

Susan Smith's

Review of

Interfaith Mission Service

History

1990 - 1994

Interfaith Mission Service in 1990 – Susan Smith’s Review of Our History

George Bush is US President and Dan Quayle Vice President. The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against disabled persons. Forest fires ravage parts of California, while sections of Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania experience severe flooding. Space shuttles *Columbia*, *Discovery* and *Atlantis* complete successful scientific, military and satellite-deploying missions. The fight against illegal drug trafficking brings ousted Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega to the US to face criminal charges. Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland. East and West Germany are rejoined, forming a unified Germany for the first time since World War II. More than 40,000 people are killed by an earthquake in northern Iran. Black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela is freed after 27 years in prison in South Africa. Some 1500 Muslims are killed in a stampede in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, during the Hajj pilgrimage. Iraq seizes control of Kuwait, provoking President Bush into sending additional US troops to the Middle East.

Against this turbulent backdrop, 1990 at IMS seems like a calm contrast. Led by Council Moderator Ted Leach and Board members Ronnie Brewer, Johanna Caruso, Edison Conner, Harold Dowler, Carolyn Fair, Eileen Fedor, Jim Hardy, Chuck Jones, Patsy Rentz, Peggy Shanahan, Dick Titus, Harold VanderVeen, Chuck Vedane, and Ernie Wonders, IMS continued to employ Pat Passmore as Secretary and JoAnn Brumbelow as Bookkeeper, while Bob Loshuertos celebrated his tenth anniversary as Executive Minister.

Moderator Ted Leach convened the bi-monthly IMS Council meetings at First United Methodist Church. Committee meetings were no longer held on Council nights, allowing more time for Congregational Representatives to enjoy a program and conduct IMS business. A new covenant with member congregations was adopted in March, and Union Chapel Missionary Baptist and Highlands United Methodist churches and the Redstone Arsenal Bicentennial Chapel became IMS members during the year. “Ministries Handouts” were distributed at each Council meeting to make it easier for congregations to include news of IMS and the ministries in their congregational publications.

The Bridge was published six times during 1990, containing information about activities at IMS and the member ministries (HELPLine, HOPE Place and seven other agencies), along with articles introducing IMS Board members. The May 1990 issue included a profile of the custodian at Jones Valley Elementary School who proved himself a hero as the tornado destroyed the school building. The last three issues of the year featured reports by Bob Loshuertos on his study trip to Rome, Geneva and Jerusalem the previous spring.

A variety of topics were addressed at IMS-sponsored workshops during the year, ranging from “A Christian Approach to Peace and Justice in the Nuclear Age” to “Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence”. Some 200 people participated in an Interfaith Dialogue program at Covenant Presbyterian Church in February, while an ecumenical service was held in connection with the local Consultation On Church Union (COCU) workshop in September. Some 400 people also attended a service of remembrance on the first anniversary of the November 1989 tornado along Airport Road.

Working closely with the local Department of Human Resources office, a unique “Poverty Awareness Experience” was designed. Families participating in the program agreed to live for nine days as if they

had to rely on welfare payments and social service agencies for food, clothing and other essentials. They were expected to go through the process of applying for assistance at DHR, then were told how much money (of their own) they would have to spend for nine days. Participating families refrained from movies, premium TV channels, and the use of their microwave, icemaker and VCR. Only emergency medical or dental care would be obtained during this time.

1990 was another tough year financially for IMS. While congregations had pledged \$77,700 in general financial support for the year, actual receipts from congregations fell \$8500 short of that amount. Payments to the IMS ministries were consistently behind all year, with the total payments for the year falling \$8500 short of the budget. The Annual Auction was moved to Grace Lutheran Church, where some \$3400 was raised to support the ministries. Total expenditures for the year were \$127,800, including nearly \$17,000 in special funds for children's medical expenses, and the tornado rebuilding and memorial efforts. IMS also received a \$7800 United Way Venture Grant to fund a tutoring program at Phillips CME Church for children in the Council Court neighborhood.

