THE BISHOP'S COLUMN

The dawn of the New Year is a thrilling experience. It is the time to forget and to resolve. It is the place of beginning again. The failures and the victories of the years gone by should be relegated to the past and all our energies given to writing new pages in the book of life. It is not enough to keep the pages unspotted, but we are given the opportunity to fill each one with high ideals, noble thoughts, and consecrated work. So let us forget the things which are behind and press towards the goals our Lord sets before us. With Christ as our Leader we can write great chapters of conquest against hate, vindictiveness, and blinded vision, and chronicle bright pages of kindness, goodwill, forgiveness and concern. This is the hour of opportunity for the churches to bear witness to the will and way of God and our Father.

This year in our Church we are observing the Aldersgate experience of John Wesley which came to him on May 24, 1738. If we simply hold a service of commemoration, the true significance of the event will be lost. If we seek definitely and find a similar heart-warming of our own, the spiritual impact we can make will be immeasurable.

Each of our Annual Conferences has carefully worked out a full program for our Aldersgate Year. Naturally, it is closely tied in with our whole evangelistic efforts. If we, who are pastors, first of all will have our own Aldersgate experience and then lead our official boards and all our members into this experience, we can and will move far ahead. Some of our problems which trouble us today will find a sure solution and many of our ills will be cured.

I am convinced, more than ever before in my life, that the solution of the world's ills depends upon the people who are Christian having another baptism of the Holy Spirit so we will think and love, live and serve as true followers of Jesus Christ.

May all of us abide in the Upper Room until we are clothed upon by the power of the Holy Spirit as we live the days of 1963.

Marvin A. Franklin

A GOOD RESOLUTION

"I will give more regularly and systematically of the money with which God blesses me to His causes. Since He provides the soil, the atmosphere, the resources, the brain and brawn from which come all that shall be within my possessions, it is as little as could be expected of me that I should return one-tenth of it to Him and His work. **This I resolve to do.**"

BORN OF CONVICTION...

(Note: The statement below was formulated by some of the younger ministers of the Mississippi Conference who are concerned over present trends of curbing the freedom of the pulpit. They represent some of our best trained and most promising ministers. We feel they express the conviction of the vast majority of the clerical members of the conference. We suggest you read the editorial, "Freedom of the Pulpit" on the opposite page.)

☆ ☆ ☆

Confronted with the grave crises precipitated by racial discord within our state in recent months, and the genuine dilemma facing persons of Christian conscience, we are compelled to voice publicly our convictions. Indeed, as Christian ministers and as native Mississippians, sharing the anguish of all our people, we have a particular obligation to speak. Thus understanding our mutual involvement in these issues, we bind ourselves together in this expression of our Christian commitment. We speak only for ourselves, though mindful that many others share these affirmations.

Born of the deep conviction of our souls as to what is morally right, we have been driven to seek the foundations of such convictions in the expressed witness of our Church. We, therefore, at the outset of this new year affirm the following:

I. The Church is the instrument of God's purpose. This is His Church. It is ours only as stewards under His Lordship. Effective practice of this stewardship for the minister clearly requires freedom of the pulpit. It demands for every man an atmosphere for responsible belief and free expression.

II. We affirm our faith in the official position of The Methodist Church on race as set forth in paragraph 2026 of the 1960 Methodist Discipline: "Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches that all men are brothers. He permits no discrimination because of race, color, or creed. 'In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith . . .' (Galatians 3:26)"

The position of The Methodist Church, long held and frequently declared, is an amplification of our Lord's teaching: "We believe that God is Father of all people and races, that Jesus Christ is His Son, that all men are brothers, and that man is of infinite worth as a child of God." (The Social Creed, Paragraph 2020)

III. We affirm our belief that our public school system is the most effective means of providing common education for all our children. We hold that it is an institution essential to the preservation and development of our true democracy. The Methodist Church is officially committed to the system of public school education and we concur. We are unalterably opposed to the closing of public schools on any level or to the diversion of tax funds to the support of private or sectarian schools.

IV. In these conflicting times, the issues of race and Communism are frequently confused. Let there be no mistake. We affirm an unflinching opposition to Communism. We publicly concur in the Methodist Council of Bishops' statement of November 16, 1962, which declares:

> "The basic commitment of a Methodist minister is to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This sets him in permanent opposition to communism. He cannot be a Christian and a communist. In obedience to his Lord and in support of the prayer, 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,' he champions justice, mercy, freedom, brotherhood, and peace. He defends the underprivileged, oppressed, and forsaken. He challenges the status quo, calling for repentance and change wherever the behavior of men falls short of the standards of Jesus Christ."

