the Story of Good News

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Charles W. and Margaret Keysor
the Story of Good News

a recollection by
Charles W. Keysor,
founder of the Good News movement

Charles and Marge leaving the post office with the day's mail.
It began in late 1965 at a business lunch.

I had already graduated from Garrett Theological Seminary and been ordained an Elder of The Methodist Church. I was serving as pastor of the 320 member Grace Methodist Church in Elgin, Illinois, west of Chicago.

My luncheon was with James Wall, editor of the Methodist ministers’ magazine, New Christian Advocate (now he is editor of Christian Century). Our conversation turned toward the evangelical wing of Methodism. Knowing this was my orientation, he asked, “Why don’t you write an article for us describing the central beliefs and convictions of this part of our church?”

His invitation led to the writing and publication of “Methodism’s Silent Minority” in the July 14, 1966, issue of New Christian Advocate.

I identified and commented briefly upon several of the mainstream faith convictions shared by all who stand in the tradition of historic Christianity: (1) a high view of the inspiration and reliability of Holy Scripture, (2) the virgin birth of Christ, (3) the substitutionary atonement of Christ, (4) the physical resurrection of Christ, and (5) the return of Christ.

These, of course, are not uniquely Methodist doctrines. Because the Bible plainly teaches them, they are shared (with some differing interpretations) by all who regard the Bible as the primary source of authority.

Methodism, at its strongest, has always operated with these great Bible truths at its foundation... along with distinctives such as sanctification, witness of the Spirit, and works as the fruit of authentic faith.

In response to this article I received over 200 letters and phone calls, mostly from pastors. Two themes surfaced over and over again: (1) “I thought I was the only one left in our church who believes these things,” and (2) “I feel so alone — so cut off from the leadership and organization of my church!”

A number also commented, “Why can’t our denomination have one magazine which publishes articles like this? Those of us who are conservative need a forum for our views. All the official Methodist publications have a different orientation, both theologically and politically. We feel excluded.”

I began to ponder this. Why, indeed, should a denomination which began with the Bible-evangelistic thrust of the Wesleys and Francis Asbury be without a voice for orthodoxy? Surely God must not desire this. Surely He cannot be pleased to see the apostolic faith being smothered by humanism and churchianity!

Some sobering realities came to mind also. To begin a magazine takes money, staff, time. I knew this well, for my profession had been magazine-making. As a graduate of Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, I had worked as an associate editor for Agricultural Advertising and Research, and as managing editor of The Kiwanis Magazine, Together Magazine, and the David C. Cook Publishing Company. I had written many articles for other magazines. And I had worked as a
public relations account executive with J. Walter Thompson Company, the world’s largest advertising agency. So the magazine business was familiar turf.

In fact, I had recently turned my back on it to follow God’s calling into the Methodist pastoral ministry. This happened after my conversion, at age 35, during a Billy Graham crusade.

Lord, magazine editing is my OLD life! I thought. This is what You called me out of. So could it be that now You want me to get back into journalism? It doesn’t make sense. . . .

I prayed. I leafed through the stack of letters resulting from the New Christian Advocate article, and I talked by phone with a number of those who had written. Steadily the idea grew stronger of a magazine to be a “forum for Scriptural Christianity” for “Methodism’s Silent Minority.”

After a couple of weeks I arrived at this conclusion: if this really is the Lord’s will, then He will overcome the many obstacles. But the odds against starting a new magazine are so great that if this is just my idea, it won’t get off the ground. I’ll see what He allows to happen. . . .

By then a little money had started coming in. I talked about this with an attorney in my congregation, John Juergensmeyer. He advised forming a not-for-profit Illinois corporation. Soon this ball was rolling and we incorporated as “The Forum for Scriptural Christianity, Inc.”

Next I talked to a job printer in my congregation, George Stevens. He offered to print the magazine at cost. It seemed as if the obstacles were beginning to melt away, so I began thinking about what sort of content might be appropriate.

Bishop Gerald Kennedy was speaking in nearby Chicago. At that time he was the most well-known Methodist bishop, having been featured on the cover of Time Magazine. I went to hear him, and found substantiation for rumors that he had some evangelical leanings.
I talked with him after the meeting. I told him about the emerging dream for a new evangelical Methodist magazine and he was very encouraging. He offered to write an article for the first issue and I quickly accepted.

From various contacts I secured the names of 6,300 Methodists likely to stand for Scriptural Christianity.

Willard Hardin, a commercial artist with whom I had worked formerly, came on board as freelance art director. He was given responsibility for establishing the new magazine’s appearance — using as few dollars as possible. I also asked him to design a logotype, or emblem, that would visually convey the great redemptive cornerstone of our Biblical, Wesleyan heritage: the cross of Jesus Christ, through which people can experience new and eternal life.

The artist offered several suggestions, and I selected the now-familiar Good News emblem consisting of a fingerprint with superimposed cross. The finger-print symbolizes our humanity and the overprinted cross suggests that Christ’s redeeming sacrifice rescues people to become what God created them to be in this world and the next.

More articles were received in response to requests I had made by mail and phone. Correspondence was increasing and my wife, Margaret, graciously undertook all the clerical work — in addition to being first lady of the parsonage and the mother of our five children, ages 17 to eight.

At breakfast one day we were talking about the new magazine. “What are you going to call it?” she asked.

“I don’t know yet, but it will surely be good news when I get all the details wrapped up.”

“Why don’t you call it Good News?” she replied. “That’s the heart of the Gospel, and I’m sure having an evangelical magazine will be good news to lots of Methodists.”
So IT found a name.

During March 1967, the magazine was run off in George’s small print shop. On several evenings the kids from our Grace Church youth group put together the various “signatures,” or sections, to assemble the finished magazine.

Marge had typed the 6,300 names on labels. When the magazines had been inserted into carrier envelopes (again with the help of our church kids), I took volume one number one of Good News magazine to the Elgin Post Office.

It was just before Easter, and with a prayer we delivered the loaded sacks, trusting that God would somehow use our efforts toward a spiritual resurrection among Methodists.

Soon began the endlessly-fascinating job of reading the incoming mail. Reactions to the first issue ran from one extreme to the other.

“Your magazine is JUNK!,” wrote O.C. Brown of Auburn, Alabama.

“Please mail me 50 copies,” wrote Mrs. Doris Beals of Jefferson, Ohio.

“A mighty fine beginning — congratulations!” wrote Carl F.H. Henry, editor of the prestigious Christianity Today.

By God’s grace, a few dollars were left after we had paid all the costs of printing and mailing out the first issue. Even as I began preparing a second issue, we realized in a new way how everything depends very literally upon God’s gracious providence.

“Lord,” we prayed, “if You want Good News to continue, You’ll have to send the money. If not, then please shut off the contributions. Either way, Your will be done!”

A businessman in my congregation, Bob Kramka, volunteered to keep our financial records. And every day we visited the Good News postal box (#421) where in a very practical way, the Lord made His will known to us.

Always, in those genesis days of Good News, we went ahead
trusting that the money would come as needed. Sometimes we went to press with only half the cash needed to pay the printer’s bill. But after praying and talking with other friends, the decision was always right on! Miraculously, enough money always arrived — just barely!

We soon discovered what has since proved a pattern for Good News: most contributions have been $5, $10, and $20. What money-raising experts call “large” gifts have been very rare. It has been amusing that some critics have claimed Good News is financed by wealthy oil tycoons. Unfortunately, we haven’t been able to find them yet! However, it is probably healthier for a voluntary movement to be financed by many smaller gifts, showing wide popular support.

