The year 2005 marks the 50th anniversary of the beginning of a youth program of the Evangelical United Brethren Church called Youth Missions to Youth (YMTY). This issue of the Telescope-Messenger recalls the program by publishing recollections from three categories of participants in the YMTY—a denominational leader, youth missioners, and host pastors. In the following article Dr. Warren Hartman, one of the major authors of the program, explains its origins. In the planning stages for several years, the summer of 1955 was picked as the time to test elements of the program on the campus of United Theological Seminary. I was one of the local youth recruited to supplement the “41 carefully selected” youth leaders from all over the United States and Canada. Two of these youth leaders, Jim Lehr of North Dakota and Wally Vermillion of Washington, stayed at our home.

During the week of the pilot program we attended seminars and worship services led by the youth leaders as well as by denominational leaders Dr. Hartman, Dr. Ralph Holdeman, and Dr. John Knecht. In particular I remember a powerful sermon preached by Dr. Knecht encouraging us to serve Christ in a church-related vocation. The call was not only to enter fields such as the pastorate, but also to carry our Christian beliefs into whatever vocation we chose. This sermon had a significant influence in my own life, and I reflected on it frequently in deciding on a career.

In addition to the seminars and worship services we also had ample times for recreation and fun. It was during these softball games and chats over lunch and dinner that we learned many valuable lessons. Music, led by Aaron Sheaffer, was also an important part of the experience. I was impressed by the quality of the 41 young leaders from all over the denomination who led this week-long experience. All of them were people I wanted to get to know better, and in some cases that is exactly what happened. From my perspective the pilot program was a success.

Drs. Hartman and Holdeman also considered the pilot program a success, and plans for taking the program on the road in the summer of 1956 were made. Over 100 EUB youth leaders from across the nation were recruited to be traveling missioners. The initial Mission took place in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area from June 12-18, 1956. Based on copies of articles from area newspapers sent to me by some of the following authors, it received an unusual amount of publicity. One newspaper had the following introduction: “One hundred young people from most of the 48 states will make Harrisburg their first stop next week in a nationwide summer program of Youth Missions to Youth.” The article went on to say, “The Rev. Lawrence W. Althouse of Charlton EUB Church, chairman of the program, said the mission is designed to accomplish three objectives—finding youth prospects between the ages of 12 and 24 for the churches, involving them in some phase of the local church’s program, and winning them for Christ and the church.”

Thus began the two summers of the national YMTY program. Missions took place from coast to coast involving 127 missioners, but after the summer of 1957 the decision was made to move the program from the national to the conference level. The major reason for this shift was a lack of resources. The development and management of the program took a tremendous amount of the time of people like Dr. Hartman, Dr. Knecht, and Dr. Holdeman. They did not have time to manage the YMTY program and meet the other needs of their division. Second, the cost of recruiting and transporting more than a hundred youth leaders each year was a significant drain on a denomination without large financial resources.

In preparation for the shift of the program to the conference level, Dr. Hartman prepared a handbook for conference leaders. Bruce Buller donated his copy of the Guide for Youth Missions to Youth to the Center for the EUB Heritage. In the Forward Dr. Hartman says, “As in all human efforts,
there are still phases of this program which need improvement, but the program as it was carried on this past year has met with a very fine response on the part of pastors, adult workers with youth, and young people themselves. The actual results in transformed lives and revitalized local Youth Fellowships have been thrilling evidences that God has surely used this program as one means of extending the Kingdom through the lives of thousands of young people."

The guide explains the specific process of organizing and delivering conference-based YMTY. It deals with mundane issues such as insurance for missioners and how to record mission expenses. More important, the guide provides detailed activities for every minute of a weeklong mission as well as for a shortened weekend mission. The Get-Acquainted Session, the Community-Wide Party, the Jalopy Raid, Why Groups, Commitment Calling, and the final Rally are all explained. It is a compilation of lessons the Department of Evangelism and the General Youth Fellowship learned in the process of the Pilot Program and the 1956 and 1957 Missions. It is an interesting document.

In the early 1970s Donna Gaines Nehring, who as a missioner in 1956 was influenced heavily by the YMTY, attempted to evaluate the program by contacting as many of the missioners as she could. Sixty-two of the 104 responded, and recently Donna sent me copies of their responses. Based on these, Donna wrote an article titled "A 1956 Investment Still Pays Dividends" that appeared in The Interpreter (February 1976, p. 6ff). In reviewing the responses, Donna commented: "[When] asked what they felt were the most long lasting ingredients of the Youth Mission to Youth experience, most felt that fellowship with other Christians was the most important—youth to youth sharing their lives as Christians. They felt it strengthened each individual to see and know other young people with problems and pleasures just like their own who were making an effort to put it all together in Christ. There are rewards from living with and working beside people from all across the denomination, young and old alike." The comments of individuals in this issue, some of whom responded to Donna's survey many years ago and several who did not, echo many of the same "lasting ingredients" of the YMTY.