In January 1990, IMS was named to coordinate Church World Service's local efforts in response to the November 1989 tornado. Early in the year, Bob Loshuertos was also elected Chair of Mayor Steve Hettinger's Homeless Advisory Council. He was also instrumental in convincing two religious congregations to open their buildings as "back-up shelters" in case freezing weather caused an overflow at The Salvation Army and Downtown Rescue Mission. IMS and HELPLine co-hosted a luncheon for church secretaries to help them help people who called their churches for financial assistance. Meanwhile the IMS food pantries served some 8300 people.

Does anyone want to donate funds to send the current IMS Executive Director on a study tour of Rome, Geneva and Jerusalem? 

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An international force led by the US uses military force to drive Iraq from its occupation of Kuwait. Eastern Airlines and Pan Am World Airways cease operations. President George Bush unveils “America 2000”, his plan to improve the quality of US education, while the US National Commission on Children recommends a national health-insurance plan to provide coverage for children and pregnant women. The Minnesota Twins, the New York Giants, the Pittsburgh Penguins, and the Chicago Bulls triumph in their respective sports, while *Dances With Wolves* garners the Academy Award for Best Picture. Terry Anderson, the last US hostage being held in Lebanon, is released. A powerful cyclone kills an estimated 125,000 persons and leaves millions homeless in Bangladesh. Boris Yeltsin becomes Russia’s first leader to be chosen directly by its people. Children’s book author Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss) dies.

The year of the mercifully brief Persian Gulf War was a year in which Interfaith Mission Service realized that the “good old days” of adequate funding from member religious congregations were probably gone forever. More and more congregations began providing direct funding to the ten IMS “ministries” (HELPLine, Hope Place, etc.) rather than funneling it through IMS. Thus began a process which, by 1998, recognized that these agencies and IMS were fellow community service organizations, but that any closer ties than that were strictly historic.

A strong effort, spearheaded by the IMS Communications Committee, was also made during the year to strengthen ties between IMS and its member congregations. Called the Interfaith Communication Network (ICN), this effort established “Cluster Groups” of three congregations each, to build relationships and promote the sharing of experiences and information. Great hopes were invested in this system. Because it required a great deal of information management, a volunteer Coordinator of Volunteers position was created, with Becky Malm agreeing in October to serve in this capacity for six months. Board members also made a concerted effort during the year to visit all of the IMS ministries and several of the member congregations to try to strengthen relationships.

Leading IMS through this eventful year were Executive Minister Bob Loshuertos and Board members Barbara Cady, Johnnie Clift, Edison Conner, Harold Dowler, Chuck Jones, Carl Malm, Karen Neir, Larry Pippins, Peggy Shanahan, Dick Titus, Chuck Vedane, Ernest Wonders and Susan Wood. To gain better attendance, Board meetings were moved from noon on the second Thursday at the IMS office to 5:00 PM on the third Tuesday at First Christian Church, with dinner being served during the meeting. In addition to the annual Board retreat in January, Board President, Harold Dowler, scheduled an additional retreat in June, saying that the Board needed planning time to “adjust to the new realities of the 1990’s”. An hour was also spent at the November Board meeting “dreaming” about what IMS could do. Suggestions ranged from holding a yearly interfaith retreat to writing an “IMS song”.

The IMS Council met bi-monthly at First United Methodist Church’s Wesley Center. Moderator Ted Leach moved from Huntsville mid-year, so Russell Bailey served as Moderator beginning in July. As the Cluster Groups were begun, attendees at the Council meetings were encouraged to sit with others in their Cluster Group. Council programs usually included information on the programs and needs of IMS and the ministries, as well as topics like “Youth Gang Activity in Huntsville/Madison County.”

The 1991 Annual Meeting and Dinner was held on January 28 at First United Methodist Church, with Dr. Steven Jacobs speaking on "Jewish-Christian Dialogue: The Scariest Thing of All." The first Community Service Awards were presented that year to Tommy Brown for working to establish the Huntsville Shuttle System, to Clinton Clay for many years as Director of Family Services Center, and to Jerry Galloway for his strong support of the IMS ministries. *The Bridge* was printed six times that year, with the March issue being sent to members of IMS congregations who were serving in the Persian Gulf, with a wish for their speedy return.