Illinois corporation law required a board of directors. So I chose the 12 original directors from among the 200 who had written in response to the New Christian Advocate article. These directors assembled in Elgin for the first Good News Board meeting, May 8-9, 1967.

It was a thrill to meet each one — to feel immediately the “click” sparked by the Holy Spirit because we were brothers in Christ. This experience of soul-unity has since been repeated many hundred times as I have traveled among Good News people in 56 annual conferences for the past 14 years. “The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.” In that blessed faith-unity, Good News people, down through the years, have experienced a precious oneness of spirit in Christ. We covet this unity for the entire denomination.

Of those original directors who attended the very first meeting, two serve today on the Good News board. They are Rev. Mike Walker, pastor, Pleasant Mound UM Church, Dallas, Texas, and Rev. Dale Bittering, pastor, St. Andrews UM Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee. The first board chairman, Rev. Philip E. Worth, pastor, First UM Church,
Collingswood, New Jersey, rotated off the board after serving two terms.

An important policy statement was adopted at that historic first meeting:

1. Good News is designed to create a fellowship in which evangelical Methodist thought and action can flourish. We pray that Good News will contribute to the spread of Scriptural Christianity throughout the church.

2. Scriptural Christianity, as we understand it, is the Christian life of faith as proclaimed in and defined by Holy Scripture.

3. We believe that the whole Bible is God’s eternal, un-failing truth. Some portions of this truth are more important than others (for example, Isaiah 53 towers above Esther). But everything in Scripture has sacred significance. A thing is not true because it happens to be included in the Bible; we believe it is in the Bible because the thing itself is true. We believe

Reporting on plans for the 1977 Convo, which he chaired, is Steve Harper, now a seminary professor. Then he was a pastor in Texas and Good News board member.

Treasurer Dale Kincaid inspects Good News annex, built by our Wilmore landlord in 1977. These two buildings house all Good News operations, with warehouse space located nearby.
that God has expressed Scriptural truth through human personality, by the agency of God’s Holy Spirit.

Perverted orthodoxy limits inspiration to the King James Version, as though God has somehow lowered it from heaven on a string. Another unfortunate mutation is the idea of mechanical dictation: that human beings were nothing more than stenographers, recording mechanically every jot and tittle that was dictated from above. We shun these mistaken views of inspiration. Instead, we regard inspiration as a dynamic, continuing activity of the Holy Spirit.

4. Love for Christ and His Church compels us to seek a revitalization of Scriptural Christianity within The Methodist Church. Everything we do in Good News must be aimed at strengthening, not dividing, The Methodist Church.

5. We shall not be afraid to seek honest insights into

Editorials featured in each issue of the magazine have provided Good News readers and the church at large with a viewpoint not otherwise being expressed nationally.

Women’s Task Force of Good News meets to prepare Mid-East study course as alternative for evangelicals. The speaker is Dr. Victor Hamilton, technical advisor on this project of Good News.
our failures as effective servants and witnesses of Christ.

6. We seek to be a responsible voice, within the church, for evangelical laymen and pastors.

7. We shall speak plainly and in love, seeking always the highest professional standards as a means of furthering the growth of Scriptural Christianity within The Methodist Church.

1968 was a historic year. Good News held its second annual meeting in Dallas, Texas, concurrent with the General Conference which consumated the merger between Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist denominations. Thus, Good News was in the delivery room, so to speak, when the United Methodist Church was born.

Two memories linger.

Some of us sat in the observer galleries, watching the debate over whether or not to abolish the church’s historic standards prohibiting use of tobacco and beverage alcohol by ordained clergy. Sitting close to us was a noisy group of young men. They seemed to have drifted up out of the counter-culture; their appearance, their open disdain for the church, and their language all reflected the then-prevalent hippie protest mentality. They cheered any speaker who favored the right of preachers to smoke and drink. They jeered speakers upholding traditional standards.

I can still recall my bewilderment at learning these were students from the Methodist seminary in Dallas! Just as amazing—the view they championed

This is the first issue of Good News magazine. Although covers have evolved visually since vol. 1 no. 1, the distinctive typography has remained “conservative-contemporary,” seeking to produce a quality but not a lavish appearance on a very low budget. Emphasis has remained on reading material because the magazine’s purpose is to inform and challenge readers to think and act.
was favored by a majority of General Conference delegates. This was "letting the world set the agenda," a kind of an ecclesiastical hedonism that can be seen today in "liberationism," ideological heir to New Leftism of the late 1960s.

Yet another image remains from 1968. One day as we were approaching the General Conference visitors' gallery, I noticed a large, angry-looking man. He was a clergyman, apparently; he wore a clerical collar and shirt. He paced to and fro carrying a sign: Prepare to Meet Thy Change!

God, it seemed, had been superceded! The Transcendent One had been set aside in favor of an ongoing process of societal evolution—and revolution. This protestor's angry attitude, and the deeper meaning of his placard, all exemplified a powerful undercurrent flowing in this historic General Conference. The influence of Herbert Marcuse, Harvey Cox, Saul Alinksy, et. al., sowed at Dallas in 1968, produced a bitter harvest of secularism. This would dominate the General Conferences of 1970 in St. Louis, 1972 in Atlanta, 1976 in Portland, and 1980 in Indianapolis.

By 1976, New Leftism had undergone a quiet evolution. Given a bath, a haircut, a briefcase, a desk in denominational headquarters, and a plentiful supply of church dollars, radical secularism became highly institutionalized within the UM Church. Instead of being angry protestors seated in the galleries of General Conference, by 1976 the institutionalized New Left dominated not only General Conference but also the epis-
copacy, annual conference power structures, and our denominational boards and agencies.

More than any of us then realized, the 1968 General Conference was a portent of things to come. We left Dallas with deeper knowledge of the labyrinthian ecclesiastical power complex which determines and controls denominational policies touching every local church. Our awareness of a dominant UM power-elite was to be reinforced in coming years, as Good News "leaned against the consensus," in Francis Schaeffer's phrase, of the prevailing ecumenical liberalism.

Renewal Groups Link Up

Soon after Good News started, we began receiving letters asking permission to organize regional groups sympathetic with Good News. We have encouraged this. I believe such groups are one very valuable by-product of the Good News movement. The uniting of like-minded evangelicals is vitally important as a long range strategy for renewal of the church. Liberalism had gained full domination of official Methodism by 1924. Since then, conservatives have been excluded increasingly from our denominational seminaries, our colleges, our publications, our curriculum, our church programs, our church agencies, and our episcopate. Beyond filling the pews and writing checks to finance the liberal establishment, conservatives seem to have little place. (Several years ago, a man with some evangelical leanings was being mentioned as a possible candidate for bishop. When he met with a delegation of jurisdictional delegates a pointed question was asked: "Are you a part of Good News? We don't want any of them!")

Forthright evangelicals became scarcer in larger pulpits and district superintendencies as well as national boards and agencies of the church. Regarding institutional conformity as a prime virtue, the church institution often rewards subservience with advancement. Thus the "system" has effectively excluded from significant decision-making positions most people who hold views that differ from accepted norms—especially those who dare to exhibit much independence.

So it was that by 1969, Methodist evangelicals had existed for decades as second class citizens, riding in the rear of the denomination bus. The irony was that once Methodism had been totally evangelical! But this fabric of orthodoxy had been torn to shreds. Starting to knit it back together has been an important work for Good News.