But how successful were the YMTY? Much of the success of the program was based on the enthusiasm and commitment of the missioners, and they were the ones who were probably most heavily influenced by the program. But the framework for the demonstration of this enthusiasm and commitment was provided by denominational leaders like Ralph Holdeman and Warren Hartman who were able to "think outside the box." I believe most missioners will agree with my observation that Warren Hartman, Ralph Holdeman, and John Knecht were enthusiastic evangelists in the best sense of the word. Their love for young people and their belief in the value of our contributions to the church were evident to all of us. For many participants of the YMTY contact with these men had a lifelong impact. With this program these three men were taking a risk because the YMTY program was not universally accepted among EUB churches, as Rev. Althouse notes in his recollections. While it led to revitalized youth programs in many local churches it is clear the motivation supplied by the missions did not last over an extended period of time, even in the most successful programs. But I think the YMTY program did prove that sensitive denominational leaders who listen openly to young people, who believe in their power to communicate the love of Christ to their peers, and who develop programs meeting the concerns and questions of youth can be successful.

Do we believe those assumptions today?

Could a YMTY approach be successful today—fifty years later? Certainly one has to acknowledge the difference a half-century makes. The society of the 1950s was more heavily influenced by religious organizations (e.g., "church" colleges were actually church colleges) than is the case today. Furthermore, young people were bombarded with fewer secular distractions (Jack Kerouac's On the Road and James Dean's The Rebel Without a Cause were mild compared to today's popular culture) and there was less cynicism in the society than is the case today. Can young people in the first decade of the 21st Century develop the enthusiasm and commitment of fifty years ago? Are they still idealistic? Based on working with college-age people for forty years, I believe they are just as idealistic today as they were in the 1950s. They are concerned by many of the same issues as youth of the 1950s. But for a YMTY approach to work today, it will require flexible, innovative, and empathetic denominational leadership. It is at this level I fear such an approach would fall on barren ground.

It would be encouraging to see a "modernized" version of the Youth Missions To Youth resurrected in the United Methodist family of today.
Youth Missioners at Lake Koronis, July 1956

Roster of Youth Missioners for 1956

Team A

Allbee, Lew
Bohn, Marlene
Brenneman, Dave
Cassel, Richard
Dutenhaver, Larry
Exman, Mary
Furman, Beverly
Gockley, Carl
Grady, James
Grass, Viola
Harr, Barbara
Kahl, Kay
Kaatz, Bud
Lang, Erhardt
Lucas, Carolyn
Lutz, Bill
Matz, Bud
Mitchell, Marilyn
Morton, Dave L.
Mourer, Dave
Moyer, Dale
Opdyke, Larry
Platz, Charles
Pletsch, Don
Price, Jay
Pugh, Delores
Rex, Linda Sue
Rinker, Jacquelyn
Rogers, Lynn
Schafer, Ann
St. Clair, Janice
Trost, Evelyn
Ulrich, Gene
Vassallo, Howard
Walton, Mary
Wenz, Paul
Wolf, Bill
Wolf, Mary Jo
Yeago, Jeanne

Team B

Bailey, Paul
Bommershine, Tom
Brice, David
Brown, Amy
Busler, Ellen
Edwards, Phil
Gaines, Donna
Gettle, Karl
Hitt, Terry
James, Jetta
Kenny, Dwight
Miller, Jack Paul
Moore, Carroll
Mueller, Howard
Rader, Blaine
Reese, Ronnie
Roberts, Janice
Schildt, John
Shearer, Dan
Stillwagon, Carol
Stoffer, Dean
Strahan, John
Strahan, Mary
Studer, Dave
Tauber, Pat
Thompson, Mary Lee
Trapp, Sheldon
Watkins, Mary
Young, David
Zimmerman, Larry

Team C

Adams, Joey
Allen, Kay
Allen, Susan
Arends, Darlene
Bieberdorf, Elene
Bobb, Edna May
Bower, Dale
Brandenburg, Calvin
Buller, Bruce
Carey, Don
Carpenter, Earl
Durrett, Donna
Eyes, Leland
Faust, Sandra
Faust, Susan
Feind, Gay
Frahm, Gary
Frahm, Careteen
Koth, Bob
Lunde, Dick
Maiel, Rita
Martin, Marshall
Michaels, Ron
Nantz, Ted
Roepke, Joyce
Scheel, Vernon
Schindler, Marilyn
Slusher, Sharri
Smalley, Larry
Streffler, Laurie
Thompson, Lois
Trujillo, Alonzo
Vogel, Dwight
Wagner, Clair
Wichelt, Joyce
Weinert, Virginia
Background of the Youth Missions to Youth
by Warren D. Hartman

The Youth Missions to Youth program had its roots in the minds of some of our most insightful and visionary ecclesiastical forefathers who drafted the legislation for the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Two of the primary architects were Rueben H. Mueller, General Secretary of Christian Education, and O. T. Deever, General Secretary of Evangelism, of the merged Evangelical United Brethren Church. Both of these men saw Christian education and evangelism as two sides of the same coin. Each served as the Assistant General Secretary of the other’s board. After union they met most of the time as one staff.

Even before the merger, Mueller and Deever were concerned about evangelism among young people. Joining them in this concern was the Director of Young People’s Work—J. Allan Ranck. An early component of the program of the Evangelical United Brethren Youth Fellowship was the designation of January as Youth Evangelism Month. This program never seemed to “get off the ground,” despite strong publicity and excellent resources.

