

Susan Smith's

Review of

Interfaith Mission Service

History

1985 - 1989

Interfaith Mission Service in 1985 -- Susan Smith's Review of Our History

In the US, artificial hearts, income tax reform (à la Ronald Reagan), Ted Turner, Pete Rose, and the successful missions of shuttles Discovery, Challenger and Atlantis make headlines. Around the world, the news media focus on Mikhail Gorbachev, the hijacking of a TWA airliner over the Mediterranean, racial violence in South Africa, a deadly tidal wave in Bangladesh, and the United Nations' 40th anniversary celebration. Closer to home, an Alabama law authorizing daily one-minute periods of silent meditation or prayer in public schools is declared unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court.

The times were turbulent in 1985, internationally, nationally and locally. Even the membership of the IMS Board was not immune, though most of the turnover seems to be have caused by Board members moving out of town. The year began with Board members Barbara Lucero, Fred Carodine, Harold VanderVeen, Linda McWilliams, Shirley Mohler, Sherwood Weil, Mickey Hallum, Pat Fague, Kathy Wood, Ed Soule, Daisy Albanes, David Cook, John Jackson, Anne Walker and Leonard Walker. During the course of the year the latter four resigned and were replaced by John Jackson, Bill Hudson, Tim Davis and Joseph Cullotta. When Cullotta was then transferred elsewhere, Gerald Sirois served during the last months of the year. There was also change in the part-time secretary's position, with Rosemary Jones resigning in September and Myra Wright assuming those responsibilities.

1985 was still an era of new-agency-creation. Using some special IMS "seed money, the Food Bank was created to distribute manufacturers' excess food production to agencies that served people in need. In March, Living In Family Transition (LIFT) Housing was created as an IMS agency. Since the recently created HOPE Place was expected to move soon from the IMS office into their own facility, it was decided that the LIFT office, staffed initially by Director Jeannie Mackay and a couple of VISTA volunteers, would share the IMS office on Gallatin Street with IMS Executive Director Bob Loshuertos. Since LIFT had been established after the 1985 IMS budget had been established, the Board departed from their usual policy and helped LIFT appeal directly to member congregations for funding. Five housing units were leased from the city Department of Community Development for \$1 per year, though a fire in a duplex destroyed one unit and severely damaged another before they were even occupied.

Working with the local Humanitarian Services Committee, IMS helped secure a van from the City Public Transportation Department, establishing the Transportation Ministry Association. Congregations were asked to provide volunteer drivers who would help area agencies get their clients to and from needed services. Congregations then had the use of the van on weekends.

In an effort to help congregations have "hands on" contact with families in need, IMS created a program entitled "Sharing Families". But despite a very positive article in the Huntsville Times, few congregations came forward to participate.

In addition to the new agencies/ministries, IMS continued its relationship with Campus Ministry Association, CASA, Family Services Center, HELPLine, HOPE Place, the Pathfinder and SCAN. Annual evaluations, designed to help congregations understand the needs and strengths of each agency, were shared with each director and published in the IMS Annual Report. As had been the case in recent years, IMS frequently had difficulty maintaining its schedule of financial support to the agencies, but by year-end all had received at least their budgeted amounts. The situation was particularly helped by the annual Auction in November, which raised nearly \$3800. In fact, it was decided to move the Auction from November to May in 1986 in the hope that such a change would avert the traditional mid-summer financial shortfall.

The Harvest of Food in October involved 182 young people from 14 youth groups, who together collected food for the IMS pantries, the Pathfinder and HOPE Place. Food Pantry Coordinator Daisy Albanes also suggested that congregations which did not sponsor pantries could have Pantry Sundays to help the pantries maintain their supplies.

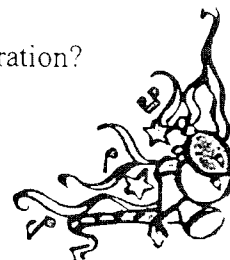
The IMS Council met four times during 1985, each time at a different member church. Each meeting featured a program (on topics ranging from "Domestic Violence" to "Peace on a Personal Level"), followed by a business meeting conducted by Board President Barbara Lucero. In November, the Council approved the membership of Huntsville Christian Church, bringing to 41 the number of member congregations.