We believe that this is our task and calling as Christian ministers.

FINDING AUTHORITY IN THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF OUR CHURCH, AND BELIEVING IT TO BE IN HARMONY WITH SCRIPTURE AND GOOD CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE, WE PUBLICLY DECLARE OURSELVES IN THESE MATTERS AND AGREE TO STAND TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF THESE PRINCIPLES.

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Jim L. Waits
O. Gerald Trigg
James B. Nicholson
Buford A. Dickinson
James S. Conner
J. W. Holston
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To Write Sunday School Lessons

The Reverend William E. I
pastor of the Pisgah M
Church, Brookhaven Distric
write the Sunday school les
the first quarter of 1963. His
son appears in this issue of
vocate.

Again we wish to thank t
erend John Millsaps, pasto
Bruce Methodist Church, for
the lessons this past quarter.

This is a labor of love on
of these well-trained young
in the two Mississippi Conf
Their lessons are read b
throughout the state.

KEEPING THE YOUTHFUL

"Sitting at the head of t
on her eighty-seventh birth
mother of Frances E. Willar
the following lines:

"Never my heart shalt thou g
My hair is white, my blood ru
And one by one my powers
But youth sits smiling in my
—From Anna A. Gordon's
Miss Willard.

One Man's Journey

Intro.

1. **Difining Moment—The Incident**
2. **The Reaction**
3. **Background For The Reaction**
4. **What Set Me On The Road To Civil Rights.**
5. **What Happened To The Twenty-eight?**
6. **Would You Do It Again?**
7. **Did The Statement Make A Difference?**
8. **Have We Arrived At The End Of The Civil Rights Road?**
9. **There Is Hope**

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO CIVIL RIGHTS

A speech delivered at Caltech
January 17, 2006
By
Inman Moore

INTRODUCTION

There is a journalist in the mid-west who has achieved a measure of fame by writing a weekly column entitled "Everyone Has A Story." What he does each week is take the local telephone directory and randomly choose a person. He then calls that person and arranges an interview. Then he writes their story. They could be well known, or they could be someone nobody knows. But whoever they are, he writes their story. For, as the columnist says, "Everyone has a story." Each one of us here this morning has a story. Here is my story. I am well aware that your story may be much more interesting than mine. But today I have the microphone, and today you are stuck with my story. For today my business is talking and your business is listening. And, if you get through before I do don't mind me. My story today is centered on my adventures along the road to civil rights and largely about one specific incident.

I. DIFINING MOMENT—THE INCIDENT

In recounting our stories, each of us has certain defining moments: moments we remember always and these moments often shape our lives. Some moments we would like to forget. Sometimes our schooling became difficult. We became for a little while like the small boy who came home from school one day with a rather large math assignment and in exasperation blurted out to his parents, "I wish I had my arithmetic done, was married, was dead, and buried." But there are moments we remember forever. My graduations from high school, college, and graduate school. My marriage to Nellie Ray Rogers. The births of my four children. My first fulltime job.

A very defining moment for me came in January of 1963 when, with twenty-seven other young Methodist Ministers, I signed a document entitled, "Born of Conviction." At the time I was a relatively young Methodist Minister, serving as Pastor of Leggett Memorial Methodist Church in Biloxi, Mississippi. Incidentally, the church building was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, but the present minister tells me they will definitely rebuild. The document was first published in the Mississippi Methodist Advocate, a church publication circulated throughout the state. It was immediately picked up by the Associated Press and made headlines in newspapers all over America.

II. THE REACTION

Putting it mildly, all hell broke loose. It was like an atomic bomb. Most of the papers throughout the state wrote editorials and news stories castigating us. At best we were called Communist "Pinkos" or Communist sympathizers. At worst we were described as out and out Communist traitors. Within a week, three of the ministers were locked out of their churches. Several others were asked to leave as soon as possible. All of us received abusive phone calls and letters. Some were threatening and intimidating. To say the least it is unsettling to get a call in the middle of the night: "Is this Rev. Moore?" "Yes." "Well, Rev. Moore, I'm glad that you're alive. I hope you'll still be alive at 8 o'clock in the morning." Several had their cars vandalized. Jerry Trigg, the Minister at Caswell Springs, Mississippi, a church very close to the Alabama state line, received reliable word that the Ku Klux Klan across the state line planned to kill him. To the credit of his church members they formed a posse to protect him. Wherever he drove they had a carload of men in front of him and a carload to the rear. While Jerry's congregation did not agree with him, they did not want to see him killed.