A man who sensed this early and invested himself in formation and cultivation of these "renewal groups" across the country was Rev. Robert M. Neely, Eastern Pennsylvania. Later, national leadership in renewal groups was exercised by Rev. and Mrs. John Sterling, Kansas West.

By our third annual meeting in 1969, people had begun urging
us to sponsor a national Good News meeting. This seemed far beyond our capacity as a small, unofficial volunteer group with limited national recognition and no funding by our church. But we prayed about it—always a dangerous thing to do! As a result, the directors asked Rev. Mike Walker to explore the possibilities for a national Good News meeting.

**Convocations Challenge UMs**

The result was “The Convocation of United Methodists for Evangelical Christianity,” held Aug. 26-29, 1970, at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, Texas. A prominent layman, Dr. Bob Mayfield, served as chairman. We were astonished and overjoyed to find 1,600 other United Methodists! The Holy Spirit drew us together in a remarkable experience of love and unity, one of the Good News mountain top experiences.

Today, there are so many evangelical meetings they are becoming almost routine. Not so for United Methodists back in 1970. It had been decades since a group of mainline Methodists had come together sharing Biblical convictions about heaven and hell... the Book, the Blood, and the Spirit. They came at their own expense from over 30 states to consider “The Crisis in the Church.”

On the opening night, I was seated on the platform waiting to speak. Chairman Bob leaned over and whispered, “Chuck, we forgot to plan for prayer meetings!” Bob confessed this oversight to the good natured crowd. Then he urged people wanting a prayer meeting to hang a towel over the outside doorknob of their rooms.

“Wherever you see a towel,” said Bob, “you’ll know some brothers and sisters are inside praying.”

Each evening you could see towels hanging from doorknobs up and down every hotel corridor. To open the door was to enter heaven’s anteroom.

Since 1970, convocations have become a vital part of Good News.

In 1971 we met in Cincinnati. In 1972 it was St. Louis. In 1973, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Louisville, Kentucky was 1974. Lake Junaluska again in 1975. In 1976 we held one regional convocation in each of the five regions, or UM jurisdictions, across the continent. The 1977 convocation location was Anderson, Indiana, and 1978 saw two regional convocations in Dover, Delaware, and Fayetteville, Arkansas. 1979 was Ashland, Ohio, 1980 Lake Junaluska, and 1981 is scheduled for Grove City, Pennsylvania.

Many devoted people have labored and sacrificed to make all these convocations possible. Perhaps the greatest responsibility has been shouldered by Rev. Bob Neely, Rev. Mike Walker, and Helen Rhea Coppedge, longtime leader of our Convocation Task Force.

Good News convocations have provided a national platform for addressing some of the major issues facing our church—issues

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not usually mentioned (or even admitted) in denominational meetings. The classic Good News rationale for working within the church was declared powerfully by Board Chairman Rev. Dr. Les Woodson, who spoke at the 1971 convo on the memorable theme, "Leucocytes in the Body of Christ."

In 1975, Rev. Dr. Ed Robb, Northwest Texas, spoke prophetically about the crisis in our UM seminaries. Institutional apologists fumed and fussed, but this message led to formation by the Ed Robb Evangelistic Association of A Fund for Theological Education. AFTE helps promising young evangelical scholars earn top academic degrees and thus qualify to teach, in United Methodist seminaries—where evangelical influence is weak or nonexistent. AFTE is independent from Good News, but it enjoys the support of many Good News people.

Convocations have been the occasion for many meetings of Good News committees and task forces. The most well publicized was a meeting of our Evangelical Missions Council [EMC] Task Force before the 1978 Convocation in Fayetteville, Arkansas. EMC Chairman Rev. Dr. Paul Morell, former board chairman, called publicly for the resignation of the entire UM Women's Division staff because of the current study book which extolled Marxism in China. (The Good News Board later pulled back from this position.)

Evangelical Missions Council Begins

The 1973 Convocation at Lake Junaluska marked the beginning of our focused emphasis on world missions. Rev. Dr. David Seamands, Kentucky, a Good News director and former missionary to India, told this convocation about a deep and growing concern over world missions shared by many United Methodists, including some not sympathetic with Good News. Our denomination's missionary force was shrinking alarmingly, he explained. It had a "lopsided" emphasis on social reform, with little or no emphasis on faith, eternity, conversion, or the establishing or nurturing of congregations.

Speaking officially for the Good News Board of Directors, David Seamands called for a churchwide "consortium" to discuss the direction and nature of our denomination's world missions emphasis. This took place Feb. 6-8, 1974, at the Lake Sharon Assembly near Dallas, Texas.

Needed: Ancient copies of Good News

Do you have any back issues of Good News magazine from the years 1967 to 1971? If you do—and if you can part with them—Good News needs issues from these years for our permanent records. Please send these magazines to Good News, 308 East Main Street, Wilmore, Kentucky 40390. Thank you!
Seventy-two people came from 23 states. They voted to establish an independent “Evangelical Missions Council” and authorized its executive committee to “communicate and negotiate with appropriate leaders at various levels of the church, to establish a clear, trustworthy and guaranteed channel for evangelical missions WITHIN the World Division of the Board of Global Ministries.” The key idea was “clear channel.” This meant evangelicals could send, to the fields, dollars and missionary candidates who support their concept of missions, with full blessing of the denominational mission’s board and staff. This seemed only fair, since the church had boasted of its “pluralism” of many differing viewpoints.

This goal was pursued in a number of meetings involving EMC leaders and top board and staff members of BOGM. “As a result of these consultations,” David Seamands recalls, “we learned that the unfortunate gulf separating us from the BOGM policymakers was wide and deep. In 1975 both sides agreed that further meetings would be fruitless. So we had gone a full circle, and were back to square one.”

BOGM leadership seemed intent on replacing the historic concept of missions. In its place, board and staff put “liberation theology,” which stresses achievement of political, economic, educational, and social change with no discernible spiritual dimension (except as individual missionaries and overseas church leaders may inject them). This official view can be seen in any issue of New World Outlook, BOGM’s official magazine and response, published for United Methodist Women by BOGM.

Meanwhile, Good News was discovering at the local church level an extensive sub rosa network of flourishing missions concern and activity. It operates quietly, sending money and church members who are missionary candidates to independent sending agencies which uphold the historic Christian faith. OMS International, World Gospel Mission, Wycliffe Bible Translators are three prominent examples. More and more United Methodists had become disillusioned by secular emphases and sloppy administrative procedures of their denomination’s missions board. So they shifted their loyalty and support to independent sending agencies, which more closely reflect their ideas of what missions ought to be. Intense pressures from the denominational hierarchy have failed to check this outflow of money into independent missions—a tide set in motion and accelerated by the board’s own humanistic reinterpretation of missions, and its blind disregard of its own constituency.

Phase I of EMC was negotiation. Phase II shifted to stimulating world missions concern in local churches. EMC and Good News both realized this need so EMC became a Good News task force in 1976. To put wheels under the vision of ministry to
local churches, we added to the Good News staff Rev. Virgil Maybray, an experienced, mission-minded pastor from Western Pennsylvania. Most of his time is spent traveling. He consults with local churches (at their request) about starting or expanding their missionary programs. He participates in mission conferences almost every week.