Shortly after I was named to serve as the Youth Director (in 1953), I asked Ralph M. Holdeman, the General Secretary of Evangelism, to help us with the Youth Evangelism Month plans. We agreed that we may need to think in new ways about the evangelism of our young people and began to explore a variety of possibilities. After a number of conversations we agreed on several principles that we thought were basic to an effective youth evangelism effort. Among them were: (1) the conviction that young people could and would reach their peers for Christ and the Church; (2) that the total Youth Fellowship program was an effective model for training and nurturing youth for a responsible role in the life of their local church and beyond; (3) that the participation of pastors and other adult leaders was essential; and (4) that the youth who became involved in an exciting youth evangelism effort would grow and mature in their own faith and commitment to Christ and the Church.

Ralph Holdeman and I concluded that we needed to test those ideas with youth in a controlled “real life” situation. We enlisted John R. Knecht to help develop resources and involved others in planning for a test event. From August 26 to September 1 of 1955 a daring pilot project was held on the campus of United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. Forty-one carefully selected youth from the United States and Canada worked with the pastors and youth from 15 churches in the Dayton area. They attended seminars, worshipped, prayed, played, and celebrated their faith. The excitement generated and the positive results accrued gave birth to the Youth Missions to Youth program.

I recall some comments from youth team members and others who were involved. “After being home, I have come to realize that the Youth Mission was not just a mountaintop, but really another plateau, and a very high one for me and I intend to live on it from now on.” “When that scruffy looking guy, who had been running with a street gang before we came, stood up and told us he had decided to follow Christ, I knew this was for real.” “What a thrilling realization it was for me to think that God could use me in His divine plan just as I am.” “The only difference in me now and before I went on the Mission is that now I want to progress up the ladder to Christ. And it’s a wonderful feeling; I only hope it never leaves.” Finally, as one of the host pastors looked over the crowded sanctuary and saw the large number of youth who were streaming forward in response to a challenge from one of the youth leaders, he said, “If I never see another miracle, this one will be enough.” The results of the YMY for both 1956 and 1957 appear on page 6.

With regard to the last number (Church Vocation Recruits), in the midst of the Youth Missions during the summer of 1957, a conference director called our office and asked that we stop issuing the challenge to serve Christ in a church related vocation. He said they did not know what they would do with the large number of youth from their conference who were offering themselves to serve in one of the church vocations.

The Youth Missions to Youth was a one-of-a-kind-program. I was invited to give an extended report to the annual meeting of the denominational youth directors. Several (including the Methodists) attempted to develop their own version of it, but none seemed to have the same kind of response. I have often wondered if we should have continued the program on a national basis for several years. It was a very intense effort and required more staff time and financial resources than we could give to it. Some conferences conducted Youth Missions for several years with excellent results, but it gradually lost momentum.
Reflections of Youth Missioners

The Youth Missions to Youth in the summers of 1956 and 1957 were significant in my life because they offered those who were young an opportunity to grow in witness to their Christian faith. One pastor from Pennsylvania reported to me: “Not many were participants from our church, but we had the best Youth Fellowship for years after the Youth Mission.”

The plan for the Youth Missions was simple—do what youth do best. Each local mission began with an invitation to the youth of the participating EUB churches to attend a party. A closing youth rally offered an opportunity for commitment to every one who came. Each day a seminar planned events, spoke to youth issues, engaged persons in good fellowship, and enjoyed a noon lunch.

In the local church the first night was a get-acquainted party and the third night was a discussion of personal faith with time for renewal of that relationship. Visitation evangelism followed the next evening. In order to get ready for the visitation—really a youth witness with two persons calling on friends—we utilized role-playing. Often this role playing became more than that. It became an honest witness for Christian faith and everyday living. I remember one of these role-playing sessions in southern California especially. A young woman from Indiana with a long pony tail expressed her faith so clearly and effectively that those of us listening were all ready to buy into that faith because it was surely the way in which she lived. These witnesses were powerful models that others could use.

Sunday came sometime during the week with Sunday school, youth leading in worship services, and a Youth Fellowship night with a Jalopy Raid to bring persons and to take them home again. Signs decorated the cars as they roamed throughout the community providing transportation to the event for youth.

The initial party was planned for 200-1,000 persons with each church suggesting the number it would bring. Songs were planned including the designation of a leader, and games were planned including equipment. Persons were invited to lead skits at the party. Food was simple—coke, chips, and ice cream bars. A short worship moment included scripture, a camp fire, and singing of “The Lord’s Prayer.”

In California I remember when I finished leading a “Lion Hunt,” Gil Dodds, the Olympic pole vault champion, came from the gym to give a short witness. In Nebraska the leader of a human scavenger hunt called for a “love letter.” Greta, was working as a nurse at Red Bird Mission in Kentucky. It needed to be opened to prove it to be a love letter. The leader read: “Love, Greta. P.S. We have had our baby and he is doing fine.” Laughter erupted. But Greta had been reporting on an expectant mother who came to the mission clinic repeatedly to deliver a baby, and this was Greta’s announcement of a successful birth. The laughter was explosive—parties and game sessions were always fun.