The reaction throughout the state was so instantaneous and so violent that many have said it was one of the turning points that eventually led to integration in Mississippi. Within six months of the document's publication, twenty of the twenty-eight had left Mississippi. They went all over America: Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, Iowa, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and Washington. I, and twelve others, came to California. Indeed, because there were so many of us coming at one time, California Methodists dubbed us "The Mississippi Mafia."

III. BACKGROUND FOR THE REACTION

When you read, "Born Of Conviction," you will no doubt ask yourself the question, "What is all the furor about?" In today's climate it seems a rather mild statement. It basically said three things: (1)It declared that all men are brothers (written today it would have included women) and therefore opposed discrimination based on race, creed, or color;
(2) opposed communism; and (3) opposed the closing of public schools and establishing private academies using state funds.

That just doesn't seem like a document that would command national media attention, does it? But attention it grabbed—and how!! The reason it did was because of the time it was written and the political and social climate of that day.

In 1963, Mississippi was a totally segregated state. The population of Mississippi was divided: half Black and half White. Retail stores had restrooms for Blacks and restrooms for Whites. Drinking fountains for Black and Drinking fountains for White. Blacks could not get a room in a motel or hotel. When Blacks came to a White person's

house, custom required they go to the back door. They could not eat in the restaurants. In those days of segregation Southern restaurants were well ahead of McDonald's in having side windows. Blacks could go to the side windows and get food, but they could not sit inside. They rode in the back of the bus, and, in spite of federal law, the schools were segregated. This included the colleges and universities. Mississippi has four Black public colleges and one private college. However The University of Mississippi at Oxford had been integrated In September of 1962. With the aid of 12,000 federal marshals, James Meredith was admitted to the University of Mississippi. This was a real breakthrough. There is an apocryphal university story that followed the entrance of James Meredith to Ole Miss. Ole Miss had a football dynasty going in those days under Coach Johnny Vaught. Coach Vaught was a legend, serving as coach from 1947 until 1970, and for a short time in 1973. He won 3 national championships and several SEC Conference championships. Ole Miss never had it so good. The story goes that when James Meredith was admitted to the University as the first Black, he applied to play on the football team. The school had never had a Black on the team before. And the other players didn't want him on the team. They went to Coach Vaught and said, "We don't want James on the team. What can we do to keep that Black guy off the team?" Coach thought for a moment and said, "When we practice today, I will send him out for a pass. I don't anyone to block and when James catches the ball I want the whole defense to jump on top of him and just clobber him. The play was called, the ball was thrown to Meredith and he threaded through the whole defense and ran for a touchdown. The players came back to coach and said, "We don't want to play with a Black guy." Now, how do we get him off the team? Coach said, "Okay. You don't want him on the team. This time I will call the play for James to run with the ball. Don't any of you block. Just let the whole defensive team really slam him and he will quit. So they called the play. The quarterback handed the ball off to James. Nobody blocked for him, but somehow he sliced through the whole defensive team and ran for another touchdown. Now the players are desperate and they rush back to Coach Vaught and say, "Coach what are we going to do about this Black guy?" To which, Coach Vaught innocently replied, "What Black guy?" You can bet your bottom dollar that Coach Vaught had many Black players over the next few years.

During segregation Blacks could not vote. Mississippi law called for the payment of a poll tax and the ability to answer questions provided by the county clerk. Conveniently Whites were never asked the questions. In 1963, in spite of efforts to allow Blacks to vote, none were allowed to vote. In one county a very educated Black showed up to vote. The county clerk required him to answer a question which was, "How many bubbles are there in a bar of Ivory Soap?" The Black man gave the correct answer when he replied, "The answer, sir, is that not one damn Black will get to vote this year."

Politically the White Citizen Councils and the Ku Klux Klan controlled the state. The Citizen's Council was far more powerful. It was an upscale Ku Klux Klan without the robes and many of the prominent citizens of the state belonged. The council succeeded

Roman Catholic Church took a slightly bolder stand, but that was not saying very much. The United Church of Christ, very tiny in number, took the most courageous stand. Finally, let it be said that, while many of the churches supported segregation, a minority of church leaders led the movement for change. For example, all members of the "28" were Methodist Ministers. And it was little Tougaloo College, a church related school, who dared to allow the Mississippi Council on Human Relations to hold meetings on their premises—something the other colleges would not allow. Also, we should never forget that the great leader of the Civil Rights Movement was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an ordained Baptist Minister.

