

Christian Re-focus

During the 1980s, Ohio Yearly Meeting continued its work to sharpen its focus on spiritual matters. The ongoing spiritual labor had ramifications for the YM's business, as rifts were opened in the work of several committees.

In 1982, the YM for Ministry & Oversight appointed the Spiritual Action Committee. Like the earlier Spiritual Life & Ministry Committee, the SAC held conferences and prayer groups. A new round of ministers were recognized in the 1980s: Winne Stratton and Archie Newlin in 1983, Nancy Hawkins in 1984, and Becky Ward in 1988. The SAC was concerned about how to nurture ministers, elders, and overseers in 1987, so it drafted an excellent statement on the three offices that was approved by the YM in 1988. In 1989, Samuel Bownas's book *Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister* was republished, and for several years excerpts of the book were read and discussed.

An important development in 1983 was the decision to publish a small paper for YM members. Its original long title was later shortened to the *Ohio Conservative Friends Review*. The paper carried articles written by various members of the YM, along with poems and stories. The editor, Mary Alice Pino, wrote a column in which she discussed sections of the *Discipline*.

The Peace Committee continued its valuable work in the YM. It published a book *Ohio Yearly Meeting Statements Opposing War* in 1981, which quickly sold out and was republished. It was enlarged and republished in 1988. In 1985, the Peace Committee merged with the Human Relations Committee, forming today's Peace and Human Relations Committee. Among other things, the committee purchased books and magazines for Olney, showed films on relevant topics, drafted a minute opposing the U.S. government's actions in Central America, and published a booklet *Continuing in Marriage*.

Ohio Friends observed silently as a portion of Iowa YM withdrew in the middle of the decade. In 1984, a man was recommended to serve as

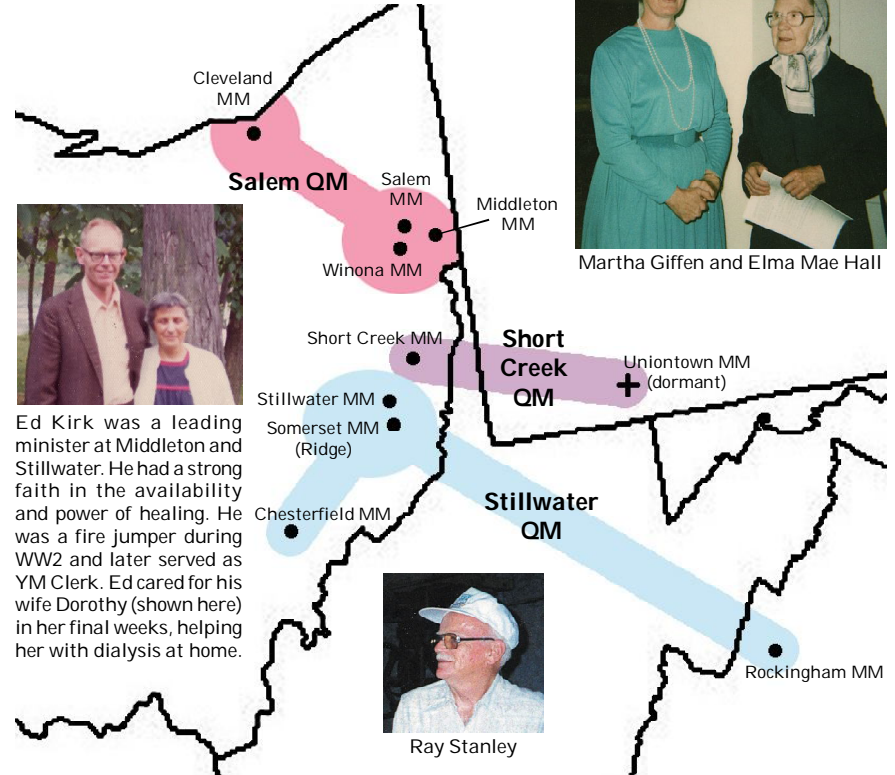
Clerk of Iowa YM. He wanted to be clear with Iowa Friends about his situation so they could make the right decision: he was not a member, occasionally drank alcohol, and had questions about the nature of Christ Jesus. When the YM appointed him anyway, the more traditional members of Iowa were concerned. Pasadena MM sent a letter to the other meetings to express concern about the decision. Some Iowa Friends wanted Ohio Friends to step into the situation. When it appeared that nothing was going to change, all the members of two meetings left their meetings, and most members of a third meeting left. The result of these departures was that Iowa YM was increasingly more modern in its outlook and less sympathetic to Ohio YM.

In 1985, John Schofield told Ohio YM that he feared that the time was coming for Chesterfield MM to be laid down. Darlene Rushby and other Friends expressed concern that more visitation should be taking place. Several Friends agreed to visit the meeting, of whom the most faithful in the long run were Randy and Martha Giffen. Mary Alice Pino, who was living in West Virginia at the time, transferred her membership to Chesterfield and visited once a month. This infusion of effort helped to salvage the meeting, and it survived after John and Dorothy Schofield moved to the Walton Home.

The Fowler Orphanage disappeared from the Ohio radar screen in the 1980s. Ohio Friends had given the orphanage money annually for many decades. By the early 1980s, the only letters being received were receipts of the arrival of the money. Ohio Friends, concerned about the situation, stopped sending money in 1987.

The increased focus on spirituality in Ohio YM resulted in increased tensions among Friends who had differing approaches to the things of the Lord. Ohio Friends were alarmed to learn that the American Friends Service Committee had assisted armed rebels in third world countries (in addition to other policies). The YM decided in 1988 not to send money to AFSC, although committees were allowed to help fund

1980 to 1990



Ed Kirk was a leading minister at Middleton and Stillwater. He had a strong faith in the availability and power of healing. He was a fire jumper during WW2 and later served as YM Clerk. Ed cared for his wife Dorothy (shown here) in her final weeks, helping her with dialysis at home.

Ray Stanley

programs the YM would support. The spiritual disunity was played out at Olney, too; its board notified the Spiritual Action Committee that operating the school was complicated by disunity in the Yearly Meeting. In 1989, the Representative Meeting discussed the rightness of homosexuality. As now, this was a difficult topic when approached from different vantage points. The MMs sent minutes on the topic of homosexuality to the Representative Meeting, which appointed a committee to review them. The committee reported in 1990 that could not find unity for a way forward. The situation was particularly difficult in Cleveland MM. That meeting

was united in drafting a minute that stated its support for people in same-sex relationships.

As the situation became increasingly polarized, a very sad verbal exchange took place on the floor of the Yearly Meeting in 1990. During the worship on Fifth Day morning, an elderly Friend on the facing benches stood and gave solid ministry. A member of Cleveland MM stood up afterwards to say that he was "tired of hearing people with no more than an eighth grade education expound on spiritual topics." The exchange captured the depth of hurt feeling among Ohio Yearly Meeting members at the time.