Since 1976, Virgil has worked in over 300 UM churches in 31 states. As a result, an estimated $1,000,000 has been channeled through the UM Board of Global Ministries, mostly for Advance Specials. (Good News has compiled a comprehensive list of these and of missionaries desiring to be identified by us. We mail this information free to pastors and local church missions leaders.) In addition, much money has also been raised by Good News efforts to support United Methodists who are serving with other boards. And when United Methodists with a call to become missionaries fail in attempts to find appointment through the UM missions board, Good News tries to help them find an open door elsewhere.

Our UM church is strongly ecumenical. We show this by our support of World and National Council of Churches, plus countless caucuses, both secular and ecumenical. This evident ecumenicity provides strong precedent for evangelicals to support missionaries who are not exclusively United Methodist. We are glad that real United Methodists do not regard the Kingdom’s limits as our own denominational borders.

What of the future in UM missions?

Tragically, our denomination’s missionary force continues to decline. Certain BOGM staff members have privately predicted the total will drop to 300 by 1985. It is quite possible that eventually there will be no official UM missionary effort—in the evangelical sense. Yet there is zeal for Christ's Great Commission within many local congregations. We know of 25 independent, lay-oriented mission programs set up in local UM churches. These operate with no relationship to the denominational missions program. To fan that missionary flame—possibly even to focus it as a unified diaspora effort—could well become the future of Good News mission activity.

Several overseas bishops have sought Good News assistance. And as this article is written, Rev. Maybray has just returned from a four week trip visiting UM missions and missionaries in Brazil.

"The fields are ripe for harvest," he told me upon his return a few days ago. "Opportunities and needs for missionaries proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ have never been greater." Good News will not surrender missions to a secular, political emphasis which now dominates our Board of Global Ministries.

Staying in the Black . . .

What water is to a ship, money is to any Christian movement. Without water, a ship can’t float.
And without money, Good News could not provide the services desired by people across our church. For example, it costs around $8,000 to print and mail each issue of the magazine. Monthly postage/shipping charges (other than the magazine) run at least $1,000. So does the telephone, which is a vital communication link connecting the Good News constituency across North America.

Good News, unlike other caucuses and UM special interest groups, has never received a penny of subsidy or assistance of any sort from our denomination. Thus God has provided a vital independence and this is necessary for any group that speaks to the church prophetically.

We have invited United Methodists to invest voluntarily in the evangelical cause. The results are shown on the accompanying chart.

As Good News expanded, we outgrew our original financial system. So in 1970 I turned to another member of my Grace UM Church congregation, Mr. Joe Maisto, a specialist in accounting systems for small businesses. With his guidance, we inaugurated the financial system which still serves Good News.

Money sent to the office in Wilmore is recorded and banked every day. Each month, we send Mr. Maisto our bank statements, income records and copies of all checks issued. He prepares a

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detailed computer statement showing income and expenditure for the month in relation to our budget, with its 79 categories. Annually we have an audit which is available to our constituency on request.

In 1980 Good News became a charter member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, formed by various organizations seeking the highest level of integrity in handling the Lord’s money.

Curriculum: Good News Goes to Nashville

One of the earliest concerns raised by Good News involved the church school literature produced by our denomination. Its frequent departure from the teachings of the Methodist Articles of Religion and the EUB Confession of Faith has been a “burr under the saddle” of evangelicals from the very beginning of Good News.

I first encountered this problem during my second year as a student at Garrett Seminary. The top curriculum editor spoke in a Christian education class, and afterward, one fellow student asked, “Will the new curriculum you are developing be more acceptable to evangelicals?”

The reply: “Well, now that children are being exposed to more violence on television, we are going to mention the cross in the children’s literature.”

Good News magazine dated April 1968, issue #4, carried a three-part evaluation, “How Good is our New Adult Curriculum?” The following quotes illustrate the basic problem:

“...In this book I find a near-complete aversion to anything beyond this earthly, material life....” —Rev. Robert Neely, p. 42.

“...What is missing here, for the Believer, is a particular and sustained Biblical theology. We find many Bible verses and references to Bible stories, but no theology per se.... This reviewer looked in vain for any word about salvation, any good news about the atonement of Jesus Christ, or any hint about the possibility of spiritual new birth through the shed blood of our Lord and Savior....” —Rev. Dr. C. Philip Hinerman, p. 48.

This evaluation was the first nationwide evangelical objection to Nashville curriculum’s betrayal of historic Christianity. Before Good News began to voice such concerns nationally, teachers and local church pastors who disliked the official literature were usually cowed into silence because “you are out of step with the rest of the church.”

Then Good News arrived. We helped a multitude of individual evangelicals realize that many other people were also having similar objections. Thus, Good News revealed the curriculum
problem in its full seriousness for the first time nationally.

On April 18, 1969, a delegation of denominational officials, including curriculum editor Henry Bullock, met in Chicago with a delegation from Good News. I remember being surprised by the condescending arrogance of the Nashvillians. One, a bishop, insisted that all scholars support the Bultmanian view that much of the Bible is "myth," that whether Jesus really lived isn't important, etc. Of course, we challenged this.

Eventually, the objections to Nashville materials led to this curriculum editor's replacement. I like to think that Good News may have dislodged the small rock of protest which, rolling down the denominational mountainside, became an avalanche. Many people have told us that continued pressure exerted by Good News has forced Nashville to bend, albeit unwillingly, in a bit more conservative direction. If I were to grade Nashville's product, I would say it has improved from F- to perhaps C-, overall.

"What does Good News want in curriculum?", a spokesperson from Nashville once asked in exasperation.

The reply, by Good News chairman Bob Mayfield, remains classic: "What we want is material that can be used by every Sunday school teacher, in every class, in every church, every week at every age level—with-

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out compromise of our basic theological convictions. Your job is to serve the church, not dictate to us.”

Several of us were later involved in some behind-the-scenes discussions about who would become the new curriculum editor. We were told by one very candid Nashville veteran: “There is only one time they hear protest in Nashville—when the cash register stops ringing.” How tragic—but apparently how true!

On Nov. 6, 1973, six from Good News went to Nashville for a consultation with 16 high-to-middle UM curriculum-producers. Highlights from the Good News position paper were included on pages 75-78 of our magazine for Winter 1974. We reported, “We have begun to speak and they have begun to listen. . . . United Methodist evangelicals have a right to expect that their church will make available grade A resources which we can use with full confidence and effectiveness in the local church. Good News will continue working toward this end.” (p. 78)

A third meeting on curriculum was held in Nashville, December 1977. A delegation from Good News again met with many of those responsible for UM curriculum.
As in the dialog about missions, these discussions did little to solve the basic problem. They showed, rather, that we are worlds apart. Dialog produces limited results at best.

Good News Resources Meet Special Needs

The 1974 Good News convention at Louisville, Kentucky, was a “National Conference on Evangelical Strategy.” One of the convo study groups centered on curriculum, and many participants expressed need for materials pastors could use to train youth for church membership and confirmation. The denominational materials were not useable, participants agreed, because they stressed psychology and theories of human potential rather than the everlasting verities of historic Christianity.

Rev. Riley Case, North Indiana, Good News curriculum chairman, contacted Nashville. He offered Good News cooperation in producing improved confirmation materials. Nashville said, in effect, (1) everybody likes the present materials, and (2) revising them would be a long, costly, and involved process.

Then Good News conducted a survey of some 1200 UM pastors. We asked what materials they were using to train youth, and about their actual class practices and needs. The response showed overwhelming rejection of denominational materials...and amazing creativity in fashioning their own materials. (One pastor had adopted the novel Bridge Over the River Kwai for his confirmation class to study!)