Another of the seminar activities to get ready for the closing service was to spend time in quiet prayer with the opportunity for persons to share the significant insights or activities for the week. Again, it was the honest witness that made a difference for others. Sometimes emotional, sometimes funny, sometimes joyous, these expressions of experience followed by quiet time to contemplate what God was doing in one’s own life was witness to an honest faith decision. We also wrote the commitment on the blackboard. Thus, persons could share with friends just what might be offered for a new step in Christian faith. Some of these commitments included renewal of a relationship with Jesus Christ, a first-time commitment to this faith, sensing calls to the pastorate and to the mission field, Bible reading and daily prayer, living life in a way that witness to one’s faith in appropriate ways happened all the time, and developing meaningful church relationships.

At the closing rally we took roll call church by church with cheering for the churches that achieved their attendance goals. In addition to the roll call, singing, scripture, effective preaching, and a short invitation to commit one’s life to Christ moved many of the young people attending to a moment of commitment. They responded by the hundreds and the thousands.

The YMTY program endeavored to build the church together. This was not just a youth experience, it was the young church in action. We sang, we played, we laughed, we prayed, but always in the context of the congregations and pastors of the host churches. Many of the individuals on the three teams each summer were those who gave leadership to the denominational Youth Fellowship. Persons who served as missioners continued in those leadership roles in the future. The church knew the blessings of youth whose spirits were brought to new faith meaning in this venture.
The YMTY also helped us to understand that we were not alone in this program. God was at work. In Nebraska, Dr. Warren Hartman joined us for team coordination and the assignment of youth to specific churches. We always included two new youth members to the assignment committee, and two youth continued with this responsibility for the sake of continuity. I remember that a specific church was named. I reached over to point to the name of a youth missioner I thought would be good for this church on the sheet Joyce Wichelt (now Joyce Sohl, recently retired Deputy General Secretary of the UM General Board of Global Ministries) was holding. She nodded in agreement. Then we waited. After careful thought Dr. Hartman suggested the name on which Joyce and I had silently agreed. One of the new youth members who saw my actions was surprised that Dr. Hartman picked the same person. “How do you do it?” We said, “Know the missioners, listen to the church situation, and expect the Holy Spirit to help with the decision.”

YMTY taught us to learn together. Seminar sessions were interactive experiences. We needed to be our creative best and we learned from each other. We had fun; and we spent time in prayer and in intensive planning. Each of us was responsible to share our Christian faith with others, and we were all expected to communicate it clearly and honestly.

When I reflect on the YMTY, it is clear to me that the EUB Church was willing to take the risks of giving significant responsibility to young people. I was 24-25 years old and was the Youth Associate in Christian Education and Youth Fellowship during those two summers. Most of the missioners were younger than I was. Some were barely 16. We were expected to be our best, and we were trusted to represent Jesus Christ effectively to other young people. Our experiences over these three summers (including the pilot program summer) indicate that the church was blessed by the YMTY and so were those who were part of the programs.

Bruce Buller

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<th>Results of the Youth Missions to Youth 1956 and 1967</th>
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<tr>
<td>(Submitted by Warren Hartman)</td>
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<td>Number of Missions held</td>
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<td>Number of Rededications</td>
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<td>Church Vocation Recruits</td>
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Photo from Warren Hartman

Claud Wagner, leading a group at Des Moines.
This week I’ve found Christ.” “Christ is now real to me.” “This is what really makes it real when one can see lives of youth changed before your very eyes.” These comments from evaluation sheets point to why Youth Missions to Youth (YMTY) was one of the most exciting and successful programs of the former EUB Church. As a joint venture of the denominational Boards of Christian Education and Evangelism, YMTY was launched fifty years ago in 1955 with a pilot mission in Dayton, Ohio.

The following summer about 100 youth missioners (senior high and college young people) converged on Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for the first mission week before dividing into three teams which then fanned out across the denomination to conduct youth missions for the remainder of the summer. The teams were directed by Warren J. Hartman, Director of Young People’s Work, and by Ralph M. Holdeman and John R. Knecht, Executive and Assistant Secretaries of the Board of Evangelism.

A typical YMTY involved a five-day period in which a half-dozen to twenty or more EUB churches in a geographical area opened their homes and hearts to the youth missioners who spent time with the local youth in a busy and exciting week.

Four daily seminars were held at a central church and attended by the local youth and youth workers. The seminars became creative sessions that ranged from Youth Fellowship workshops, to learning how to make commitment calling, to planning for the week’s events. There were two evening activities in which all the youth came together. A “Come-As-You-Are” party at a local stadium or large church parking lot occurred early in the week. Attendance at these parties ranged from 100-1,000. Near the conclusion of the week a Mass Youth Rally was held that included spirited singing, personal testimonies, a message, and a call to commitment. Once again attendance numbered in the hundreds at each rally. Other evening events centered in each local church included “Why?” groups (in-depth discussions of personal faith), youth-to-youth home visitations, Jalopy Raids, and Youth Fellowship meetings. Sundays included missioner participation in church school classes and in worship services.