The 1985 Annual Meeting and Dinner was held on January 31 at Holmes Street United Methodist Church. Following a presentation by Dr. Joseph Monti of the University of the South School of Theology, the IMS officers and Board members were installed. Those present also voted to establish the non-paid staff position of Volunteer Coordinator, whose main job was to keep Congregational Representatives informed and involved in IMS activities.

On the day following the Annual Meeting, members of the clergy were invited to a mini-workshop with Dr. Monti to look further at a document entitled "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", produced by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. This workshop turned out to be the beginning of an Ecumenical Dialogue for clergy, which continued for several years under the sponsorship of IMS. The annual Ministers' Lunch was also held in August at the Knights of Columbus Hall, with Methodist District Superintendent Charles Howard as the speaker.

September 8, 1985, marked the 15th anniversary of the approval of IMS' Articles of Incorporation. The occasion was celebrated with a dinner at First Christian Church. Member congregations were invited to make celebratory donations to IMS, most of which were used to support the newly established LIFT program.

If 1985 was IMS' 15th anniversary, then 2000 will be our 30th! Want to help plan the celebration?



Interfaith Mission Service in 1986 -- Susan Smith's Review of Our History

Ferdinand Marcos' 20-year tenure as President of the Philippines ends with his flight from that country. Former UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim is accused of membership in Nazi organizations during World War II. An explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Soviet Union releases a cloud of radiation into the environment. The US space shuttle Challenger explodes shortly after takeoff from Cape Canaveral. Terrorist attacks in Rome and Vienna convince President Ronald Reagan to break diplomatic ties with Libya, while hostage taking and releases disrupt US relations with Lebanon. William Rehnquist follows Warren Burger as Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court. The Statue of Liberty's torch is relighted following its 100th anniversary restoration effort. Participating in "Hands Across America," more than five million people form a human chain across the US to focus attention on the problems of poverty and homelessness. It is 1986 – an explosive yet hopeful time!

The Board which guided IMS activities through 1986 experienced a fair amount of turnover, adding leadership challenges to Barbara Lucero's second year as Board President. Other board members during the year included Fred Carodine, David Cook, Tim Davis, Pat Fague, Daisy Fernandez, Thelma Gardner, Bob Gunn, Mickey Hallum, Bill Hudson, John Jackson, Linda McWilliams, Shirley Mohler, Bob Ogle, Gerald Sirois, Ed Soule, Harold VanderVeen, Anne Walker, Leonard Walker, Sherwood Weil and Kathy Wood.

There were various types of changes in the IMS staff as well. Executive Director Bob Loshuertos' title was changed to "Executive Minister" to better reflect the range of his responsibilities. A new non-salaried position of Volunteer Coordinator was created, particularly to encourage greater participation by Congregational Representatives in IMS activities, but Marty Flynn was only able to serve a few months before health concerns forced her resignation. The position of part-time IMS secretary also saw turnover, with Hilda Page and Jane Norman each staying only a few months until Elouisa Stokes began her tenure in the office on Gallatin Street.

The first IMS event of 1986 was the Annual Dinner on January 30 at First United Methodist Church. Following dinner, Dr. Keith Suggs assumed the role of Mark Twain, sharing some of his observations on religion. New officers were installed, and the 1986 objectives and budget were adopted. The Annual Report distributed that evening listed IMS activities and accomplishments during 1985 and included "evaluation" reports on all the IMS-affiliated ministries.

Council meetings were held four times during the year, each hosted by a different member congregation. Each included a program, with topics ranging from "Rape: Pain to Wellness" to "Storytelling in Scripture", followed by a business meeting. At the May meeting, Grace Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church of Our Savior were welcomed into IMS membership, bringing the number of member congregations to 43. The Church of Our Savior (which no longer exists) was the first congregation in rapidly growing Madison to become an IMS member.

The Bridge was published bi-monthly in 1986, with articles on CASA, LIFT Housing, SCAN, Campus Ministry Association, Transportation Ministries and HOPE Place. New member congregations were introduced and HELPLine's new Rape Crisis Program was described. Individuals involved in IMS in various ways continued to contribute articles describing "Why I'm in Ministry".

