated at a deficit for much of 1983, with money given for specific purposes occasionally being used to support the organization's basic operation. In mid-year, when IMS was unable to meet its monthly commitments to the ministries/agencies, the Finance Committee was forced to establish a set of payment priorities: (1) salaries, (2) rent/utilities, (3) ministries and (4) all other bills. However, with the help of \$3300 raised at the Annual Auction, IMS ended the year "in the black".

In 1982 IMS had established a fund to provide a ventilator for a teen-age muscular dystrophy patient. In 1983 IMS spearheaded a fund-raising effort to purchase two ventilators for Jessica Buchanan, an 18-month-old child who had been paralyzed in an automobile accident. In just two months, from donations large and small, over \$24,000 was raised to purchase the equipment needed to release this small child from the hospital. During 1984 another \$24,000 was received, raising the total amount contributed to \$48,000. When Jessica's parents finally received an insurance settlement, the money spent on her ventilators was repaid to IMS. In this way the Buchanan Fund was established, which has since paid for unusual medical-treatment-related expenses for several other area children. During 1983 other short-term funds were established to pay for medication and treatments for two cancer patients and transportation from out of town for another to receive treatment. A fund was also created to pay for ambulance service for those who could not afford it.

IMS' relationship with its "ministries" – independent agencies which received some of their funding through IMS – continued to be very strong, including sharing a booth at the Volunteer Bureau's "Volunteer Huntsville Days". As they did each year, the Evaluation Committee wrote reports on each of the ministries. Early in the year, Bob Loshuertos found himself spending much of his time working to get HOPE Place started. Their first director only stayed a couple of months, but by year's end HOPE Place had a full-time director and had purchased their first house as a shelter for victims of domestic abuse. IMS helped Campus Ministry Association secure office space on the UAH

Continued next page

Continued from page 4

campus, while the New Ministries Committee began working with Community Action Agency to establish a food bank here.

During 1983 Aldersgate United Methodist Church was the only congregation to become a new member of IMS. Teams of Board members and other concerned individuals mounted a campaign to visit all member congregations, resulting in payments from several congregations which had not made financial contributions in recent years.

At least four issues of The Bridge and two issues of the IMS Journal were published in 1983. Bridge articles included an explanation of the "reunion" of two portions of the Presbyterian church which had been split since 1861. In each issue one or two individuals provided a personal answer to the question, "Why am I involved in ministry?" News of faith-related events and pleas for contributions to the IMS food pantries finished filling the four-page issues. Each issue of the IMS Journal contained just three or four longer articles on topics such as "The Humane Use of High Technology", the Kairos prison ministry, and the conditions caused by the civil unrest in Central America.

In February, in an effort organized by Barbara Lucero, some 240 volunteers from 11 congregations distributed 25,000 pounds of government-surplus cheese in five-pound blocks to families which met income criteria. In October, IMS co-sponsored with the Huntsville Interfaith Peace Group a "Perspectives on Peace" conference at First United Methodist Church. IMS also joined with HELPLine to provide a salad luncheon-information sharing time for church secretaries. A grant from the Boeing Employees' Good Neighbor Fund permitted the purchase of audio-visual equipment, so the production of an IMS slide presentation was begun.

Two particular examples demonstrate the role that IMS played in the community in 1983. When Huntsville Hospital and Huntsville Rehabilitation Center were competing for authorization to convert the old Fifth Avenue Hospital into a rehabilitation hospital, both sought IMS endorsement for their positions. Even stronger is a statement from Mary Butler, Director of the Department of Pensions and Security (now Department of Human Resources) in Madison County, which was contained in a letter she wrote to the IMS Board:

IMS has encouraged an orderly response to this community's social service needs. The Madison County Department of Pensions and Security is grateful for the leadership, volunteer hours and financial support which the IMS congregations have made available to their fellow man in this community.

It is our job in 1999 and beyond to ensure that IMS continues to live up to that statement! ☺

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A suicide bomb attack at the US Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, kills 23 people. The Soviet Union refuses to participate in the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. The escalating war between Iran and Iraq threatens commercial oil shipping in the Persian Gulf region. Civil war ravages much of Central America. Geraldine Ferraro becomes the first female on the national ticket of a major political party. The space shuttle Challenger carries aloft the largest astronaut crew ever, including Kathryn Sullivan, the first US woman to walk in space. Ronald Reagan and George Bush are re-elected to serve four more years as President and Vice President. 1984 was an eventful year on the national and international levels!