On the basis of what we learned from this survey, we devised a plan for Good News produced materials. Our board okayed the project and urged us to keep in contact with UM curriculum people, hoping they might change their minds and choose to cooperate.

Under the leadership of Riley Case, we produced the “We Believe” confirmation materials, introduced in January 1976. UM pastors of over 2,500 UM churches have used these materials, and requests for a senior high/adult version resulted in publication of an upper age edition in January 1979.

After “We Believe” materials had demonstrated their value, we asked Nashville to adopt them as approved alternate confirmation materials. There seemed to be good precedent since the Publishing House catalog had already advertised confirmation materials produced by two Liberal denominations. Nevertheless, Good News materials were rejected—proving once again that the much-talked-about UM pluralism does not really include non-Liberals.

Newsletters and Other Resources

Publishing has taken various forms in the Good News movement. Until 1976, the magazine
was issued four times a year. To bridge the long gap between magazines, Good News launched an interim newsletter in mid-1968. The editor was Rev. Dale Bittinger, Holston Conference, then Good News Board Chairman. He reported denominational developments and spiced straight news with a peppery zest which bothered some. This newsletter made an important contribution for several years. Then it was phased out.

Specialized newsletters developed as the interests of Good News diversified. The first was Catalyst. Aimed at United Methodist seminarians, it offers evangelical resources and perspectives. Rev. Mike Walker started Catalyst in 1974 and is still its editor.

Since the Evangelical Missions Council became a Good News Task Force, an EMC Newsletter has been published intermittently for those having special interest in missions.

Words to the Wise began in late 1975 for those especially interested in influencing the 1976 General Conference.

Two Good News newsletters issued on an occasional basis are Link, for leaders of renewal groups, and Good Curriculum News, reporting activities in the area of curriculum.

The largest Good News auxiliary publication is Candle, begun in 1977 by the Good News Women’s Task Force. With a mailing list of 20,000 it offers helpful resources for UM women and reviews of UM Women’s official resources and programs.

Countless reprints from Good News magazine have been circulated. Some of these represent important Good News policy documents. For example, “Good News Concern with Theological Education in the UM Church” was written by Rev. Dr. James V. Heidinger II, East Ohio, (long active in Good News leadership and seminary concerns) and was approved by the Board as our official statement on seminaries. The 17-page feature appeared in the magazine for Nov./Dec. 1978 and has been widely circulated in reprint form.

In 1972, we published a booklet Hymns of Good News. It contained 14 new hymns, most written by the Good News editor during his Grace UM Church pastorate.

In 1978 Good News procured a “China Packet” to supplement the UM Women’s official study on China. We felt the need to add the missing evangelical dimension. And in 1979 we published another alternate study, “Biblical Prophecy and the Middle East.” It offered a Biblical perspective to augment the largely-secular UM Women’s official study.

In December 1979 Zondervan published a book developed by Good News, What You Should Know about Homosexuality: a Biblical View. Good News invested nearly $10,000 in this project because we saw a great unmet need to help people understand why Biblical Christians must oppose unalterably all pressures to accept homosexual practice as acceptable. We invited six well-qualified authors to write about different aspects. We sent the first two finished chapters to Abingdon.
Chairmen of the Good News Board

A major contribution to the Good News Movement has been the leadership of the following Chairmen of the Good News Board of Directors who served in the years indicated.

1972—Rev. C. Philip Hinerman, Minnesota Annual Conference.
1973—Mr. Robert G. Mayfield, Kentucky Annual Conference.
the official UM publisher. They would not make a commitment, so we sent the same two manuscripts to an independent publisher, Zondervan. They quickly sent us a contract.

So it was Good News—an unofficial group—which created the only forthright defense of our denomination’s opposition to homosexual practice. This book was published by an independent publisher. Who, one wonders, is really supporting our church’s position?

A book widely used by pastors for training classes and adult groups is Our Methodist Heritage, written by the Good News editor and published by David C. Cook. It states some of the main Wesleyan essentials in popular, journalistic style, and has been distributed largely through Good News.

**Doctrine Does Matter to Good News**

The original Protestant, Martin Luther, believed that theology is supremely important. It shapes all that a person is and does. What we know, or don’t know, about the Living God ultimately determines our attitude toward other people, ourselves, our world, and our church.

Good News began in 1966 because of a great theological void in our denomination. The “people called Methodist” had moved far off the Biblical foundations laid by Otterbein, Asbury, and the Wesley brothers. We had become largely indifferent to doctrine. We had marginalized the Living God. He and His revealed truth were no longer the beating heart of official church concern.

The emptiness caused by this displacement was — and is — felt by many pastors and people. Something vital is missing! The vigor of Biblical religion flickers low. Somehow, our updated, organizational religion, though “relevant,” is curiously anemic. It lacks power to have much impact upon our society. Para-doxically, the more the church has “let the world set the agenda,” the less it has been able to effect real social change. . . . to stem the growing depravity of a world gone whoring after false gods.

It is my deepest conviction that theological compromise and confusion are the root cause of all that is happening in and to our church. That is why “Methodism’s Silent Minority” was written in 1966. That is why Good News began.

This theological centering makes Good News different from the other “special interest” church groups. Their raison d’etre is race, sex, socialist advocacy, sexual orientation, minority empowerment, language, or sociology. Ours is theology — God-ology. Many Good News critics have failed to understand this uniqueness. We are not another gimme-all-the-jobs-power-and-money caucus. Rather, Good News has sought to enlarge the influence of historic Christianity in our church.
Much of the opposition has come because Good News, by its very existence, calls into question the theological direction taken by our denomination for 80-100 years. This is far deeper than a mere “lovers’ quarrel”? The difference has to do with the very nature of the Church, the Christian religion, redemption, and what constitutes ultimate authority. Finally, it has to do with whether or not God is really who we see in Jesus Christ and in holy Scripture.

Sometimes I am asked, “What is the most important thing Good News has accomplished?” I answer: we have sought to be a clear, faithful voice in the wilderness for historic Christianity. Toward this end, I believe the most important single contribution of Good News (apart from publishing the magazine) is creation of the Junaluska Affirmation.

In April 1974, the Good News Board organized a “Theology and Doctrine Task Force.” Named as chairman was a former EUB, Rev. Dr. Paul A. Mickey, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology at Duke University’s Divinity School. The goal of this group was to prepare a clear, affirmative statement of “Scriptural Christianity,” drawing together the two parallel doctrinal statements which comprise our theological heritage: the Methodist Articles of Religion and the EUB Confession of Faith (1980 Discipline, pp. 55-68).

Two addresses about theology were delivered at the 1974 Convocation by members of the
new task force. I spoke about "Our Theological Wilderness," and Riley Case presented a position paper, "The Faith According to Nashville." This lucidly described the Liberal amalgam which has replaced historic Wesleyan theology in official curriculum — and widely across the official church.

For 18 months the task force labored. Then, on July 20, 1975 the Good News Board formally adopted the group's work. This happened at Lake Junaluska, so we named our statement "The Junaluska Affirmation." It is a brief, systematic summary of the essentials of "Scriptural Christianity." After a preamble come sections on The Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, Humanity, The Holy Scriptures, Salvation, The Church, and Ethics.

My research failed to reveal any systematic Methodist statement of faith-essentials since Methodism came to America in the 1700s. Why? We simply adopted as our theological core the Articles of Religion — which John Wesley had adapted from the Anglican Church. To this we added as doctrinal basis his "Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament" and his "Standard Sermons." Methodists in America accepted this doctrinal corpus from "Father Wesley," then we busied ourselves "spreading Scriptural holiness" across a vast continent with little time spent "theologizing."