Three denominational teams traveled throughout the church in the summers of 1956 and 1957 conducting YMTY programs in places like Wichita (Kansas), Terre Haute (Indiana), Kansas City, Des Moines, Decatur (Illinois), Muncie (Indiana), Denver (Colorado), Milbank (South Dakota), Viola (Wisconsin), and Johnstown (Pennsylvania). Following the summers of 1956 and 1957 variations of YMTY programs were held in Iowa as weekend events, in Toledo (Ohio) during the Christmas break, and elsewhere. In July, 1958, while serving as the Board of Christian Education’s Youth Associate, I was privileged to direct a team of Kansas youth in four YMTY programs in the Kansas Conference.

The impact of the YMTY on a denomination the size of the EUB Church was considerable. About one-fifth of our churches participated in a YMTY. Perhaps as many as 300 of our high school and college youth served as missioners over the period investing themselves in Christian service, learning and growing in educational and evangelistic skills. Youth from across the church met, lived and worked with each other making strong friendships and catching a glimpse of the larger church. Literally thousands of Christian commitments were made in a YMTY. A significant number of future ministerial recruits resulted. About thirty-five years after one YMTY I received a call half-way across the country from a woman who wanted me to know she was to be ordained the following evening. She had received the call to become a pastor in her YMTY in which I shared. She had resisted the call as life led her in other directions, but now it was coming to fulfillment. God used the enthusiasm of youth to provide a powerful and lasting impact on the church many years after her involvement in a YMTY. That impact is still remembered fondly and felt today.

Clair Wagner
Memories of people and events of fifty years ago are often as fuzzy and faded as are the photos and articles of the Youth Missions to Youth Program of the EUB Youth Fellowship. But some memories remain clear. These include: (1) the large number of youth who participated in and affirmed/reaffirmed their commitment to Christ during the youth evangelism events at each location; (2) Jalopy Raids (decorated cars) that cruised neighborhoods inviting the unchurched youth to parties, worship services, and rallies; (3) the intense work done by the Youth Missioners and each local youth committee to assure leadership training as well as spiritual enrichment during the events; and (4) conversations held among the youth about Christian faith and the challenges youth gave to each other about the faith.

There are other specific memories of the events in which I participated. I remember the suburban church in the Harrisburg (Pennsylvania) area where Rev. Lawrence Althouse served as pastor and the enthusiasm of the youth in that community. I remember the small rural churches that came together in the Sterling (Colorado) area with as much or more enthusiasm as those of the larger communities. I worked with the young people in the LeRoy and Mead churches. I remember an automobile accident involving several Youth Missioners in the middle of Kansas and the kindness and help of the members of the local church. I remember the gathering at Lake Koronis (Minnesota) for the General Convention in the midst of the summer for renewal/enrichment for many of the Youth Missioners.

As is the case in many such experiences, it is primarily the people that you remember. Warren Hartman, Bruce Buller, Dwight Vogel, Tom Boomershine, Bill Wolf, Paul Bailey, Lois Miller, Sandy Faust, Marilyn Grauberger, Dale Bower, Clair Wagner are just a few of those important people of that summer. As is often the case in the church, I kept running into these same people during the next fifty years at General Conferences, various meetings around the country, and United Methodist Women Assemblies and events. The skills we learned as college students in Youth Missions to Youth leadership roles have been used by many of us through the years in our various roles within the United Methodist Church.

The concept of youth evangelism is no longer a major focus of the denomination, but some of the techniques/concepts were used by the General Board of Global Ministries and the Women's Division in our programs for young people in the past several years. Two Youth Mission Chorales were conducted by the General Board of Global Ministries—one in 1998 to Europe and the other in 2001 to Asia. Each chorale involved college students who witnessed to their faith through song; those who gave testimony to their own faith at concerts and services; and those whose lives were changed by the people they met during their six weeks on the road. Young people working with other young people and assuming leadership and faith-mentoring roles are still needed today. The teen women and college/university units of United Methodist Women are trying this type of leadership as the young women find their place in God's mission in the world today. May we learn from the past and be open to the future.

Joyce D. (Wichelt) Sohl
It is difficult to believe that almost fifty years have passed since I was selected to participate in the first Youth Missions to Youth program. I felt greatly honored to be selected, and my participation changed my life in unforeseen ways. I will return to that theme later. First, let me recall a couple of things that remain in my mind after fifty years.

One of the remarkable aspects of the program was the idealism of its young participants. We thought we could change the world for the better. We set about our task with a degree of enthusiasm that has seldom, if ever, been matched in my own subsequent experience. A particular incident comes to mind. One evening in a Midwestern city, several of us decided to enter a tavern and deliver our message of redemption to those inside who were seeking a rather different kind of solace. The bartender and his patrons were dumbfounded. Fortunately, we left before the bouncer had an opportunity to forcibly reject the good news we delivered.

Another recollection that impresses me as an anthropologist is how quickly the group as a whole established its own little subculture, complete with rituals and specialized jargon. I don’t remember how it started, but before long, every time we passed other members of the group, we would say “Turkey Gobbler” as a form of greeting. We found that changing the inflection of this phrase could convey a variety of different nuances. This, and other such rituals, served to unify the group and provide a touch of humor to an otherwise serious task.

To return to the matter of how this experience changed my life, there are the obvious things such as making lifelong friends. An unexpected ramification was that I came to look back upon the experience with mixed gratitude and embarrassment. This embarrassment was due to the emotional extremes that we often experienced and promoted in the special services we held for young people. In my own life, I moved on to a form of religious practice which emphasizes meditation and listening quietly for the still small voice of the Universe. I am afraid that this still small voice is easily overlooked in a “noisy” setting that encourages emotional and behavioral intensity.