In January, IMS teamed with nine other community agencies to offer the second in a series of annual cancer-related workshops, this one entitled "Cancer: A Family Illness, A Community Concern". In April IMS also co-sponsored with Hospice of Huntsville and The Key Counseling Center a symposium called "Rituals of Death and the Gifts of Healing". The Rev. Richard Kew also spoke on "Clergy Burnout" at the annual Clergy Lunch in August, while the Ecumenical Dialogue (which had begun the previous year) continued to attract members of the clergy to discuss issues such as medical ethics with Dr. Joseph Monti of the University of the South School of Theology.

Financial support came to IMS not only from member congregations and individual "Friends of IMS". A \$2000 grant from the Boeing Employees Good Neighbor Fund enabled the purchase of IMS' first computer, while the annual Auction in November raised over \$3200. The end-of-year financial report shows \$108,500 in expenditures supported by \$106,000 in income. Of this amount, some \$56,000 was distributed to the eight independent ministries and to the fund which helped pay for rent and utilities in emergencies.

The 1986 Halloween Harvest of Food collected nearly 6000 non-perishable food items. Since the demand on the food pantries had nearly doubled in the past year, this collection by congregational youth groups was particularly welcome. In fact a computer problem in the DHR Food Stamp office in October created such demand for emergency food assistance that two of the four existing pantries were "cleaned out" prior to this collection.

Several of the IMS-affiliated ministries saw tremendous growth and success during 1986, while one other floundered. LIFT Housing continued to use VISTA volunteers to coordinate the purchase and renovation of housing units for families in transition. By May, LIFT had four units occupied, with another 20 families on a waiting list. CASA's fall weatherization program for low-income elderly persons was very successful. But the lack of congregational participation in the Sharing Families program begun the previous year severely limited its ability to help families in need.

The issue of abortion became divisive during 1986. IMS as an organization refused to take a position on the issue, saying that it was up to each member congregation to speak for itself. Despite a certain amount of pressure, HELPLine (an IMS-supported ministry) refused to quit providing abortion referrals when requested. Eventually at least one congregation demanded that none of their financial support to IMS be funneled to HELPLine, a request that was honored. Actually the practice of a congregation designating its IMS funding for a specific ministry continued to cause problems, provoking a restatement of policy regarding designation and budgeting.

Non-profit organizations need to examine their structure every few years, so a By-laws Review Task Group was named in late 1986. A class of business students from UAH also provided an analysis of IMS' structure and programs. Their report gave a great deal of the credit for IMS' success to Executive Minister Bob Loshuertos. They noted that the same societal factors that were threatening a decrease in contributions were also causing an increase in needs for assistance and services. The students also provided some suggestions for restructuring and recommended the establishment of a contingency plan to prepare for times of declining income.

Sometimes we forget to give directors of organizations the recognition they deserve during their tenure in that position. It's nice to know that Bob Loshuertos' contributions to IMS' success did not go unrecognized until he retired or until our most recent Annual Dinner!

Interfaith Mission Service in 1987 -- Susan Smith's Review of Our History

The year is 1987. The Dow Jones average surpasses 2000 in January, but suffers the largest one-day loss ever on “Black Monday” in October. The war between Iran and Iraq continues, with 37 US sailors killed when the USS Stark is attacked accidentally by an Iraqi warplane. Hostage-taking in Lebanon increases, including the capture of Anglican Church envoy Terry Waite. Television evangelist Jim Bakker resigns in disgrace. Some 400 Muslims die in Mecca in a clash between protesting Iranians and Saudi police during the annual Hajj pilgrimage. A severe earthquake in Los Angeles causes six deaths, many injuries and widespread damage. A fragile cease-fire between Nicaraguan government forces and “contra” rebels fails as Congressional committees in the US blame the Iran-contra scandal on the Reagan White House.

Against this tumultuous backdrop, Interfaith Mission Service continued to serve our community. The 1987 Board consisted of Karen Barnett, Daisy Fernandez, Leslie Franklin, Thelma Gardner, Mickey Hallum, John Herndon, Bill Hudson, John Jackson (President), Ruth Jurenko, Bob Ogle, Gerald Sirois (replaced mid-year by Greg Bittner), C.A. Smith, Dick Titus, Harold VanderVeen and Sherwood Weil. When they accepted Board membership, these folks probably thought that they were mainly committing to monthly meetings, with occasional other committee work, but they were soon to learn otherwise!