Family wise, most all of the twenty-eight suffered. Most of my relatives either believed in segregation or did not want to rock the boat, including my mother and father. I needed heard a profane or obscene word about Blacks in our home. The "N" word was never used. But Dad could not understand why I would jeopardize my career, and indeed my life, by challenging the quote "Southern Way of Life." "Inman," he would say, "Things will work out over the years. Just give it time. There's no need to risk your life." I would reply, "Dad, this terrible system has been going since the Civil War. How much time are we talking about? Ten years, Fifty, a hundred? The only way things are going to change is if we make them change." But my eloquent speech made no difference. Dad and Mother never quite understood my feelings.

My own challenging of the status quo started before the "Born of Conviction" statement. I was a founding member of the Mississippi Council On Human Relations. Because we may have been the only organization in Mississippi in the 50's and 60's to have both Black and White members we finally had to meet at Tougaloo College on the outskirts of Jackson. When we met, the Highway Patrol seemed to have always been tipped off, and there were always Patrol cars at the entrance to Tougaloo taking names and license plate numbers. We were never arrested but we certainly got onto the files of the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, and it was quite intimidating.

In 1962, the Biloxi Beach Riots occurred. The beach along the Gulf Coast stretches from Biloxi west to Bay St. Louis. Due to segregation, not a single inch of that beach was available for Blacks. A number of Blacks decided to test the waters and put together a group to go down to the beach on a Sunday afternoon. Word got out about their coming and a bunch of young white thugs with brace knuckles and chains met the Blacks at the beach and beat them very badly while law enforcement officers did nothing. The next Sunday morning I preached a sermon on "Biloxi, the Beach, and Civil Rights." My church lay leader was a prominent attorney in Biloxi and a segregationist. We had been great friends in the past, but our friendship ended with that sermon. He was a good man in so many ways and very generous with his church, but, like so many in the South, he was blind in the area of race relations. However, I must say that I went for years preaching sermons on brotherhood without ever getting specific about integration. But the Biloxi riot pushed me to a more definitive action. I felt that

if I had not spoken out then, I would have had to leave the ministry. So, career or no career, I knew that Mississippi must come into a new day, and Blacks must cease to be secondary citizens.

Well, at any rate, Mississippi was a closed society in those days. It was the closest we have ever come in America to a fascist state and it came about because of often good people with their eyes closed and unwilling to admit to the terrible evil and tragedy of segregation.

IV. WHAT SET ME ON THE ROAD TO CIVIL RIGHTS?

So there you have the political and social make-up of Mississippi in the early sixties. And you can see why our mild "Born Of Conviction" statement created an uproar. One of my friends asked me the other day sitting in a restaurant, "Why did you develop a different outlook on race from most of your fellow Mississippians." Because I grew up as a redneck in the briar patches of Mississippi just like everyone else. I loved to fish and hunt. When I was eleven years old I asked and got for Christmas my own 410 shotgun. And I frankly knew and thought little about the race situation. As a child I never questioned segregation. I never even thought about the shame and humiliation of segregation.

Looking back, it seems so strange that I would grow up never questioning the so-called "Southern Way of Life." It truly never occurred to me. When we walked down the sidewalk, blacks cleared the sidewalk. We went to different schools and different churches. When we went to the movies, the blacks sat in the balcony. I never saw Blacks sitting in a restaurant. I do remember on one occasion passing a miserable shack of a building and, upon asking my parents, they said it was a colored school. I did wonder why that school looked so bad—but not for long. My wife had the same experience, and I have talked with many other Southerners about this odd phenomena. This seems to be the same experience that most Southerners agree on. As kids it never dawned on us that we were unintentional monsters where civil rights were concerned. It is overwhelming to realize the part that culture plays in our lives.

I began to be aware of injustice in late high school, and my feelings were heightened by going to Methodist youth camps and reading Methodist literature. My real awakening began in the Navy during World War II. I was a Pharmacist's Mate. When I entered the service, it was segregated. We slept in different barracks. Then President Truman issued an edict integrating sleeping quarters. One night in the little town of Guiwan on the Island of Samar in the Philippines, I walked into my Quonset hut and there on the top bunk of my bed lay a 200 pound Black guy. Wow!! And, you know, it worked out just fine!

My experience in Manila was earthshaking. We followed General McArthur north to the retaking of Manila from the Japanese and my epidemic disease control team was put in charge of venereal disease control in the city. What an experience! The Japanese had bombed Manila and then we bombed it. Manila was almost totally destroyed. The Navy quickly took possession of one of the few remaining buildings, the Wilson Building. We literally slept, ate, and worked in the same building. The citizens of Manila were in terrible shape. They were sleeping under old discarded parachutes, huge cardboard boxes used to ship machinery, and anything else they could find that would keep them dry. We would set out our garbage cans and they would literally be swarmed by children scrambling for any crumbs they could find to eat. I was there for the better part of a year, and it is an experience I shall never forget. Surely, I said, God would never allow anything like this. But he did! However it set me on a course to believing that all men and women, regardless of race or creed, deserved to be treated with respect and dignity. My Manila experience certainly played a part in putting me on the road to Civil Rights.

