

Tongues and Bonnets

The decade of the 1970s was a time of innovative spiritual churning in Ohio YM. The Lord was working in different ways in different parts of the YM, helping many Friends to respond to their callings in fresh ways.

During the 1970s, the most discussed development was the charismatic movement. Several Friends had attended a Full Gospel Men's Fellowship in Youngstown and were called into a new and active spirituality. To a great degree, charismatic Christianity was compatible with the waiting worship of Ohio Friends, as people were given an opportunity to express their gifts. During the 1970s, typical examples of charismatic activity included speaking in tongues, casting out of devils, faith healing, and a more pronounced ministry that re-emphasized Christian terminology that was not being heard as regularly in meetings as previously. At the annual meeting of the Spiritual Life & Ministry Committee at Winona in 1971, some Friends laid hands on each other and prayed for spiritual baptism. Charismatic activity followed at Olney that fall. The YM for Ministry & Oversight held an evening session in 1972 for members "who have experienced a spiritual birth or awakening, a special baptism or encounter with Christ through His Holy Spirit."

Although the charismatic movement had its critics in Ohio YM, its impact was clear. The amount of spirit-led ministry greatly increased, as several Friends responded to the calling. At the end of 1974, Ohio YM only had four recorded ministers: Thomas Cooper and Bill Cope of Middleton, Rebecca Price of Winona, and Bill Taber of Stillwater. In the latter half of the decade, six new Friends were added to their number: Ed Kirk (1975), Richard Hall and Lydia Miles (1976), Martha Giffen (1977), and Howard and Myrtle Bailey (1979). The YM for M&O advised in 1973 "Our meetings should be colonies of Heaven, outposts of His Kingdom..."

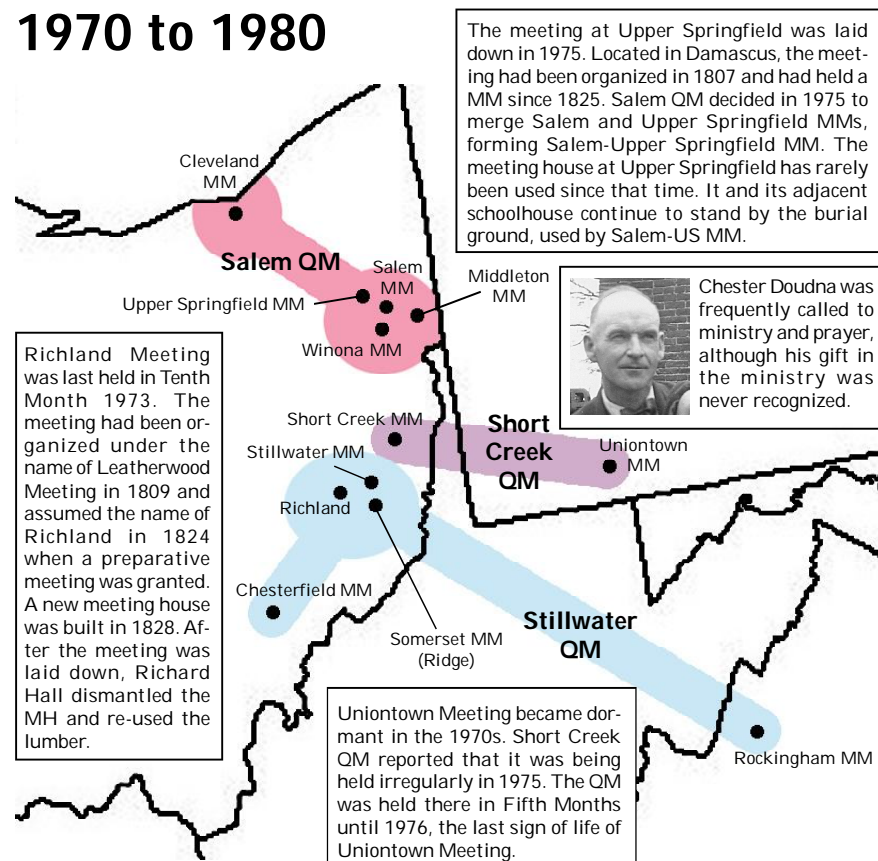
During this time, a group of younger Ohio YM Friends began an intentional community south of Stillwater. In 1970, they purchased a large

tract of land from Paul Warfield, who was willing to sell it to anyone would preserve it from strip mining. Seventeen Friends banded together to purchase the land, then encompassing 843 acres in Monroe County. The new community was named Raven Rocks. The Friends who moved there included Warren Stetzel, the first non-Quaker to teach at Olney. From the beginning, Friends at Raven Rocks had a great interest in ecology. They constructed very energy-efficient houses (some underground, some solar). With the passage of time, Raven Rocks Friends stopped attending meetings due to their difficulties with the charismatic movement and with what they perceived as the entrenched tradition of the elderly Friends. Raven Rocks Friends maintained a strong connection to Olney, including several teachers and administrators.

The General Meeting of Conservative Friends was held at West Grove, North Carolina, in 1974 and at Paullina, Iowa, in 1976. The meeting at West Grove was particularly important for Ohio YM because several young Friends there felt a calling to a more committed Christian community. As a result, a group of them moved to Virginia, where an independent group named Rockingham Friends Fellowship was being held. Bill Rushby, an active Friend there, was a member of Somerset MM in Ohio. In 1978, Stillwater QM granted Rockingham MM. This was the newest meeting in the YM in a decade. Its members found spiritual value in outward forms of traditional Quakerism (what Bill Taber called "Neo-Conservatism"), particularly earlier forms of plain dress, use of the biblical calendar, and using second person singular pronouns. Rockingham Friends also valued Christian language and on occasion would refer to successful principles of the Mennonites.

The new developments in Ohio YM shocked Friends in Iowa and North Carolina YMs. They maintained the course that Ohio had followed previously, accepting new urban meetings into their folds that were not in unity with traditional Quaker beliefs and practice. The situation was painfully obvious at the General Meeting at

1970 to 1980



Paullina. The strong ministry of Ohio Friends there was perceived as evidence of the ongoing presence of Christ Jesus by Ohio Friends, but Iowa Friends found it embarrassing or sometimes offensive. After that session, Iowa withdrew from hosting the event and has not held it since.

An example of how the changes of the 1970s impacted Ohio YM was an exchange near the end of the decade. In 1979, Florence Sidwell brought a letter to the YM that expressed concern for the American Friends Service Commit-

tee, especially some of its programs that she believed did not appear to be "labor for Him." She felt that more waiting was needed in AFSC business decisions so that the organization was working on behalf of Christ Jesus. The letter was approved by the YM and sent. Stephen Cary replied, saying "I assure you that we are seeking in our humanly fallible way to see ... what love can do..." Cary's letter made the situation worse, as Friends in Ohio needed to hear stronger Christian language than he was able to offer, and it was only a matter of time before Ohio stopped supporting the AFSC.