

I remember he was a giant in my eyes. And the movement he was leading gave me, a young pastor just three years out of seminary, hope that our church could one day be different—that evangelicals would no longer have to survive as something of an underground movement within United Methodism.

During those early days of my pastoral ministry, I found the Good News movement to be expressing many of the concerns and convictions I felt. It encouraged me greatly during those times of frequent discouragement.

In the mid-1970s, I was elected a member of the Good News board and became personally acquainted with Chuck. To know him was to appreciate him as a multi-gifted person. He was at once a pastor, journalist, executive, leader of renewal, national voice, and penetrating theologian. He also became a personal friend.

I remember, while serving in Ohio, getting lengthy phone calls from Chuck to discuss articles, editorials, and issues confronting the church. Though I was a novice, Chuck always encouraged me to write and to become more involved in the Good News ministry.

To know Chuck was to realize he had the courage to speak faithfully and the ability to speak persuasively. Because he was obedient, Chuck was a vessel through whom God would channel a vision and rally the commitment of thousands of United Methodists.

When Chuck launched Good News he was bitterly opposed, and for a number of years he bore personally the brunt of criticism from many who disagreed with him. But when he stepped down from his Good News post in 1981, many of those ardent critics saluted him for his courage and his commitment to the evangelical

faith.

Those of us who worked closely with Chuck loved him dearly as God's bold and faithful servant. For 15 years both Chuck and his devoted wife, Marge, poured themselves unselfishly into the Good News effort. When the time came for change, Chuck spent many hours helping me get oriented to my new tasks. And Marge stayed on at her Good News job for a time, providing continuity during the period of transition. We are profoundly indebted to them for their faithful service.

What a monumental contribution Chuck has made for the cause of Scriptural Christianity within the United Methodist Church! When the chapter for this period of Methodist history is written, the contributions of Charles Winchester Keyser will be a major part. And, about that, Chuck would have us add, "To God be the glory!" Ω

SPEAKING OUT

Add Members or Make Disciples?

by James T. Reuteler

We United Methodists need to change our recruitment emphasis from *membership* to *discipleship*. Membership does not mean the same thing as discipleship, and today we desperately need to communicate the difference.

The word "disciple" is the most frequently used term in the Gospels for a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, and its use is not limited to the twelve. Even in the Books of Acts, "disciple" is used 22 times, in contrast to 4 instances of "saint," and two of "Christian." "Disciple" is a good Biblical word that means more than mere institutional membership.

And this is our problem today: most people see membership in the church as membership in a religious institution. What we need to communicate to people is the need to believe in and follow Jesus Christ.

Discipleship also conveys the image of a pupil or student, and this is in line with our Wesleyan tradition. Those early Methodists joined class meetings



and societies in order to encourage one another in their growth toward Christian maturity. They were disciples in the fullest sense of the word. On the other hand, an emphasis on membership in the church communicates very little expectation for Christian growth.

Many of our congregations have from one to four "orientation sessions" for new members, and very little attention is given to what it means to be a disciple of Christ. We expect very little, and our new members live up to our expectations. Few of them have any sense of becoming part of the living Body of Christ. But if we emphasized discipleship in the church, we would be *forced* to talk

Dr. James T. Reuteler is pastor of the United Methodist Church of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. He earned a Ph.D. from Emory University with an emphasis on liberation theology relating to missions. He served as a missionary to Malasia from 1968-1976.

about something other than a religious institution.

What have been the results in the United Methodist Church of our low expectations of people becoming members? Lyle Schaller has called us a "voluntary association" in which little is expected. It has been estimated that 99 percent of our people could not even pass a simple Bible quiz, and my experience as a United Methodist pastor for 18 years confirms this tragic truth.

Contrast this sad state of affairs with "high commitment" churches, in which regular attendance and tithing are required. In most of the UM churches with which I am familiar, our congregations are doing well if more than 30 percent of our people attend worship on any given Sunday. And many UM pastors feel fortunate to be able to count on one hand the number of tithers.

Our attendance and financial statistics are symbols of a deep illness. The answer is not a new legalism, but a new emphasis. That emphasis ought to be on discipleship within the church.

Two years ago I made the decision that the church as a "voluntary association" was not acceptable, and I decided to do something about moving our congregation in a new direction. My first step was to teach a class on Christian discipleship, and make it a requirement for membership (both for transfers as well as professions of faith). Only, I no longer talk about "membership." The requirement is for discipleship in the church.

The class lasts for 12 weeks, and a new class begins every quarter. Both new and mature Christians are present in every class. I am not worried about repetition, for I see the topic of discipleship in the same sense as I view the Bible—as a diamond. Every time we deal with it, we look at it from a different angle. Our purpose as Christians is not only to understand what discipleship means, but to learn how to express its brilliance in everyday life.

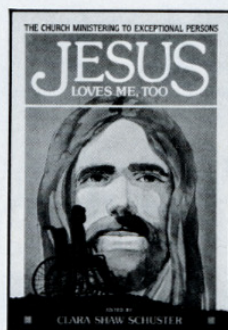
I have initiated two other programs in our church that carry with them the same high expectations for discipleship. The first one is an ongoing, in-depth Bible study. Response to it has been beyond my expectations. We have two sessions on Sunday evening and one on Thursday morning. Each

year we cover a major section of the Bible, in the following order: the Books of the Law, the Historical Books, the Wisdom Literature, the Prophetic Books, the Gospels and Acts, and the Letters and Revelation.

The other program we've initiated to reinforce a higher level of commitment is Youth Club, a balanced program of Bible study, recreation, music, and a fellowship meal. Youth Club takes discipleship seriously, and calls for a commitment of time and money. Thirty-five adults come every Wednesday night to work with 60 children and youth.

What have been the results of all this? Not everyone has welcomed this approach with open arms. So far, we are not receiving as many new disciples into the church as we used to receive new members; but we are losing fewer people out of the back door today than we used to, and that is encouraging. Furthermore, I feel optimistic about a congregation that is becoming Biblically literate, and about the high level of involvement in our youth program.

The future, I am convinced, belongs not to those congregations that emphasize membership, but to those that stress *discipleship* in the church.



Two new books
from
BEACON HILL PRESS

For a Ministry to Children

JESUS LOVES ME, TOO

For a Ministry to Exceptional Children!

Clara Shaw Schuster, general editor. A collection of 13 articles by various experts in the area of the exceptional child. Challenges the local church to examine what is being done and what could and should be done. Goes into detail on how to offer the kind of support such children need, and what to do in their sometimes unique emergencies. Covers health, learning, or communication disabilities. Full resource book for the caring congregation. 143 pages. 5 1/4" x 7 1/2".

TC083-411-0741

\$6.95

TRAIN UP THE CHILDREN

By Linda J. and Keith V. Burba.

A book to help teachers become better disciplinarians. Reasons for poor teacher habits are cited, misbehavior is examined, problems are discussed. Differences in age-level response and the need for boundaries precede the two chapters on preschool and elementary children. 111 pages. 5 1/4" x 7 1/2".

TC083-411-0628

\$4.50



BEACON HILL PRESS of Kansas City

BOX 527 • KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64141

PLEASE
SEND _____ **JESUS LOVES ME, TOO** (TC083-411-0741) @ **\$6.95**. Add 5% for postage and handling.
_____ **TRAIN UP THE CHILDREN** (TC083-411-0628) @ **\$4.50**. Add 5% for postage and handling.

Name _____
Address _____

Amt. enclosed \$ _____ Charge to VISA _____/MasterCard _____

No. _____ Expir. date _____