The IMS Board of Directors charged with balancing community needs and resources in 1984 was composed of Rev. Joe Estes, Dr. John Jackson, Linda McWilliams, Harold VanderVeen, Ed Bosworth, David Cook, Callie McNeil, Rev. Bob Marsicek, Shirley Mohler, Anne Walker, Mickey Hallum, Pat Fague, Kathy Wood, Rev. Ed Soule and Trish Van Laningham. Monthly Board meetings were held at the IMS office at 2007 Gallatin Street, "home" to Executive Director Bob Loshuertos and part-time secretary Rosemary Jones.

As is always the case, conditions elsewhere had an impact on life in Huntsville, AL. The escalation in the price of oil continued to push utility bills up. To respond to the need for assistance with such payments, IMS helped to establish a new fund at Catholic Center of Concern and a push was begun to add \$1 to residential utility bills to provide income for this effort. While that plan did not materialize, these efforts eventually led to the establishment of Project Share, in which voluntary contributions may be made to a fund administered by the Salvation Army.

Demand for emergency food assistance was also increasing, so IMS Food Pantry Coordinator Trish VanLaningham started trying to figure out how to have at least one pantry open on evenings and weekends. Several new community service programs were established during 1984. The Food Pantry system included only four pantries, but together they served over 440 families in that year. Youth groups participating in the Halloween Harvest of Food collected over 1300 food items, then celebrated their accomplishment with a party at the Carousel Skate Center.

Meeting a variety of other kinds of individual needs, the IMS Emergency Fund provided over \$11,000 of assistance with rent, utility bills, medication, etc. IMS also coordinated fundraising efforts which helped a Nigerian student with terminal cancer to return home and a HOPE Place client to move into more permanent housing. Other such efforts provided a feeding pump for a tuberculosis patient and a monitor for a baby at risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Using a \$1000 grant from IMS and additional start-up funding from United Way, the Food Bank was established and equipped in 1984. A Rape Crisis Program was begun which would eventually come under the HELPLINE umbrella. And in a process that was to lead to the creation of LIFT Housing, IMS spent the latter part of the year preparing to receive a \$25,000 Community Development Challenge Grant to purchase 4 to 16 independent housing units.

IMS continued to be plagued by uncertainty about how to provide funding for the IMS “ministries” – Campus Ministry Association, CASA, Family Services Center, HELPLine, HOPE Place, The Pathfinder and SCAN. IMS congregations were strongly encouraged to provide funding for these agencies through IMS, and the agencies were not permitted to request funds directly from member congregations. The relationship with these agencies also included an annual evaluation by an IMS committee.

In mid-year the Board contracted with a consultant to do an evaluation of IMS’ overall operation. Bill Miles felt that confusion existed over the decision-making roles of the Council and the Board and suggested a stronger role for Congregational Representatives to encourage stronger ties to member congregations. He also suggested that IMS reexamine the practice of continuing to consider a congregation an IMS member if no funding was being provided.

During 1984 four churches joined IMS, bringing the total number of member congregations to 40. At four consecutive Council meetings, Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Hope Presbyterian Church, the First Church of God and the Light of Christ Center were welcomed.

The cash flow at IMS was a constant source of concern. Some \$39,000 of the total \$91,000 IMS budget for 1984 flowed through on its way to the ministries/agencies, but payments were often one to two months behind schedule. The fifth annual IMS Auction at Holy Spirit Catholic Church raised \$3500, which helped the year end “in the black”. During 1984, special contributions from individuals and congregations also paid most of the cost of a new telephone system, while a grant from the Boeing Employees’ Good Neighbor Fund purchased a much-needed copier.

The IMS Annual Dinner and Meeting was held in February at First Christian Church, where Madison County Commission Chairman Mike Gillespie and a representative of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama jointly presented a program on “The Cooperation of Church and State in Social Ministry”. Four Council meetings were held during the year at different locations, each combining a program and business. A new slide presentation on IMS and its ministries made its debut at the May meeting.

Other events during the year included the annual ministers’ lunch, at which the directors of the IMS ministries described their agencies; a workshop on mobilizing church volunteers, sponsored jointly with the Voluntary Action Center and the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama; and a luncheon for church secretaries at which HELPLine provided suggestions for handling requests for financial assistance.

In mid-1984, Executive Director Bob Loshuertos accepted a Certificate of Appreciation from the Alabama Department of Pensions and Security (now Department of Human Resources) for “valuable contributions which have enhanced the lives of the citizens of Madison County.” May we continue to live up to that recognition every year! ☪