I do not mean to imply that the experience of the young people who participated in our services was superficial because it was emotionally induced. The long-term results have differed, I am sure, for each person involved. For some, the results probably were quite ephemeral, whereas for others, their lives were undoubtedly changed for the better.

As a final note, in recent years I have gotten over my embarrassment of what seemed to be the emotional excesses of the Youth Missions to Youth program. I have pride in a religious heritage that emphasizes the priority of a first-hand encounter with the Eternal over creed and doctrine. This relatively “un-creedal” approach sets our tradition apart from various types of religious fundamentalism that are tearing so much of the world apart. This is a priceless gift from the past—a past that extends back beyond the Protestant reformation to the Anabaptist roots of the Evangelical and United Brethren churches. Today, this heritage, reinforced by Methodism, continues to combine an emphasis upon direct experience with religious tolerance and a concern for the welfare of others.

Dave Young

Doors swing on hinges and so do the events of our lives. During the spring of 1956 Rev. Roger Keech, Youth Director of the Pennsylvania Conference, talked to me about the Youth Missions to Youth program. It sounded interesting and I agreed to take part. Thus in June I found myself with other youth missionaries from across the country in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. A memory that remains to this day is the big smile, the kind voice, and the fatherly approach of Rev. John Knecht. He once said, “God often works in spite of us.” To me, he was the model of an ideal Christian.

From Harrisburg it was on to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and an assignment to Ball’s Mill and Cogan Station, located in lovely country between the mountains. There I made friends with families by the name of Mutchler and Heim, and we remained in contact for many years. The second assignment for our team was Philipsburg, Pennsylvania. Then it was off to Lake Koronis, Minnesota, for the General Youth Fellowship Convention. On a Saturday evening in the chapel, my call to ministry was validated.

After the Youth Fellowship Convention I was involved in missions in Muncie (Indiana), Decatur (Illinois), and the greater Indianapolis area. At each of these stops I recall the song times, the instructional and training sessions, the Jalopy raids, the big parties and Shaggy dog events with Bud Katz, and the nights of commitment with Paul Bailey speaking from Jeremiah, “The summer is over. The harvest is past and you are not yet saved.”
In the autumn of 1956 I was assigned to a four-point rural circuit. I was as “green as grass,” but could not even have tried this assignment had it not been for my experience on the Youth Missions to Youth in the summer of 1956. In fact the experience was so vital for me that I signed up for the 1957 program.

The Youth Missions to Youth not only introduced me to denominational leaders, but to Christian youth from across the nation and led to my only westward trip. In 1957 our team went to Salina, Kansas. I was in a little community named Jewel. It was out in the heartland. My host family lived on a 600-acre wheat farm. They also gave me directions to the storm cellar, gave me a flashlight, and explained how to listen for the sound of a runaway train—the indication of a coming tornado. The folks in Kansas, as in Pennsylvania, were warm and friendly.

On the way to our next mission assignment in Sacramento, California, we had some wonderful opportunities to explore America the Beautiful. We stopped in Colorado Springs and toured the Garden of the Gods and ascended Pikes Peak. Then it was on to Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a visit to our McCurdy Mission. Enroute to California we passed through the Painted Desert and had a brief visit to the Grand Canyon. Just before entering the desert we stopped for gas. I was driving a 1950 Chevrolet. The station attendant reminded me to “check under the hood.” Right on top was the fan belt with a fourth of an inch of belt remaining—ready to break. Once again the Lord was watching over a group of young people.

For some reason I recall little of the mission in Sacramento. Then it was on to Everett, Washington. One morning we arose about 4:00 a.m. and went fishing in the Skagit River.

From the experiences in the summers of 1956 and 1957 I gained lessons about people and places that could not be learned in the classroom. I was able to see how folks in other places “live and move and have their being.” Some lifelong friends were made. And often when I hear the name of a town or place I think of folks like Carroll Moore, Sheldon Trapp, Karl Gettel, Dwight Kenney, Paul Bailey, Janet Fix, Pat Tauber, Tom Bommershine (the youngest member of our team), and others. We met briefly, but their friendship, smiles, and humor became building blocks in my own life. Four years later, through Sylvia Weber, I was able to go with her father’s [Rev. James Weber, Professor of Religion at Indiana Central College] college group to the Holy Land.

From my perspective the Youth Missions to Youth had good results. I believe they were divinely inspired, and have often wondered why they have not been repeated. Throughout the years there has remained in me that spirit from those days of long ago. “Our impossibilities are God’s opportunities.” Thus, I am eternally grateful for the hinges that opened the door for me to become part of a great adventure—going across the United States in the name of Christ—in the company of many tremendous people.

John W. Schildt

Authors of This Issue

Warren Hartman (Franklin, Tennessee), Bruce Buller (Rochester, Minnesota), Clair Wagner (Lancaster, Pennsylvania), John Schildt (Chewsville, Maryland), Lawrence Althouse (Dallas, Texas), and Robert P. Longenecker (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) are all retired United Methodist (and EUB) pastors. John Schildt is a well-known author of books on the American Civil War.