A real turning point in my life came in August of 1946 when I went to a national Methodist Youth Convocation in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I had been discharged from the Navy in April of 1946 and was waiting to start the fall semester at Millsaps. By sheer coincidence, I was persuaded by my sister to attend the Convocation. There I heard a Black College President speak with great intelligence and power on the race situation in America and particularly in the South. It literally turned my life around. I felt I could and should be a part in making the world a better place. So, never say a speech, or sermon, never really affects our lives or our world. They do, and I am living witness.

My Experience at Millsaps College, a liberal arts school somewhat similar to Occidental or Pomona, helped with a wonderful philosophy teacher. Graduate school at the Candler School of Theology was an eye opener. While at that time it was segregated, it carried on a dialogue with several Black schools and my professors were really on target to change things.

My wife, who incidentally I met at the Grand Rapids convocation, has been a steady bulwark for me all these years. Also, from Mississippi, she never backed an inch when life became more difficult because of my public actions. We have four children, two of whom are here this morning. It is difficult for a pastor's wife to cope with raising a family and playing a supportive role in her husband's ministerial career. She is a main reason I have stayed the *course* on the road to civil rights.

Another powerful force that greatly affected me was the movement sparked by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I was only in one meeting where he spoke, but his influence has been great. One cannot read his book, *Strength To Love,* without being greatly moved.

His *I Have A Dream* speech from the Washington March, his *Letter From Birmingham Jail,* and his speech in Memphis the night before he was killed, *I Have Been To The Mountain-Top*—these all electrified me. Dr. King was the greatest prophet of the 20th Century and one of the greatest of all times. His influence on me was immense.

I suppose we never fully know why we do what we do, but the above reasons have played the principal roles in why I am making the journey.

V. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TWENTY-EIGHT

So, what happened to the Twenty-eight? Did they just fade a way. Not on your life. As I mentioned, several were forced out of their pulpits immediately and all came under pressures of one sort or another. All received threats. All had problems with friends and relatives and church members. There was no support from the church hierarchy. You may think that document was a mild document. Oh no! It was a very moving document. It moved twenty of the Twenty-eight right out of Mississippi. We scattered among a number of states. Thirteen of the twenty came to the California-Pacific Annual Conference which comprises all of Southern California, Hawaii, and other Pacific Islands. It moved Nellie, our children, and me to California, arriving in April of 1963. The 28 were all men. They all had interesting and rather significant careers. None left the journey to civil rights. It turned out that the Twenty-eight had a number of rather brilliant guys. Jerry Trigg became pastor of the Colorado Springs United Methodist Church, then the largest Methodist Church in the west. Maxie Dunnam became President of Asbury Theological Seminary. Buford Dickenson became President of the Methodist seminary in Ohio. Jim Waits became Dean of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta.

As for Nellie and me, I served three appointments in California, and three interim pastorates. I came from Mississippi to be pastor at the First United Methodist Church in Palmdale and then went to Crescenta Valley United Methodist Church, then a fairly large church with over 1,000 members. In the early seventies, Nellie and I decided to go into business. I took early retirement from the ministry, but maintained my ordination and membership in the Annual Conference. Nellie and I opened and operated Tournament Souvenirs here in Pasadena for over twenty years, selling it and retiring in 1997. In 1999, our Methodist Bishop asked me to come out of retirement and serve as pastor of Grace United Methodist Church, a Black church, here in Pasadena which I did, retiring again in 2004. However, I seem to have thoroughly flunked Retirement 101. As of September I accepted the position as Associate Pastor of a large church in Burbank, The First Methodist Church.

So, in a sense, I am retired/unretired. As to the rest of the Twenty-eight, eight are now dead, and all the rest are retired and living in various parts of the country. In June of last year, we had a reunion in Jackson, Mississippi which again made national headlines in papers around the country. 13 of the remaining 20 attended and we were together for several days in Jackson. The news letter about our reunion sparked the Pasadena Star News to run a Sunday edition first page story about my part in the civil rights movement. There is a copy of the story here this morning.

Nellie and I have now lived in Pasadena for almost 36 years. Today we are involved with many local organizations, and we very much feel at home in Pasadena, California.

VI. WOULD YOU DO IT AGAIN?

Over the years I have been asked the question, "Would you do it again?" Knowing all the furor it caused, "Really, would you do it again?" When we had our reunion an AP reporter asked us just this question. To a man, we emphatically replied, "Yes! We would do it again because it was the right thing to do."