Interfaith Mission Service did some major “soul searching” in 1987. Beginning with input from the September 1986 Council meeting, the IMS Board held a day-long retreat on January 3rd and devised a plan to evaluate the organization’s position in the community. In mid-month, the Board held a dinner meeting with the directors of the eight independent agencies/”ministries” which received funding from IMS. When asked “What could IMS do differently?” they requested more reliable monthly payments and a written policy addressing some congregations’ practice of designating a portion of their IMS support to be paid to a particular agency.

The February 19th meeting of the IMS Council (composed of at least two representatives and one clergy person from each member congregation) was devoted to a discussion of what IMS was doing well and what could be done differently. IMS’ history of initiating projects which later became independent agencies (e.g., HELPLine, CASA, HOPE Place, Food Bank) received praise, but a few participants suggested that financial support be phased out as the agencies matured. Several others stated the need for more communication and coordination with member congregations and more efforts toward interdenominational cooperation. Council meetings all year were devoted to this process, rather than the usual program-business meeting format.

In March and April, Luther Kramer donated his time as a process consultant to facilitate the Board's examination of this input, plus the study of IMS' financial structure done by UAH students in late 1986. In two lengthy evening meetings, the Board developed a list of 14 recommendations which they considered crucial to the life of IMS. Beginning with widening "the footpath between IMS and the member congregations to become an interstate highway which goes both ways", the recommendations addressed public awareness, financial stability, community leadership roles, Board members' responsibilities, and several ways to strengthen relationships with member congregations. A list and description of these 14 recommendations was mailed to each Congregational Representative, with a request that each CR indicate his/her first, second and third priorities on a return postcard. At the July Board meeting, ad hoc committees were created to study (1) increasing IMS visibility in congregations and with the general public; (2) increasing the two-way flow of information, volunteers and money between IMS and member congregations; and (3) recruiting new congregations to join IMS.

Over the course of the next several months, it was decided to create a part-time paid Coordinator of Volunteers position, since a year-long search for a volunteer to fulfill this position had not been successful. (Janice Winters began in this position in November.) Two proposed By-laws revisions also resulted from this process: (1) to create a Chairperson/Speaker of the Council position separate from the Board President; and (2) for the Council to meet bi-monthly rather than quarterly.

While this complex evaluation process was going on, there was much "business as usual" too. In September, Executive Minister Bob Loshuertos learned that IMS would need to vacate its offices at 2007 Gallatin Street by November 1. In looking for another office location, the Board fully realized "what a deal" Dr. Jeff Hindman had been providing for \$265 per month. After an intensive search, the Holmes Street office which IMS still occupies was leased (also at a below-market rate) from Dr. Sam Citrano. Responding to an urgent plea from Loshuertos, the Boeing Employee Good Neighbor Fund provided most of the direct costs of the move. Elouisa Stokes had resigned as office manager just in time to avoid having to pack up, a task that fell to Loshuertos, new office manager Jeanette Johnson and members of the Board.

The IMS Annual Dinner on January 29 at First Presbyterian Church attracted nearly 100 persons to hear the church's bell choir perform and Dr. Walter Harrelson of Vanderbilt Divinity School speak on "Pursuing Interfaith Understanding in a Divided World". The Annual Report distributed that evening showed congregational membership remaining at 43, providing \$96,500 of a total annual income of \$128,000. In addition to managing the trust fund established in 1983 for Jessica Buchanan, an 18-month-old child paralyzed in an automobile accident, IMS also raised \$2400 to help the family of two-year-old Jessie Hopkins defray the expenses of his liver transplant in New Orleans.


The Annual Report also included reports on the operations and needs of the eight agencies which were considered "independent ministries" of IMS. Included among these was LIFT Housing, which continued to share office space with IMS and whose staff members Bob Loshuertos continued

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to supervise. The Annual Report also highlighted other activities of the year: a Cancer Workshop in January co-sponsored with 10 other agencies; the six Ecumenical Dialogue sessions with Dr. Joe Monti of the University of the South; the Clergy Luncheon in August and Clergy Workshop in September, at which each "ministry" described its services.