Joyce Wichelt Sohl (White Plains, New York) retired recently from her position as Deputy General Secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries.

David Young (Valemont, B. C., Canada) is a retired Professor of Anthropology from the University of Alberta. After retirement he taught for several years in Japan.

Doris Gaines Rapp (Huntington, Indiana) is a professional psychologist in private practice and an author. Her husband, Bill, is a retired United Methodist minister.

Although Donna Gaines Nehring (Clayton, Ohio) wrote no article for this issue, she supplied a great deal of valuable information for it. She is a nurse.

Robert L. Frey (Miamisburg, Ohio) is the editor of the Telescope-Messenger and a retired Professor of History and academic dean at several colleges and universities.
I was 15 years old in 1955 when my church, Beavertown EUB, participated in the Pilot Mission of the Youth Missions to Youth program held at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. What an amazing week! I knew, as soon as I was old enough, I had to be a youth missionary.

In 1956-1957 I sang soprano in the all-Dayton EUB Youth Choir which rehearsed at First EUB Church near the seminary. On occasion, I would encounter John Knecht, Assistant Secretary of Evangelism for the EUB denomination, in the hallway or on the stairs of the large white church. "I just have to be on a team this summer, Dr. Knecht! Please, what can I do?" Like our heavenly Father who will not deprive His children of what we ask when we ask Him specifically and entreat Him morning, noon, and night, John Knecht finally replied, with a heavy sigh and a smile, "Write a letter to the Evangelism office."

Finally, in the summer of 1957, at 17 years of age with my senior year in high school yet to come, I was one of the younger Youth Missioners. Assigned to the Midwest Team, our caravan of cars, including the old "Grey Goose" (which was held together with bailing wire, spit, and prayer), and a new four-door Dodge sedan (complete with huge tail fins that resembled a businessman's four door Batmobile), traveled along the highways between Ohio and the Dakotas, stopping at six locations for week-long missions.

"Jalopy raids" initiated each week's activities. From local churches in the Mission area, car-loads of youth descended on prospective members of the respective Youth Fellowships and invited them to come to a Mixer, dressed just as they were. Hundreds of young people from all over the city would then gather to fellowship, play games, have refreshments, and enter into prayer for the week of learning and worship. Our goal was to increase the membership and to strengthen local Youth Fellowships.

During our early morning devotions we prayed for the presence of the Holy Spirit and for the spiritual awakening of local youth and Missioners. Daily seminars, held at a centrally located church, were full of youth, skits, fun, worship, praise songs, and study. Evenings in local churches gave opportunity to touch the lives of youth through prayer meetings, Bible study, and a time to plan Youth Fellowship activities for the Fall session.

I have many memories, not only of the 1957 summer YMTY, but of a Christmas Mission the next December, and a Mission weekend in Illinois the following year. One memory is of a mixer where several hundred local youth, youth directors, missioners, and our advisor, Warren Hartman, had gathered. A young man was sitting alone on the little hill that overlooked the activities. The pastor of the church to which I had been assigned told me that the "boy" was 20 years old and had just gotten out of jail for manslaughter. He had been driving his car at a high speed when it left the road killing his passenger, his best friend. "Talk to him, Doris. Maybe you can get him to join us."

"Oh God," I prayed, "What do I know about jail or prison? What do I know about all that sadness? You know, Father, not me. Let my words be your words with this young man." I approached him and said, "Hi, I'm Doris Gaines from Dayton, Ohio. I noticed you sitting here all alone, so I thought I'd sit with you for awhile."

"You'll miss all the fun up here," he responded. "Oh that's OK. In a few minutes maybe you'll join us. You know God includes everyone in His family." "Not me, You don't know what I did." "God knows and He still loves you. And He loves me in spite of all the things I've done or failed to do." We sat there for awhile, then I said, "I know I don't know exactly what to say, but I can keep you company. God would not want me to leave you sitting here alone." Often it is not what we say, it is just being there. "OK, let's go," he finally sighed. He got up and offered his hand to me. "You and God win." I will always remember Danny (not his real name) because God remembered me when I looked to Him for words.

The final evening of each Youth Mission week was a citywide Youth Rally for worship, inspirational singing, testimonies, deeply moving prayers, and commitment. At the end of the service, one of the Youth Missioners gave an invitation to all those present to come forward, as an act of commitment, as each one asked the Lord to be his/her own personal savior. Youth from all over the city made their way to the altar rail where they knelt in prayer and supplication that the Lord would enter their life. It felt as if the sanctuary was full of angels, fluttering their soft wings in harmony with the swell of the organ, as young people left their seats and inched forward. The altar area was soon full, but that stopped no one who wanted to come forward. They
crowded the aisles and knelt where they were when they could go no further. Danny came too. I saw him about halfway down the center aisle, kneeling on one knee and resting his head on the other, crying in joy, release, and wonderment that God would love and forgive even him and make His home in Danny’s heart. Like sweet warm milk on a cold winter eve, the Holy Spirit pours in and nourishes the spirit and satisfies the soul.

My experiences with Youth Missions to Youth are how I mark my Christian days. I went from being a “child” of God to being an “adult” in Him—a doer and not just a receiver. When we bear witness to the work of God in our lives and the saving Grace of Jesus, we are forever changed: we become new beings in Him—Missioners of Christ.