IMS had moved into the office space at 411-B Holmes Avenue in 1987. During most of 1991, the Mental Retardation Board leased two rooms and shared the phone system. As the year drew to a close, the Mental Retardation Board found other office space, and the American Diabetes Association began to occupy one room there in November.

Efforts to address issues presented by Huntsville's homeless population consumed much of Bob Loshuertos' time in 1991. The Mayor's Homeless Advisory Commission was established, with Loshuertos as its first Chair. IMS also organized a small group of churches to open their doors on a rotating basis when the regular shelters overflowed on cold nights. Discussion was also begun about IMS opening a homeless shelter. A special request was made to congregations to help raise \$3000 as local matching funding to establish New Futures, a program within the Harris Homes Foundation to assist homeless families with children.

In Spring 1991 nineteen members of the clergy joined Bob Loshuertos to begin a Chaplaincy Program for the Huntsville Police Department. A forum at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Madison began a discussion about emerging needs in that growing community, a process that eventually led to the creation of the Madison Area Resource Line (MARLIN). Efforts were intensified to complete the funding for a memorial to the individuals who died in the November 1989 tornado in southeast Huntsville. IMS also received an award for "outstanding service by a religious institution" from the State Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources.

When the Salvation Army moved to their Oakwood Avenue location, they opened the sixth IMS food pantry, fulfilling a need for such a pantry in the northwest part of the city. Since pantries frequently ran out of food to distribute, Board member Edison Conner organized a system in which specific congregations collected food for particular pantries, a system which functions well to this day. The Halloween Harvest of Food also collected nearly 6000 food items.

IMS worked with several other community agencies to provide a wide range of workshops and seminars. The Third Annual Family Violence Seminar drew some 160 persons to the Von Braun Civic Center in April, while the first annual Clergy Workshop addressed "Privileged Clergy Communication and the Law". In October, some 200 youth attended a Sunday evening session entitled "When AIDS Comes to Church," with religious leaders and adult lay members attending sessions the following day and evening. The Ecumenical Dialogue for clergy members transformed into Interfaith Dialogue, meeting bi-monthly and alternating presentations by local clergypersons with visits by Dr. Joe Monti from Sewanee, TN.

Filling gaps in services to homeless individuals, sponsoring a workshop on AIDS, seeking new sources of funding, encouraging the creation of new food pantries – it sounds like this decade is ending very much as it began. Wonder what the next year-decade-century-millennium will bring????

Interfaith Mission Service in 1992 – Susan Smith's Review of Our History

The US unemployment rate is over 7%. Trans World Airlines and Macy's Department Stores file for bankruptcy, and General Motors announces the largest annual loss in history by a US company. Looting and violence erupt after LA police officers are acquitted of all but one count in the beating of Rodney King last year. Johnny Carson retires after 30 years as host of *The Tonight Show*. Bill Clinton and Al Gore defeat incumbents George Bush and Dan Quayle in November elections. Astronauts aboard the space shuttle *Endeavour* correct the orbit of a wayward communications satellite, while NASA begins a search of the universe for signs of intelligent extraterrestrial life. Drought in southern Africa and earthquakes in Turkey and Egypt take tremendous tolls in human life. At the Winter Olympics in France, athletes from the recently dismantled Soviet Union lack a flag and a national anthem.

Despite the continuing collapse of communism in eastern Europe, much of the national and international news in 1992 was more distressing than hopeful. Here in Madison County, while the economy and other conditions created many unmet human needs, there were many collaborative efforts underway to meet those needs, and IMS was involved in most of them!

Board members steering IMS through 1992 included Jim Bell, Edison Conner, Johnnie Clift, Harold Dowler, Steve Jacobs, Karen Neir, Larry Pippins, Peggy Shanahan, Dick Titus, Chuck Vedane, David Wiens and Susan Wood. Russell Bailey was the Moderator of the IMS Council, which met bi-monthly at First Presbyterian Church, conducting the business of IMS and hearing programs on topics as varied as "Life in Madison County from a Black Perspective" and "To the Year 2000: Religious New Thought".