With the addition of Madison United Methodist Church, the IMS Food Pantry system grew to five pantries. The Bridge continued to inform the community about activities of IMS and the "ministries", and a series of profiles of IMS Board members was begun. Scattered among the six issues in 1987 were also descriptions of current issues among Lutherans, Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics, as well as a plea from the Department of Human Resources for foster parents. The November issue also carried an announcement from Faith Presbyterian Church of an arrangement whereby Bruno's grocery stores would donate \$1 in perishable food to the Food Bank for every \$300 in Bruno's and Food World receipts collected by local churches.

Continual examination of ways in which we can serve our community. Continued desire to welcome new congregations into our fellowship. Continued efforts to provide top-quality speakers for area clergy and people of faith. Continued desire to inform the community about services provided by IMS and other agencies. Continued need to strengthen our financial base and our two-way communication with member congregations. Such was IMS in 1987 – and still in 1999! 

Interfaith Mission Service in 1988 -- Susan Smith's Review of Our History

Ronald Reagan is completing his second term as US President, and George Bush is elected his successor, defeating Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis. Severe drought affects half of the nation's agricultural land. President Reagan attends a five-day summit in the Soviet Union, while Lech Walesa makes the transition from leader of the Solidarity trade union to leader of Poland. Most of Central America seems on the brink of military/political upheaval, while fighting and hostage-taking characterize much of the Middle East. US relations with Iran are further strained when a US cruiser shoots down an Iranian commercial airliner after mistaking it for an attack plane. A bomb explodes aboard a Pan Am 747 over Lockerbie, Scotland, claiming 270 lives. The US returns to space with the launch of the shuttles *Discovery* and *Atlantis*. The Olympic Winter Games are held in Calgary, Canada, while the summer games draw thousands of fans to Seoul, South Korea, and "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" brings movie animation into a new era.

It doesn't seem like there was a calm corner anywhere in the world in 1988, and IMS was no exception. Following a year of internal and external examination, several significant changes were made in the IMS by-laws and in the timing and format of Council programs. The Council, where larger congregations were now entitled to more than the previous two Congregational Representatives, began meeting every other month, rather than quarterly. The meetings did not include informational programs, but began with a light supper, which was followed by committee meetings, a business meeting and reports from the ministries which received financial support from IMS. In addition to changing the Council meeting schedule and the apportionment of CR's, the by-laws adopted in May also established the position of Council Moderator (beginning in 1989) and made the independent ministries actual members in IMS. Except for the change in fiscal year, which occurred in 1991, these by-laws continued to define the structure of IMS for 10 years.

The IMS Board at the beginning of 1988 consisted of John Jackson (President), Mickey Hallum, Karen Barnett (Secretary), Harold VanderVeen, Greg Bittner, Frederick Davis, Ruth Jurenko, C.A. Smith, Audrey Walker, Sherwood Weil, Dick Titus, Chuck Vedane, Buck Camp and John Herndon. The mid-year resignations of Jackson and Barnett caused Mickey Hallum to assume the Presidency and added Johanna Caruso and Don Wright to the Board. The year also saw Bob Loshuertos complete his eighth year as Executive Minister and his 25th year as an ordained Lutheran minister. Office manager/secretary Jeanette Johnson handed her secretarial duties over to Pat Passmore but remained as a four-hour-a-week bookkeeper. With financial records being computerized by mid-year, Jeanette found the task manageable in that time.

Two congregations -- Madison Christian Church and Southside Christian Church -- joined IMS during 1988, bringing the number of member congregations to 45. Several financial benefits fell to IMS this year: a very successful Auction (\$4300), first-time participation in the Combined Federal Campaign, and \$3700 received from the Wally Byam Caravan Club International -- the collection taken at the worship services held for the Airstream travel trailer owners who camped at a site off Airport Road for two weeks. Despite all of this, the financial situation was precarious all year, with the Board having to authorize the use of \$1300 in Special Funds to cover salaries and taxes in April. An end-of-year letter from the Finance Committee to member congregations requesting additional contributions had limited success, so IMS ended the year three months behind in its payments to the independent-but-affiliated ministries like HELPLine and HOPE Place.