VII. DID THE STATEMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Another question I am asked "Did the statement make a difference?" The results are in and it seemed to have made quite a difference. There is a professor at Emory and Henry College in Virginia who is writing a book about the Twenty-eight. His conclusion is that it was the chink in the armor that really started to break down the formidable wall of segregation in Mississippi. Of course the national movement of Dr. King was felt everywhere. The freedom riders. SNCC. All of it put together hastened the demise of segregation.

Today, the schools are integrated. The United Methodist Church is integrated. Henry Clay, one of the most courageous Black ministers on the Mississippi Human Relations Council was made a District Superintendent.

My roommate in college went on to be a doctor. He always said when he was in college he wanted to serve as a small town doctor. He did just that, going to a small delta town, Shelby, Mississippi, he staid there his entire career. His wife, Kate, is a nurse. Together they opened a clinic and served thousands of people and many were Black. Shelby, as most delta towns, had more Blacks than Whites. When Bob went to Shelby, the town council was all White. The mayor was White. The county sheriff was White. All the county supervisors were White. Today, the mayor is Black. Several years ago all the council was Black, save for my roommate (and he is probably out now). The county sheriff and the supervisors are all Black. The mayor of the capital city, Jackson,

is Black. Politics in Mississippi are still quite racist, but Blacks are getting elected to more and more offices. All the colleges and universities are very integrated. No more colored restrooms or drinking fountains. Blacks stay at all motels and hotels. The state is indeed integrated.

VIII. HAVE WE ARRIVED AT THE END OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ROAD?

Well, then, have we arrived at the end of the civil rights road? There are some who would say "Yes." A man some time ago said to me, "Why are the Blacks still pushing? We've given them everything they wanted. Everything is integrated." His very wording is indicative of the problem. "We've given them---." It's like they are the outsiders, and we have condescended to give them something. My friends, the Blacks are as much citizens as the Whites or any other color. But to further answer his question, there is much more to be done with all of us working at it. Many of the Blacks grew up in utter poverty and it is hard to break the chain.

The pictures out of New Orleans are heartrending in their disclosure of the tremendous poverty there. Civil rights don't just encompass relations between Blacks and Whites. Civil rights are for all our people. We still have a way to go for women to have an equal playing field. We still have a way to go in our acceptance of Gays and Lesbians. We have a long way to go in our treatment of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the homeless.

When talk show hosts talk of all French being cowards and sneeringly demean other races, that is racism. When one talk show host has made his reputation by calling feminist leaders "Feminazis," that is sexism. When we look at the poor and say "Why don't they help themselves?" That is classism.

IX. THERE IS HOPE

I conclude by saying that I have high hopes for the future. I know there are wars and rumors of wars and we have many domestic problems here in America. But I still have high hopes because I have faith in myself and faith in people like you gathered here this morning.

I know very well that we don't always achieve what we want in our lifetime. But we can, here and now, make a difference. Things that we start can be picked up by those coming after us. We would never accomplish much if we only tackled things that can be completely done today. Houses, roads, bridges, and businesses would not be built if we felt it would all be accomplished today. But we start today. You and I! We can take the first steps. There is the old cliché, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." We can resolve to do the best we can and leave the rest to the future with high hopes.

Sometimes in despair, we cry out, "What is the use? If only we had a great leader or leaders like there were in the past!! But the great leaders have all been killed or assassinated. So what can we do? We are waiting for a leader." Jim Wallis, the editor of Sojourner Magazine and a great defender of the poor, has written a fine book entitled *God's Politics.* In the closing chapter he tells about a young African American woman named Lisa Sullivan. She grew up in a rather poor home in Washington, D.C., but succeeded in going to Yale and earned her PhD. She had some great job offers and worked for a time for several major national foundations. But she continued to feel called back to the streets of Washington and the forgotten children of color who roamed them. So she came back to Washington. Jim Wallis says she was the best street organizer he ever saw. But at the age of 40, she died of a rare heart ailment. Jim Wallis said that he and a mutual friend Marian Wright Edelman stood weeping at the graveside and he kept remembering some of Lisa's words. Often in the meetings of people working with the poor, workers would often complain that there were no longer any leaders and would ask Lisa "Where today are the Martin Luther Kings?" Lisa would get angry and reply, "We are the ones we have been waiting for!" It seems to me that our commission as human beings is to always be out on the high road of civil rights. Today we are the ones. Yesterday, it was someone else. Tomorrow will surely come. But today, we are the ones we have been waiting for.