During most of 1992 the American Diabetes Association rented one room in the IMS office, sharing the phone system and other office equipment. Bob Loshuertos, in his eleventh year as Executive Minister, welcomed Pat Montague as Office Manager/Secretary, replacing Pat Passmore, who had resigned after four years in that position. After just a few months as Coordinator of Volunteers, Becky Malm found it necessary to resign, so Edison Conner took over the ten-hour-a-week position in May. JoAnn Brumbelow continued as Bookkeeper (a position from which she just resigned in December 1999.)

Membership in IMS grew during 1992 with the addition of All Saints Lutheran, St. Matthew's Episcopal and Holy Cross - Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox churches. The Huntsville stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints also joined IMS as a Member Religious Organization. Pathfinders withdrew from "IMS ministry" membership, but the Downtown Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army Soup Van were added to the list of agencies which could receive funds through IMS.

John Bush and Andy Wolfe co-chaired an IMS Long Range Task Force which, over the course of the year, developed a set of priorities to guide IMS' efforts for the next three to five years. Proposing a new "Statement of Mission", the task force urged a redefining of the relationship between IMS and member congregations and a strengthening of the connections among the congregations, as well. To this

end, the “cluster” structure, begun the previous year, was fully implemented, creating groupings of four diverse congregations who were encouraged to work on projects together.

The Long Range Task Force also encouraged IMS to increase outreach to the poor and homeless. All IMS activities were organized into a SEA plan, balancing efforts toward Service, Education and Action. Several of these efforts were food-related. The Food Pantry System was expanded to include 36 pantries and a set of operational guidelines were revised. In July, IMS publicized the need for volunteers to assist St. Bartley’s Primitive Baptist Church in providing a picnic for homeless individuals. The “One Person, One Vote, One Can” drive collected over 3000 food items at polling places during the August city elections. In October, some 260 youth from 17 congregations participated in the Autumn Food Festival, collecting nearly 8000 items. “Operation Full Plate” encouraged restaurants and bakeries to donate their surplus to feeding programs, while an article in the March/April Bridge tried to clarify the differences between the Food Pantry System, the Food Bank and Food Source.

Though Bob Loshuertos’ term as Chair of the Mayor’s Homeless Advisory Commission had ended, IMS remained active in homeless issues, including helping to raise the \$3000 local money necessary to obtain federal funding for the New Futures program. He also worked closely with the Huntsville Police Department to create a police chaplaincy program, and helped convince the local TV cable providers to offer VISN (now the Odyssey network) to their subscribers in the community.

In 1992 IMS sponsored the first local observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Worship services were held in various churches around the county on each of the eight nights between January 18 and the 25th. A total of nearly 900 people attended these services, with one couple attending all eight!

Just a few days later, the IMS Annual Dinner on January 27 was held at First Presbyterian Church, where some 135 attendees heard the Rev. Greg Bittner of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham speak on “Our Hope in Ages Past ... Our Hope Now??” The Rev. Frank Broyles and the late Don Dyer received the second annual Community Service Awards. The congregation of Faith Presbyterian Church was also honored for establishing a staff position of Minister of Church and Community, the position recently accepted by Frank Broyles.

The March 1992 Bridge invited city residents to the first monthly “One Huntsville” dinner at Britling’s Cafeteria (where the Huntsville Hospital Medical Mall is now). One Huntsville lasted for several months with no program, dues or official structure. The only requirement was that you pay for your own dinner and bring someone with you who was of another race.

Other events during 1992, sponsored in whole or in part by IMS, included the fourth annual Family Violence Seminar in April and the Clergy Workshop and Luncheon in August. It was decided in advance that the Annual Auction (which raised \$3000 under the chairmanship of Susan Frederick) would be discontinued in 1993 and replaced by an Interfaith Concert.