After several years' efforts by Bob Loshuertos and the Humanitarian Services Committee, Huntsville Utilities established Project Share, making it easy for utilities customers to make a donation which could be used to pay the bill of an elderly or disabled individual. Meanwhile, the Emergency Fund distributed some \$12,000 in assistance

with rent and medication expenses. The Halloween Harvest of Food involved over 200 youth who collected food for the IMS Food Pantries, which together served about 175 families per month. Employees of the City of Huntsville also collected more than 2000 food items which were donated to the pantries.

IMS continued the tradition of offering professional development opportunities to area clergy. The September 1st Clergy Luncheon permitted 65 religious professionals to meet and hear the new Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham, while bi-monthly sessions of Ecumenical Dialogue attracted 27 clergy members from a broad range of denominations to hear various professors from the School of Theology at the University of the South. A September workshop, co-sponsored with seven other human services agencies, brought Alabama Department of Human Resources Commissioner Andrew Hornsby to speak before 70 attendees on "What Does It Mean To Be Poor In Madison County?" The fourth and last in a series of Cancer Workshops was also held at UAH, co-sponsored with 11 other agencies.

Several years earlier, the Huntsville Housing Authority had studied conditions in the Binford Court housing project and found many of the 200 units there grossly substandard. By mid-1988 the HHA had decided to tear down Binford Court and permit a private developer to build housing units for low-income families on the site. This decision prompted a lawsuit filed in federal court by the Binford Court tenants. In the settlement of this suit, IMS was named as the relocation agency, charged with expediting relocations of the affected families with minimal trauma. Under this agreement, semi-retired attorney Ed Hart and two other staff members worked for about four months, with IMS acting as the fiscal agent.

Sociologists who have studied trends in American philanthropic efforts and social concerns tell us that, sometime in the mid- to late 1980's, Americans began to swing away from a broad sense of caring about "everyone in my community" toward a narrower concern within "my congregation" or "people like me". These same sociologists tell us that, cycles being what they are, the pendulum is expected to begin to swing back toward a more socially sensitive era during the early '00's. (Is that how we are going to refer to the coming decade? It sure looks funny!) 1988 was probably the beginning of the pendulum's time furthest out on its arc. Through all the pendulum's extremes and its passages through the middle ground, IMS has continued to serve our community. God willing, we'll continue to do so through many future swings. ☺

Interfaith Mission Service in 1989 – Susan Smith’s Review of Our History

George Bush succeeds Ronald Reagan as President of the United States. Douglas Wilder is elected Governor of Virginia, becoming the first African-American elected governor in US history. The oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* runs aground in the Gulf of Alaska, causing a massive oil spill. The *Magellan* spacecraft is sent on its way to Venus, *Galileo* heads toward Jupiter and *Voyager 2* passes close to Neptune. Chinese troops in Beijing kill scores of protestors as they move into Tienanmen Square to quell pro- democracy demonstrations. Communism in Europe shows signs of crumbling and the wall that divided East and West Berlin since 1961 comes down. The drug AZT shows promise in slowing the progress of AIDS. In separate incidents, lone gunmen in California and Kentucky attack schoolchildren and co-workers before committing suicide. Hurricane Hugo wreaks death and destruction across the Caribbean and southern US. Baseball’s Oakland A’s, parent club of the Huntsville Stars, win the World Series in four straight games. And in the City of Huntsville, the City of Madison and Madison County, October 1989 is officially proclaimed “IMS Community Awareness Month”.

It was ten years ago, but change the names, and it could be this year’s news! Some of the same could be said of the IMS Board as well. Three of the 1989 Board officers (Dick Titus, Johanna Caruso and Peggy Shanahan) are serving on the Board again in 1999. Other 1989 Board members were Mickey Hallum, Sherrod Mallow, Edison Conner, Jim Hardy, Chuck Vedane, Harold VanderVeen, Frederick Douglas, C.A. Smith, Ruth Jurenko and Don Wright. Bob Loshuertos and Pat Passmore continued in their positions as Executive Minister and Secretary/Office Manager, and JoAnn Brumbelow joined the IMS staff as Bookkeeper.