A sequel occurred in late 1980 when Zondervan published Paul Mickey’s commentary on the Junaluska Affirmation. Essentials of Wesleyan Theology interprets the Affirmation for study on college and seminary levels.

The Office: Good News’ Nuts and Bolts

What an assembly line is to an auto manufacturer, the general office is to Good News. At first, it was located in my study in the parsonage of Grace Methodist Church. During 1967-69, my wife Marge did all the office work as a volunteer. The load of correspondence grew each month. So I bought a dictating machine and found a lady in our congregation, Diane Hagemann, who typed letters as a part-time stenographer.

By 1969 we simply couldn't handle the work from the parsonage any more. So we moved into a three-room office in downtown Elgin. It was owned by a member of my congregation, Attorney John Juergensmeyer. We then hired our first full-time employee, Norma VanDelinder, an accomplished secretary. She too belonged to my congregation.

Fortunately, my experience in journalism before entering the pastoral ministry had included executive responsibility and I was able to call on this as we built our office procedures and systems from scratch. Lack of money and personnel meant that we had to improvise constantly, cut corners, and do without many refinements considered routine in normal of-
ices. We worked every available moment on nights, early mornings, and weekends to produce the magazine, record contributions, and answer the mail.

Providentially, we avoided the mistake of trying to do our own printing and art work. Instead, we found competent experts and delegated to them. This allowed us to avoid buildup of costs for staff and expensive equipment. Also, it freed us to do what we could do most economically and efficiently.

In 1972, I accepted an invitation from Dr. Dennis Kinlaw, President of Asbury College. He asked me to join the faculty to teach Christian journalism on a part-time basis. I secured a special appointment from the Northern Illinois Annual Conference and in June 1972 we said good-bye to Elgin and moved south to the Bluegrass. On one day we purchased a house in Wilmore and also located space for the Good News office. It was larger than our old quarters in Elgin and the rent was reasonable. The only problem was that in the winter, cold winds filtered through cracks in the wall. From November to March we wore heavy sweaters and boots as we worked.

However, Wilmore provided many advantages for the office. Asbury Seminary and College are located here, and this provides a large pool of skilled secretaries and clerical workers — students and/or wives working on a degree known locally as P.H.T. — Putting Hubby Through.

By 1976 we had outgrown our office. The Board authorized a quantum leap in staff: Rev. Virgil Maybray coming full-time to head our missions work plus Rev. Eddie Robb, Texas, a full-time associate to share my burdens of editing and administration.

Where would we find more office space? One day Jean Brandenburg, a local businessman, came to see us.

"I was wondering if you might need a larger office..."
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successor, Bob Wood, a former Good News director.

Since 1975, Diane Knippers has served Good News in ever-widening capacities. She is Associate Editor responsible for "You Ought to Know," one of the magazine's most important features. Also she is Associate Executive Secretary, with special responsibilities for coordinating the activities of the various Good News task forces.

Starting in January 1979, Ann Coker, a former journalism student, became our Office Manager. She has been working on the magazine since 1977.

During her final year at Asbury College, Cindy Vettes, another of my journalism students, worked part-time for the magazine. Upon graduation in June 1980 she joined the staff full-time. She has been carrying major responsibility for the magazine but will be married soon and leaving Wilmore.

Mountains of letters and packages are sent by our shipping department every week. The present manager is Kathryn Sheffield, a United Methodist from Alabama.

For those interested in statistics, the present Good News office numbers twelve full- and seven part-time employees.

Church Politics: A Time to Work

Politicking within our church occupies an important chapter in the story of Good News. Herein lies an apparent contradiction: a movement basically theological counting votes, electing delegates, caucusing, and preparing resolutions. Why?

The answer lies in the facts of evangelical survival in a non-evangelical climate. In this situation, at least five choices seem apparent. First, we can pretend nothing is wrong. Business as usual. Second, we can limply submit to the violation of our faith, our intelligence, and our conscience. Third, we can go find a different church. Fourth, we can ignore church politics and build a spiritually vital sub-church within the denominational husk. That was Wesley’s strategy. Or, fifth, we can try to change things for the better. That means getting involved in our denomination’s decision-making process.

This last alternative has been the Good News policy. Its first public expression came in the third magazine, fall 1967. An editorial, "Time to Speak," included this statement:

Why do we remain voiceless? Why don’t we make ourselves heard? A splendid opportunity lies before us. General Conference will meet next spring, and all Methodists have a right to send resolutions to be considered by the General Conference. How will evangelical Methodists rise to this challenge? Will we speak in large numbers? Or will we remain nothing more than a disgruntled "silent minority," having no influence in a church which is ours by theological birthright?
This concept developed slowly. It became a major Good News thrust climaxing in the General Conference years of 1976 and 1980.

To my notion, the story of Good News' political action is not so much the chronicle of great victories as it is restraining and inhibiting the church power-brokers. ..of crucial holding actions not understood or appreciated by many, ..of raising Scriptural principles in an un-Scriptural climate, ..of demonstrating dogged desire to remain part of a denomination which has so foolishly ignored, manipulated, and ground underfoot its evangelical brothers and sisters.

Another important thing about our political efforts: they reveal the anti-Biblical influences which were dominant in the 1970s and today: (1) pressures to regard homosexual practice as acceptable; (2) refusal to allow local churches the right to choose their own Sunday school literature, support missions on an ecumenical basis, have some say in how their dollars are to be spent by the church; (3) killing unborn babies under the guise of free choice; (4) a prevailing absence of historic Christianity as even a serious option in our denominational colleges and seminaries; and (5) lopsided denominational support for Left-leaning causes, sometimes even including open support for Marxist-aligned groups and nations.

Often Good News has been the only voice raised nationally against these abominations. Otherwise, the silence has been deafening.

**General Conference 1972**

In 1967, Good News urged people to send petitions to the 1968 General Conference. Before the 1972 General Conference, we prepared and distributed 10 petitions and four resolutions. These were printed in the magazine for Jan/Mar 1972 (pp. 49-64) and we sent thousands of printed petitions to Good News readers. This first full-blown Good News political agenda included: laypeople vote on ordination of clergy, limit tenure of church executives, churches free to choose curriculum materials, gifts apply against apportionments, greater representation for local churches in curriculum development, use church funds for purposes solicited only, spiritual renewal should have greater emphasis, freedom to designate money given by churches, withdraw from COCU, making Christ's Lordship the denomination's top priority.

As I recall, more than 10,000 Good News-stimulated petitions and resolutions were sent to the 1972 General Conference. We used identically printed petitions because this device had been used previously to win ordination for women. But General Conference leaders chose to handle the piles of Good News petitions en masse. That meant that 1,400 Good News petitions on one subject would be listed only once—giving them, in effect, the same weight in the official
register as one non-Good News petition.

1972 also saw the first attempt in recent years to maintain an organized evangelical presence at General Conference. Rev. Dr. Bob Sprinkle and Helen Rhea Coppedge cranked out occasional newsletters offering a Good News perspective on important issues. We also made some experimental contracts with delegates, seeking focus for an evangelical point of view as expressed in the Good News petitions. We tried to bring together sympathetic delegates in a caucus of evangelical concern. The magazine for summer 1972 carried a comprehensive editorial, “In the Aftermath of Atlanta,” the first national report giving an independent interpretation of a General Conference.