Now that we’re on this side of The Turn of The Millennium, it seems strange to learn that people were already speculating on Life in 2000 as early as 1992. I wish I could read the text of the Council program on religion in 2000. I wonder how much of it proved true?!☪

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Political turmoil continues in Czechoslovakia, Somalia, Nigeria and Burundi, while warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina agree in principle to a division of their nation into ethnic republics. Israel’s Prime Minister Rabin and PLO Chairman Arafat sign an historic accord on Palestinian self-rule. An earthquake kills nearly 10,000 people in central India. South Africa’s Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk are named winners of the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts in dismantling the apartheid system. Newly inaugurated US President Bill Clinton names his wife as chair of a Task Force on National Health Reform and Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the US Supreme Court. Pope John Paul II comes to the US to attend World Youth Day festivities. Federal law requires large companies to provide employees with unpaid leave for family and medical purposes. Researchers at a DC medical center successfully clone a human embryo, creating identical twins. Six persons are killed when a bomb explodes at the World Trade Center in New York City. The Waco, TX, compound of the Branch Davidians is destroyed by fire after a 51-day standoff with the FBI. One of the worst floods in US history strikes the Midwest, while a series of fires in dry southern California destroys more than 1000 homes. Alabama governor Guy Hunt resigns after being convicted of using campaign funds for his personal use.

It is 1993. The Rev. Bob Loshuertos is in his 13th year as IMS Executive Minister, with part-time assistance from Office Manager Pat Montague, Bookkeeper JoAnn Brumbelow and Volunteer Coordinator Edison Conner. Serving on the Board that year were Jim Bell, Johnnie Clift, Barbara Conrad, Harold Dowler, Susan Frederick, Terry Greer, Mona Hagyard, Doak Mansfield, Karen Neir, Jim Nipper, Larry Pippins, Susan Reynolds, Wendell Trotter, Peter Vial and David Wiens. Most Board meetings were held at First Christian Church, with each month’s agenda reflecting the IMS priorities established late in 1992: to develop and implement the Cluster Network; to evaluate IMS’ financial situation and reports; to strengthen relationships with the member Ministries; to refine IMS’ focus in accordance with the 1992 Long Range Report; and to increase participation in IMS through education of the member congregations and the community.

Russell Bailey served another year as Moderator of the IMS Council, which met bi-monthly at Trinity Presbyterian Church. Program topics ranged from “Bosnia - A Personal Religious Perspective” to “Government and Religion”, with “What Non-Muslims Should Know About Islam” drawing the largest audience. The Council welcomed Big Cove Presbyterian and First Cumberland Presbyterian churches into IMS membership, and accepted newly formed Hospice Cares as an IMS Member Ministry. The November Council meeting attracted fairly large attendance to join in a sharing, planning and organizing session for the future of IMS.

The Cluster Network created in 1991 was further refined, in 1993, with congregations being assigned to clusters based on geographic location. Much of Edison Conner’s effort was aimed at establishing the flow of communication through this network to encourage increased participation in IMS activities. IMS Board members also committed themselves to visiting at least one-third of the member congregations during the year.

At the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Breakfast sponsored by the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, IMS received recognition for “One Huntsville”, the no-dues, no-officers supper “club” which met monthly at a restaurant for conversation across racial and ethnic lines. While everyone agreed that the concept was wonderful and the Huntsville Times gave it good coverage, “One Huntsville” was unable to attract sufficient participation to sustain itself, so it ceased to meet in December 1993 after nearly two years.

Eight worship services at eight churches on eight consecutive nights drew a total of 1100 people to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 1993. At the IMS Annual Dinner on February 1st at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, some 235 attendees heard the Rev. Dr. John Claypool speak on “Life is Gift”. Malcolm Lindy, Jay Seabrook and St. Bartley Primitive Baptist Church received Community Service Awards at the dinner. A 25th Anniversary Celebration and Interfaith Concert on Valentine’s Day involved 250 people, making and enjoying “a joyful noise”.

A seminar entitled “Breaking the Cycle of Violence ... reclaiming our community” was held in April, the last of a five-year series on domestic violence. A mini-workshop was held the same month, training Sunday School and youth leaders to react to child abuse. In August a clergy workshop entitled “Racism in My Backyard?” was linked to the Annual Clergy Luncheon, establishing a format that has lasted to this day.