The previous year’s By-laws revision had created the position of Moderator of the IMS Council, a position that was held from January through July by Greg Bittner, with Ted Leach filling out the year. The Council, composed of Congregational Representatives (CR’s) from each member congregation, now met five times a year, plus the Annual Dinner/Meeting, which was held at First Presbyterian Church again this year. A survey of CR’s indicated a preference for a consistent meeting place, rather than rotating among member congregations, so all but one of the Council Meetings was held at Holmes Street United Methodist Church. CR’s were expected to participate on an IMS committee, so the evenings’ schedules had committees meeting for 45 minutes before the Council business meeting began. The September Council meeting, however, was devoted to the showing of a new videotape presentation on IMS, “Twenty Years of Sharing Ministry”.

Congregational membership continued to grow with the addition of Southside Christian, Trinity Baptist and St. John the Baptist Catholic churches, but the closing of the Episcopal church in Madison created a loss as well. Meadow Hills Initiative became an IMS ministry, joining HELPLine, HOPE Place, Family Services Center and other organizations in receiving financial and volunteer support through IMS. The Ministries Committee of the Board spent much of 1989 refining its charter and establishing an action plan for IMS’ involvement in the community. As part of this effort, committee chair Chuck Vedane developed a four-part Sunday School program linking the beliefs of different faiths and denominations to cooperative efforts in the community. Toward the end of the year, an effort began to establish written covenants with member congregations and with the ministries.

Then as now, IMS provided volunteer and staff support to many other organizations. Board members and others represented IMS on the boards of Community Action Agency, Legal Services of North Alabama and Huntsville Association for Pastoral Care. Then as now, much of the time of the Executive Minister/Director was spent coordinating efforts with other community agencies. However, in mid-year the Board adjusted its expectations of how Bob Loshuertos spent his time, requesting more emphasis on communications and office administration and less on the development and support of ministries. Board members assumed some of the responsibility for representing IMS in the community, but Loshuertos remained the contact person for the group that eventually became the Mayor’s Homeless Advisory Council. Largely through the efforts of IMS, downtown congregations

established an agreement whereby two congregations on a rotating basis would open their fellowship halls on winter nights when the regular homeless shelters became full.

Because of these and other humanitarian efforts, Bob Loshuertos received the Brotherhood Award from the Huntsville-Decatur chapter of the National Conference for Christians and Jews in May 1989. During the same month he read a statement representing the Christian faith at the Alabama Holocaust Commemoration in Montgomery.

1989 was the second straight year of reduced financial support from congregations, so the budget of \$86,000 was a minimal increase over the previous year's. There was still a strong effort to channel as much money as possible to the ministries, but the year ended (as it had in 1988) without IMS having provided them their full allocation. In an attempt to monitor the budget and cash flow more closely, the Board did a mid-year updating of financial policies and attempted to simplify the financial reports they received.

In April the Annual Auction raised almost \$3000, selling everything including a kitchen sink. A grant from the Boeing Employees Good Neighbor Fund purchased a copying machine that enabled the IMS office to produce The Bridge in-house. Edison Conner coordinated the Halloween Harvest of Food, in which 280+ youth from 18 congregations collected more than 8000 food items. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and Huntsville City employees also collected food for the six IMS pantries.

A fund was also established to assist the victims of the November 15th tornado in southeast Huntsville. Coordinated with the local Red Cross and other relief agencies, the \$25,000 received from many sources was used when other types of financial assistance were not available. IMS also coordinated the fundraising effort for the Tornado Remembrance memorial at the corner of Whitesburg Drive and Airport Road. The Buchanan Fund, established when an insurance settlement was reached on behalf of a child severely injured in an automobile accident in 1983, provided almost \$10,000 of assistance to 18 families whose children had unusual medical needs and expenses.

In April IMS co-sponsored with ten other agencies the first in a series of well-attended Family Violence Seminars. Dr. Peggy Way of Vanderbilt Divinity School spoke at the annual Clergy Workshop in August, while speakers from the University of the South, Birmingham Southern College and the local community addressed the bi-monthly Ecumenical Dialogue.

It's always a challenge to find ways to "do more with less" in the way of financial resources. As the societal trend toward sponsoring more narrowly focused activities continued, IMS continued to serve the community in a broad variety of ways, sometimes in different ways from what we had in the past. Ten years later we are still finding new ways to serve and establishing new collaborative efforts to get the job(s) done. ☞