Frankly, 1972 was a disaster for the evangelical cause. General Conference approved of abortion. The homosexual issue surfaced. Delegates voted a massive structural reorganization which phased out the Boards of Laity and Evangelism. The gargantuan Board of Global Ministries was born. It would quickly smother the evangelical viewpoint and become itself a willing captive to Liberation Theology.

Worst of all, the 1972 General Conference officialized “doctrinal pluralism.” This legitimated the smorgasbord concept: people freely concoct their own religion, helping themselves from any “ology” or “ism.” Doctrinal pluralism has accelerated our theological decay by applying the prevalent “do-your-own-thing” philosophy to Christian truth. In my opinion, this will be recognized someday as the most serious mistake in the history of American Methodism.

Yet within our first faltering attempts to influence a General Conference lay seeds for the future. And as we pointed toward the next General Conference, 1976, those seeds began to sprout...

God then raised up two political strategy leaders for Good News. One was a seasoned pastor, Rev. Bob Snyder. He had acquired political experience with a Good News-related group in his East Ohio conference. And again God sent Good News Bob Sprinkle, a student radical in the 1960s, now a strong Bible Christian.

We began sending out a political strategy newsletter, _Words to the Wise_. It helped evangelicals better understand the UM political system and also to begin using it for petitioning, electing delegates, etc. Grass roots interest began to mount, and people asked us to conduct seminars in practical politics. Some of us traveled to different parts of the country holding these. Bob Sprinkle conducted one in Wilmore, requested by a group of turned-on UM students at Asbury College. Using their contacts back home, these students stimulated petitions to General Conference from more than 30 annual conferences.

Homosexuality proved to be the most visible political factor in the years between 1972 and 1976. No other issue has so angered, disturbed, and puzzled people of the church. That it became an issue at all simply
underscores how far Methodism had moved toward abandonment of Scriptural authority in these troubled years. It also represents the ultimate capitulation of Christians to the moral depravity of the pagan world.

In 1972 General Conference received a proposed revision of the Social Principles Statement. It was surprisingly "open" toward homosexuality and a vigorous debate erupted. The committee report was amended to preserve the historic position of the church and Scripture: "...we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" (1980 Discipline, p. 90). This was to be the bulwark of church policy, reaffirmed by the General Conferences of 1976 and 1980. However, soon after 1972 it became evident that some within our church were seeking to undermine this position. A warning was sounded in Good News for Spring 1974:

Winston Churchill's description of World War II as "The Gathering Storm" may well be applied to United Methodism's growing tension over homosexuality. Clouds now visible on the denominational horizon suggest that this storm may break with savage fury at the 1976 General Conference. It will be precipitated by those who will make strong efforts to get official approval of homosexual practice as acceptable for Christians. A special thrust will be aimed at removing barriers against prac-
ticing homosexuals serving as ordained ministers of the UM Church. . .” (p. 18)

General Conference 1976

Unfortunately, this prediction proved to be accurate. The UM Council on Youth Ministries openly supported homosexual ordination. And a homosexual caucus was formed to lobby for "gay" rights before and during the 1976 General Conference. Meanwhile, the homosexual emphasis was becoming more open and militant across America. One of its main targets was the church, the greatest single barrier to the approval of perversion.

Between 1972 and 1976 homosexual advocacy became one of the high priority causes enshrined in the Liberal pantheon of social issues. To support "gay" rights became a sign that one was "relevant." Thus a powerful linkage developed between the "rights" efforts of the various caucus groups. To question the "gay" lifestyle drew criticism that one was opposing also the advancement of women, blacks, youth, and assorted minorities. This was a tragic strategic error for the minority groups. Their linkage with homosexuality caused many of their valid emphases to be discounted by hostility toward homosexuality on the part of many church members.

The homosexual advocacy group received permission to operate one of the four caucus booths in the building where
the 1976 General Conference met. So did Good News. It was hard to comprehend that our denomination accepted self-professing, practicing homosexuals on a par with the exponents of historic Christianity!

During the 1976 General Conference at Portland we saw homosexual couples flaunting their depravity. To see them mixing with the crowd of General Conference delegates was astonishing. So was the invitation extended to the homosexual caucus leader, Keith Spare, to speak for the "gay" cause in a hearing of a General Conference legislative committee.

Spare was invited to speak briefly before the whole General Conference, claiming at least 1,000,000 United Methodists are homosexual! This happened in a crucial moment during the debate on homosexuality. Nobody upholding the Biblical position of the church was allowed an equivalent "point of personal privilege."

In the legislative committee mentioned above, I watched speakers glibly discount, even ridicule, a stack of 1,400 petitions urging the church to hold its Biblical position against homosexual acceptance. Senders of these petitions were stereotyped as ignorant extremists from a few isolated areas.

Fortunately, Good News Board member David Seamands, a General Conference delegate, had taken time to study these petitions. He spoke up to reveal they had come from a wide

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In the end General Conference rejected pro-homosexual efforts to remove the key Social Principles statement "...we do not condone..." The UM policy was, in fact, strengthened. Delegates added the sentence, "We do not recognize a relationship between two persons of the same sex as constituting marriage" (removed by the 1980 General Conference). Delegates also voted a restriction against spending UM money to support homosexual organizations or advocacy.

Another prong of the pro-homosexual assault in 1976 was a proposed church wide study of human sexuality. "Gay" tacticians use such "studies" as a "Trojan horse" to advance their cause. They stack the committee with homosexual sympathizers whose "findings" increase the pressures toward homosexual acceptance.

Under leadership of Good News Board member John Grenfell, a Detroit delegate, a substitute motion was written and adopted. It encouraged studies of human sexuality on a local basis and this effectively torpedoed the churchwide study. Thus Good News gave support to the 1,269 petitions which opposed the study (only 29 wanted it). Unfortunately, however, the proposal for such a study was partly accepted by the 1980 General Conference.

The Good News group at the 1976 General Conference numbered around 25. Some were sent to Portland by regional Good News groups; others paid their own way or were sent by interested friends or churches. Our observers noted activities in the 10 General Conference legislative committees and plenary sessions. Our volunteers cooked, drove vans, answered questions and distributed materials at the Good News booth, and talked with delegates explaining the Good News viewpoint.

This was the first time evangelicals had been organized politically at a General Conference and this caught some people by surprise. When the smoke of battle cleared, those frustrated by the Good News caucus vowed revenge in 1980.

The secret of our political success in Portland was prayer. Across the continent, people, prayer groups, and even whole congregations were praying. Just before the sessions began, several of us visited the huge empty auditorium. We noticed a lady seated alone up in the dim balcony. She was still there a half hour later so several of us went to see if she needed help.

"Thanks," she smiled. "I’m praying that God will move upon this General Conference. I am praying for the person who will sit in each of those seats down there."

General Conference 1980

The pattern set in Portland was expanded at the 1980 General Conference in Indianapolis. Virginia Law Shell, a Good News Board member, and her husband, Don, took responsibility for heading the Good News effort to influence this General Con-
ference. She is widely known as a former missionary to Congo and as co-founder of the Marriage Enrichment program within the Board of Discipleship. Don, a corporate computer executive, brought great skills and wisdom to the task he and his wife ably shared. The core of Good News workers at the 1980 conclave expanded to 65. George and Eva Wickes, from Dayton, Indiana, organized a nationwide prayer chain involving at least 50,000 United Methodists. Two long distance WATS telephone lines were maintained in Good News General Conference headquarters so that people could phone in for specific prayer needs and reports of General Conference action. Delegates were invited to use these phones when not occupied.