In September 1993 HELPLine announced that it would no longer be screening and referring people for food assistance as of January 1, 1994, so IMS began to make plans to fill this gap. Edison Conner began recruiting volunteers to answer the FOODLine phone, and the Boeing Employees Good Neighbor Fund contributed money to purchase the needed computer and other equipment. FOODLine and the food pantries received some of the proceeds of the CROP Walk in October, which raised \$17,000 and six truckloads of food when 400 walkers participated in a six-mile walk through southeast Huntsville. The Autumn Harvest of Food and Skate Party also saw 200 youth from 10 congregations collect 5000 food items for the pantries and HOPE Place.

During 1993 IMS also helped several downtown churches set up Churches United for People (CUP) to provide emergency financial assistance, just as MARLIN, established the previous year, did in Madison.

In mid-year the Committee of Forty was established, with the stated goal of raising \$10,000 for IMS in the next year, a goal they nearly reached. Interfaith Sabbath in October asked congregations to hold a special offering for IMS, an effort which netted about \$800. The fact that many congregations ran behind on their financial commitments meant that payments from IMS to the Member Ministries ran far behind all year, just catching up at year’s end, thanks to the efforts of the Committee of Forty. In fact, one major contributing congregation made the decision mid-year to begin sending its funding for HELPLine, HOPE Place, etc., directly to those agencies, rather than through IMS. The IMS Ministries Committee continued to conduct evaluations of the ministries, highlighting new aspects of their programs and their needs.

As this “review of our history” moves closer to the present day, we can clearly see the roots of both the problems and the programs of IMS in 2000. One of my high school history teachers always told our class that any nation (or other entity) that doesn’t know its history is doomed to repeat itself. May we learn from our past, avoiding repeats of situations that did not work well, giving ideas that sound worthy another try, and celebrating the many good ideas that have guided IMS through the years. ☞

Interfaith Mission Service in 1994 – Susan Smith’s Review of Our History

A powerful earthquake rocks Los Angeles. A special prosecutor is named to investigate President and Mrs. Clinton’s financial dealings in “the Whitewater affair”. The Republican party captures control of both houses of Congress for the first time in 40 years. The Winter Olympics are held in Lillehammer, Norway. NATO forces establish a cease-fire in war-torn Bosnia, while US troops return from a 15-month peacekeeping mission in Somalia. Nelson Mandela is elected President in South Africa’s first all-race elections. Jordan’s King Hussein and Israel’s Prime Minister Rabin sign a declaration ending the 46-year-old state of war between their countries. A strike by major league baseball players brought the season to a premature end, while another contract dispute delays the beginning of the National Hockey League season. O.J. Simpson is arrested on charges of murdering his former wife and a male friend of hers. Richard Nixon and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis both die in New York City.

1994 saw some areas of the world taking steps toward peace, while others struggled with the ravages of war. IMS’ triumphs and struggles were less dramatic, but significant nonetheless. Since HELPLine had announced in late 1993 that they would no longer be able to handle calls for food assistance, IMS established FOODLine, which began screening such calls and making referrals to church-based pantries on February 1. Thanks to Coordinator of Volunteers Edison Conner and a very small band of phone-answering volunteers, some 9500 adults and children received emergency food assistance during the year. The FOODLine system struggled with inadequate computer capability until a grant from the Boeing Employees’ Good Neighbor Fund came to the rescue.

In August, IMS became a “supporting member” of First Call, a program developed by the Madison County Youth Gang and Violence Task Force to keep young people who had committed a first, minor offense out of the juvenile justice system. The IMS Council approved making First Call an IMS ministry, and soon most of the administration of the program and recruitment of First Call mentors moved to IMS.

Under an agreement reached in late 1994 with the Alabama regional office of the National Conference for Christians and Jews, IMS began providing assistance with NCCJ’s local activities. It was out of this agreement that the Interfaith Dialogue program, sponsored by IMS, NCCJ and First United Methodist Church, and many other joint efforts would grow.

Because of IMS’ involvement in relief efforts following the 1989 tornado, Church World Service asked Executive Director Bob Loshuertos to become their north Alabama coordinator for emergency disaster response. He also participated on the City of Huntsville’s Human Rights Commission “Think Tank”, the group which proposed the structure of the current-day Human Relations Commission. He also helped a group of clergy from the Gurley area begin working together, an effort that soon yielded a FOODLine pantry to serve area residents.