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What Became of the 28? (as of January 2005)

3 (Nicholson, Lampton, Rush) were forced out of their churches in January 1963, with two of them never preaching another sermon at those churches after the statement was published. All three transferred to other Annual Conferences in 1963 (Iowa, Indiana, Southern California/Arizona). Lampton left the ministry in 1966, earned a Ph.D. in Speech Communication from Ohio University, and now runs his own communications company (see web site at **www.ChampionshipCommunication.com**). Rush transferred to South Carolina in 1968 and retired there in 2001. Nicholson retired in 1986 from the Iowa Conference.

8 more **(Oliver, Moore, Furr, McRae, Kellar, Carter, Holston, and Walters)** transferred to other Annual Conferences in 1963 (4 to Southern California/Arizona, 2 to Florida, 1 to Oklahoma, 1 to Indiana). Oliver returned to the North Mississippi Conference in 1967, and retired there in 1982. Furr left the ministry in 1972, going into business. Moore retired from the ministry in 1975 at age 50 to go into business; from 2000-2004 he pastored a small African-American UM congregation in Pasadena, California. Holston, McRae, and Walters all served as pastors until their retirements in 1989, 1998, and 1998. Kellar became a pastoral counselor and retired from the ministry in 2003. Carter became an Air Force Chaplain, retiring from the Air Force in 1990 and serving as a pastoral counselor until he retired from the ministry in 2000.

5 more **(Dunnam, Dickinson, Troutman, Trigg, and Moody)** transferred to other Annual Conferences in 1964 (3 to Southern California/Arizona, 1 to Indiana, 1 to North Texas). Dunnam transferred three more times in his career, serving (among other positions) as Editor of *The Upper Room* (a United Methodist devotional magazine) for a number of years and as President of Asbury Theological Seminary from 1994 until his retirement in 2004 (he maintains the title of Chancellor of Asbury). Trigg transferred to the Rocky Mountain Conference in 1980, serving until his 2002 retirement as Senior Pastor of First UMC in Colorado Springs. Dickinson served as an administrator at Claremont School of Theology (a UM seminary in California), and at his untimely death at age 51 was President of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Troutman retired in 1991 from the pastoral ministry. Moody left the ministry in 1972.

3 more **(Roberts, Waits, and Hall)** left the Mississippi Conference in the next few years. Roberts transferred to North Mississippi in 1966, where he remained for the rest of his career. From 1978 until his death in 1988, he served as Director of the Mississippi United Methodist Hour, a radio and television ministry sponsored by both Mississippi UM conferences. Waits transferred to the Tennessee Conference in 1967, serving as Associate Pastor to former Mississippian Roy Clark at West End Church in Nashville. In 1970 he became an administrator at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, where he served as Dean from 1978-1991. From 1991-98 he was Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada, and from 1998 until his retirement in 2003, he was President of the Fund for Theological Education. After remaining in Mississippi as a pastor until 1971, Hall transferred to Southern New Jersey. He then transferred to West Virginia in 1980 and retired in 1994.

That leaves **9 (Conner, Dickson, Entrekin, Napier, Brown, Tonkel, Way, Ryker, and Thomas) who remained members of the Mississippi Conference.** Way became an Air Force Chaplain in 1964. He returned to Mississippi in 1987, serving as a pastor and hospital chaplain until his retirement in 1996. Entrekin and Napier both served in extension ministries (hospital chaplaincy, campus ministry, etc.) for most of the rest of their careers, though both did serve as local church pastors again later. They retired in 1991 and 1994. The others all served the rest of their careers as local church pastors, with Dickson (retired 1983) and Thomas (retired 2002) both serving as District Superintendents (Dickson from 1968-1974, Thomas from 1986-1992). Ryker, the oldest signer, retired in 1974, and Conner retired in 1983. Brown retired in 1989, and Tonkel has not yet retired, serving as pastor of a congregation in Jackson (Wells Memorial) since 1968.

Of the 28, **9** of them **(Dickson, Entrekin, Napier, Brown, Dunnam, Tonkel, Waits, Dickinson, and Troutman)** were reappointed to the same church/charge in June, 1963.

8 (Oliver, Holston, Conner, Dickson, Ryker, Dickinson, Roberts, and Moody) are deceased.

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Standing their ground: Statement 'an atomic bomb'

Methodist ministers fought racism in '60s

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As a student at Millsaps in the 1970s, Joseph T. Reiff found his heroes in a group of ministers who forged "a crack in the armor of the closed society" that existed in Mississippi in the 1960s.

In the fall of 1962, James Meredith had become the first black student at the University of Mississippi. The event sparked riots on campus that left two dead, 48 soldiers injured and 28 U.S. marshals wounded by gunfire.