Teams of Good News observers were dispatched to track the course of events in each of the 10 legislative subcommittees during the first part of General Conference. We held caucus breakfasts for overseas and other delegates.

Over $60,000 was contributed by Good News supporters to help underwrite the cost of influencing the 1980 General Conference. We prepared and sent out some 14,000 “petition packets,” containing instructions for writing petitions, as well as models on 17 topics. These ranged from designated or selective giving to modification of the denomination’s pro-abortion position.

An important innovation in 1980 was a series of carefully written letters sent in advance to all delegates discussing our

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What have been the results of our political efforts? Probably they are mostly intangible. Many have found hope because instead of drifting helplessly, we could do something to correct serious defects in our church. At least we could try. The long range question is whether or not the political awareness kindled by Good News will spread to other evangelicals across the church. If so, our denomination may be changed through the political process.

Perhaps the most appropriate closing word on Good News politics was spoken at the end of the 1980 General Conference. Helen Rhea Coppedge, a veteran of our efforts in 1972, 1976 and 1980, said:

...We have made some real gains at this [1980] General Conference. While I certainly do not want to down-play or belittle the very real victories we have won, I don’t want us to be under any illusions about where we are. It is important that we put General Conference in the context of our larger situation. In spite of a lot of comments about “the conservative mood of the conference,” essentially what we have done is to slow the rate of shift; the direction of the shift is still away from us rather than toward us. For example, nothing has happened at this General Conference that changes the situation relative to our concerns in missions. We want our people to be hopeful, but under no illusions about the situation as it really is....

**Good News: Voice of a Movement**

I began the story of Good News telling about our magazine. So the magazine seems a logical place to end. It has been closest to my heart since 1966, and I have sensed a special calling and direction from the Lord in writing...editing...planning...and supervising the production of 66 consecutive issues. Of course Good News, like most magazines, is a projection of the editor. Sometimes this has caused nervousness among colleagues who, understandably, don’t always agree with what the editor says or how he says it. But as Paul the Apostle wrote, “by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect” (I Corinthians 15:10).

The past 20 years have been hard ones for denominational magazines. Starting in 1956, Methodism began a “bold venture” featuring a new family magazine, Together, and a ministers’ magazine, New Christian Advocate. I was the first managing editor of these publications, so I have watched from
afar with special interest as their circulations declined and the magazines devolved into United Methodists Today and Today's Ministry.

On June 1, 1975 our denomination terminated these publications. The Methodist Publishing House revealed that it had paid $6,260,000 over 18 years subsidizing these magazines. Despite this and official status, they couldn't make it.

Meanwhile, Good News was born. Without official subsidy, and in the face of often heavy official opposition, Good News had expanded slowly but steadily. The issue for January/February 1981 had a print order of 20,000 copies. These went to United Methodists in all states and 23 countries around the globe.

How did Good News buck the magazine trend?

I believe that God raised up this periodical and has assigned it a distinctive place and mission. By His grace, we have not been disobedient journalistically to the heavenly vision. We have tried to meet an unmet need. We have not betrayed the historic Christian faith. We have not let the world set our agenda. We have labored to hear and reflect the voices of local pastors and people, to articulate faithfully the cries of joy and pain of Methodism's Silent Minority. We have feared God only, and have been willing to

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incurred the wrath of many prominent church persons.

"Letters to the Editor" has been a popular feature from the beginning. I have tried to make this an authentic voice of the people, providing a place where both joys and sorrows could be openly expressed. We have published most of the brickbats criticizing Good News. And sometimes we have faced an office crisis when prestime arrived and we lacked the critical letters which add zest and spice.

In blending the contents of each issue, I have tried to follow the philosophy of George Horace Lorimer, a great editor who built the Saturday Evening Post long ago. Rather than trying to please everybody with every article, I have tried to put something into each issue that would stimulate, inform, challenge, or prick the conscience of every reader.

Great care is exercised in our staff planning sessions to include a wide range of material in each issue: personal testimonies, news of the denomination, provocative editorials, insights into Biblical and theological truth, glimpses into our rich evangelical heritage, information about helpful resources. Poetry and even a bit of fiction have been blended in occasionally.

On occasion the magazine has served as a vehicle for communicating specially important messages to the church leadership. The Spring 1975 issue carried, "A Letter Sent to our Bishops in the United States" by Board Chairman Paul Morell:

I am writing to you out of a deep concern for the welfare of our beloved United Methodist Church. Speaking in behalf of the unofficial movement of evangelicals in our denomination, I urge you to take a strong public stand against the ordination of practicing homosexuals self-confessed or secret. . . . Please SPEAK UP! Take a stand. Keep our Church united. We look to you as a spiritual shepherd for leadership and true Christian statesmanship in this time of spiritual and moral crisis." (p. 58)

Looking back over all the issues, the title of which I am proudest appeared in the issue of July/September 1970. An expose' reporting the experiences of a pastor who studied at St. Paul's School of Theology was titled, "Everything's Up To Date in Kansas City (they've gone about as far as they can go)."

The most noteworthy expose' was either our review of the Jessup Report, September/ October 1980 issue, p. 26, or "Our Washington Connection," July/August 1978, p. 41.

Our most widely reprinted feature has been the paraphrase of John Wesley's "Character of a Methodist." This appeared in our second and third issues; over 100,000 reprints have been circulated.

The biggest jobs of interpretive reporting have been our special reports on the General Conferences, published in 1972,
1976, and 1980. I finished the 1976 report on the airplane flying back from Portland. The 1980 General Conference report was a team project. Our Art Director had selected the paper and given us the basic layout. The writing chore was shared with Diane Knippers.

Since 1975, art and layout has been done by a talented saint, Jim Sweeney, who is a vital UM layman and also a skilled commercial artist. Working out of Dallas, he has access to many artists and typographers. He takes the titles and subtitles of articles for an entire issue and prepares finished art. This is combined with type in the "pasteup," or "dummy," done in Wilmore by Cindy Vetter's and Ann Coker who handle all liaison with the typesetter and printer. Almost all articles are typeset in Wilmore by Ruth Seamands, wife of Asbury Seminary Mission Professor J.T. Seamands. The magazine is printed by S. Rosenthal and Company, Inc. in Cincinnati, a large quality publisher which prints over 1,000,000 copies of TV Guide each week, plus other magazines and books.

Good News belongs to the Evangelical Press Association. From EPA we have received a number of awards. In 1971 Good News was named the top General Magazine, in 1975 Organizational Magazine of the Year, and in 1979 Periodical of the Year, organizational category. In addition we have won prizes for a number of editorials and articles. These professional honors we have recognized as another sign of God's direction in our day-to-day creative operations.

It is with great pleasure that I can report to you the name of my successor as Good News Executive Secretary/Editor. He is Rev. Dr. James V. Heidinger II, the present Board Chairman of Good News. I believe God has directed the search committee, under the able leadership of former Good News Board Chairman Rev. Dr. Paul Morell. He presented Jim's name to the Good News Board which met as this issue was going to press. Jim was the Board's unanimous choice, and I believe Good News stands on the threshold of a new and exciting chapter under Jim's able leadership.

Dr. James V. Heidinger II

Looking backward to 1966, I breathe a prayer of thanks to our Heavenly Father for the joys, the challenges, and even for the heartaches Marge and I have experienced through these our Good News years. And looking forward into the future, we exclaim, "and the end is not yet, praise the Lord!" Ω