A list of IMS activities during 1994 reflects the broad range of interests and concerns held by member religious organizations:

- The third annual local observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity drew a total of 685 attendees to worship services on eight consecutive nights in mid-January.
- The January 31st Annual Dinner speaker ruffled some feathers while talking about “The Significance of the New Religious Right”. Community Service Awards were presented to the Rev. Margaret Hanson, Chester “Mac” McCutcheon and Church Women United.
- The second annual “Make A Joyful Noise” Concert drew musicians from six congregations and an audience of 300 to Holy Spirit Catholic Church on February 13.
- In March, a second “The Courage to Act” workshop helped to educate religious leaders about child abuse.
- The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Haugk, founder of Stephen Ministries, addressed a dinner meeting on April 17, followed by a workshop entitled “Antagonism in the Church” on the following day. The next week, IMS and Campus Ministry Association co-sponsored the Huntsville Study Forum’s presentation on “Recognizing Evil Before It Shows Itself: Learning from the Theological Conflicts in the Shadow of Hitler”.

- A May teleconference, co-sponsored with several churches and other agencies, on sexual misconduct by congregation leaders and a similar event in October on violence in the media drew disappointingly small attendance.
- In contrast, attendance was good at the Clergy Workshop and Luncheon in August, when two theologians spoke about caring for families in congregations and for pastors' own families.
- The CROP Walk in October saw 400 youth and adults walk a five-mile route through southeast Huntsville to raise \$17,000 for local, national and international programs fighting hunger.
- The November Youth Harvest of Food collection of 3000 food items was celebrated with a skating party afterwards.

IMS finances continued to be strained during 1994. Because some member congregations failed to meet their pledges of support to IMS, the paid working hours of the Office Manager and Coordinator of Volunteers were cut, and Bob Loshuertos' planned sabbatical was postponed. Payments to the IMS-affiliated "ministries" such as LIFT Housing and HOPE Place were nearly 30% behind at year's end. As these agencies became more frustrated with the undependable support arriving through IMS, more and more congregations began providing their support to these agencies directly. In fact, as early as December 1994, an ad hoc "Futures Committee" suggested changing the IMS relationship with these ministries from one of "pass-through" funding to one of validating the services and needs of the agencies, as a service to the congregations.

To try to offset the declining trend in financial support from member congregations, the Communications Committee visited ¼ of the congregations in the last half of 1994, and the Board directed Loshuertos to concentrate more of his time on developing effective Congregational Representatives (CRs). However, as Edison Conner's focus was shifted to supporting the FOODLine volunteers, the Cluster Network of congregations, created in 1991, crumbled.

The Board which steered IMS through these days was initially composed of John Bush, Susan Frederick, Mona Hagyard, Marsha Latham, Crystal Ledbetter, Karen Neir, Dick Titus, Wendell Trotter, Francoise Wackenhut, Vernon Huguley, Jim Nipper and Peter Vial. Johanna Caruso, Ray Crum and Wendell Davis joined the Board mid-year when Huguley, Nipper and Vial resigned. Russell Bailey served a fourth year as Council Moderator. The Board and Council began meeting at 5:00 and 7:00 on the same nights at the same location, a pattern that continued until the Council was dissolved in 1998. Much of the Board's energy was focused on implementing the revised Long Range Plan and Mission Statement that came out of ad hoc committees during the year. Revisions of the Bylaws changed the fiscal year and Board members' terms to April 1 through March 31. The Council met in odd-numbered months, combining informative programs with business meetings.

As all the previous ones have done, the Mission Statement adopted in 1994 reassures us that IMS' basic purpose has held steady and permitted a variety of responses to a broad range of community needs. In 2000, as in 1994:

Interfaith Mission Service
is interdenominational and interfaith in nature,
serving in God's name by:

- bringing together the religious community in areas of service
 - promoting inter-religious understanding, and
- demonstrating that an enlightened, empowered, cooperative religious community can help address the needs of the area.