Another 28 people would face injury the following January when they united to sign a document opposing discrimination, communism and the closing of public schools to establish private academies using state funds. The white ministers from Mississippi's southern Methodist Conference signed the "Born of Conviction" statement, which was published in The Methodist Advocate.

"I used the statement in some classes to talk about Christian ethical dilemmas, particularly related to race," said Reiff, a 10th-grader at Murrah High when t he schools desegregated and now an associate professor of religion at Emory & Henry College in Virginia. He is writing a book about the Born of Conviction signers, 17 of whom are still living.

"To put it mildly, all hell broke loose," said Inman Moore, pastor of Leggett Memorial Methodist Church in Biloxi and founding member of the Mississippi Council on Human Relations when he signed the statement. "It was like an atomic bomb in Mississippi.

"Our statement was a very moving document. It moved most of us right out of the state."

Moore said within six months of the document's publication, 20 of the 28 signers had left Mississippi for Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, Iowa, Texas, Arizona, Colorado and Washington. Thirteen went to California.

"Because there were so many of us coming at one time, California Methodists dubbed us 'The Mississippi Mafia,' " he said.

Jerry Trigg was pastor of Caswell Springs Methodist Church in Pascagoula when he helped write the statement.

"There were clergy throughout the state who were having tires slashed and crosses burned," said Trigg, who learned that the Alabama Ku Klux Klan planned to kill him and dump his body in a river. They had been infiltrated by the FBI, who informed the town sheriff - Trigg's good friend and a church member. Community members took turns sitting on Trigg's porch to make sure he was safe.

Trigg went on to lead the 4,000-member First Methodist Church of Colorado Springs, the third-largest church in the West.

The experience in Mississippi, he said, taught him "certain challenges are very difficult, but it by no means diminishes their importance. The key thing is to try to understand what God desires and act upon it no matter how tough it is."

Summer Walters was 27 and working at Jefferson Street Methodist Church in downtown Natchez when he signed the statement.

After it was published in the The Methodist Advocate, Walters received a call from city leaders asking him to meet them.

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He was forced out of town by city leaders, but luckily landed a job in Indiana.

"That was like having a fresh supply of oxygen when you think you are choking to death," he said. "It was just really a gift from God. We had a place to live, a parsonage, a guaranteed minimum salary and a chance to start a new ministry - out of Mississippi."

Walters worked for various Indiana churches over the years.

"Profound systematic change doesn't happen dramatically without revolution," Walters said. "If you don't do what you think is the right thing, what is your life about?"

Maxie Dunnam grew up in rural Perry County and helped found Trinity Methodist Church in Gulfport, but he was forced to leave after signing the statement.

The journey took him to California, then back down South, where he became the world editor of The Upper Room, a Methodist devotional. He also served as president of the Kentucky- and Florida-based campuses of Ausbury Theological Seminary, and the Florida Dunnam campus in Orlando bears his name.

Dunnam never regretted signing the statement but said he has wondered what might have happened if he'd stayed.

"I doubt my path would have been the same at all, and you have to rest in the fact that God uses us whether we've made a mistake or not in terms of staying or leaving," he said.

"I doubt that I would have been exposed to the world and had a world ministry if I had stayed there simply because of the nature of the church in that particular time in history. I think the biggest thing I learned is the gospel is always counter-cultural. It does not affirm the status quo."

Unlike these ministers, Denson Napier, who was working in Perry County at Richton Methodist Church when he signed the statement, he never faced negative repercussions. He received community support.

"If you have people who are committing themselves to the Christian way of living and to truth, they are making sure their power is used to be helpful not hurtful," he said.

But Joe Way, 29 and working at a Meridian church when he signed the statement, was forced out of the Methodist conference.

"Once I realized there was no way in the world I was going to get a church in Mississippi, I decided to become an Air Force chaplain," he said.

Way served 23 years in the military before returning to Mississippi to become a pastor near Pascagoula.

"It was just something that had to be done because of what I believed," he said, recalling the statement.

Reiff said there were many things that were much more pivotal than the Born of Conviction statement in the history of the civil rights movement, but it was a notable step.

"I think a lot of white Mississippians could fairly easily dismiss the civil rights movement folks as outside agitators or crazy," he said, "but it was much less easy to dismiss ministers of the white Methodist churches who had grown up in Mississippi, who were leaders of their communities."

What is the legacy of the 28 and the Born of Conviction statement today?

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"I think it teaches that people need to speak their convictions," Reiff said, "particularly in situations where there is injustice, and the injustice seems to be supported by the majority of people."