Doris Gaines Rapp

Reflections of Pastors

I was no more than halfway through the initial year of my first full-time pastorate since graduation from seminary. I was in the midst of building a new church. And I was trying to guide my congregation through a transition from a rural to a suburban church. Many members were not all that certain they wanted to make the transition. I thought I had all I could handle.

Then Dr. Ralph Holdeman, Secretary of Evangelism for the EUB Church, asked me to serve as the chairman of the local committee for the Youth Missions to Youth in the Greater Harrisburg area of Pennsylvania from June 12-18, 1956. Harrisburg was to be the initial mission for a projected program that would carry 100 young people across the EUB denomination in June, July, and August in nineteen different locations. Sponsored jointly by the Department of Evangelism and the General Youth Fellowship, the YMTY was designed to find youthful prospects for the areas’ EUB churches, involve them in some phase of the local church’s life, and win them to Christ.

When I agreed to serve, I did not realize how time- and energy-consuming the responsibility would be. For one thing, I assumed it would be primarily a matter of informing and signing-up all the area EUB churches. It did not occur to me that many of these churches would have to be “sold” on participating and that some would not participate at all. I spent a couple of weeks visiting pastors, and eventually we had a total of twenty-five churches participate and host youth teams.

When I arrived at Charlton EUB Church in Paxtonia in June, 1955, fresh from United Seminary in Dayton, the Youth Fellowship appeared to be virtually dormant. The young people seemed to be just “going through the motions.” When I learned about the YMTY program, I hoped it might inject life into our youth ministry.

Four youth missioners were assigned to Charlton EUB Church: Blaine Rader, Tom Boomershine, Joyce Wichelt [Sohl], and a fourth young man whose name escapes me. I have corresponded recently with Blaine, Tom, and Joyce, and they cannot recall his name either. All four of these young people were enthusiastic, energetic, and quickly won over both our young people and, to my surprise, many of the adults. These missioners lit a fire under our Youth Fellowship, just as other teams of youth missioners were having a similar effect in Harrisburg, Colonial Park, Penbrook, Linglestown, Grantville, Manada Hill, Oberlin, Lemoyne, New Cumberland, Wormleysburg, Youngstown, Manchester, Williamstown, and Wiconisco.

The program they brought included both daytime and evening events. An opening session was held on Tuesday, June 12, at the State Street EUB Church. Bishop George E. Epp brought greetings from the general church at this session. The next day acting mayor of Harrisburg, Stanley Walker, brought greetings from the city demonstrating the support this program received from the city. Seminars were held daily, Wednesday through Saturday, from 9 a.m. to
3:30 p.m. in the State Street EUB Church. The discussion theme for the first session was “The Meaning of the Christian Faith for Youth and How to Share It with Other Young People.” Two “come-as-you-are” parties were held, one on the west shore of the Susquehanna River at Neagley Park in Lemoyne and one on the parking lot of the Central Dauphin High School on the east shore.

I was too young yet to be a skeptic, but I recall that I had doubts about the “Jalopy Raids” scheduled for Sunday afternoon. Young people filled cars to canvass the areas and to invite other young people to special Sunday evening programs in the various churches. I had a hard time envisioning the youth of Charlton Church doing that—but, succumbing to the infectious enthusiasm of our four missioners, they did!

I also knew that the leadership team was aiming at no less than 1,000 youth to attend the closing rally at State Street Church on Monday evening. I wondered whether that was in the realm of possibility, but that night as I watched them jam the church and all the adjacent rooms, I did not doubt that we had more than reached our goal. It was an unforgettable and inspiring moment when hundreds of youth came forward to the altar rail in dedication, followed by the entire congregation singing “The Lord’s Prayer” led by a 50-voice youth choir. The closing rally was conducted by Clair Matz, Jr., of Reading, Pennsylvania; Jetta James of Dayton, West Virginia; and Bruce Buller of Naperville, Illinois.

As I drove back to Paxtonia that evening, I thought to myself, “It’s over—but maybe it’s just beginning!” I do not know about the other pastors, but at Charlton Church we found the effects from the YMTY invigorating our Youth Fellowship for quite some time. It was still in evidence when I left Charlton in 1960 to pursue graduate studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Sometimes I ask myself whether such a program could still be effective today. Although youth culture and youth work have changed remarkably since those days, with some updating I think it could work.

Lawrence Althouse

In my second year as a pastor, I was given this amazing bit of “information” in a “fun song” —A Snake’s Belt Slips for It Hasn’t Any Hips and Its Necktie is Just Below Its Waistline. As Youth Director for the Lebanon County (PA) EUB Youth Fellowship I was much involved in our county’s Youth Missions to Youth. That is how I learned about the snake’s dilemma.

My two-point charge was among the thirty-five EUB congregations in the county. We also had two long-established camp meetings in the county. Although unaware of any family relationship, I prevailed on the conservative manager, Rev. Christian Longenecker, to allow us to use Mount Lebanon Camp Meeting grounds as the “hub” for our Youth Missions to Youth program. At one point he almost asked us to leave. But we “made it” from Friday, July 26, to Thursday, August 1, 1956!

It was “a bit of a stretch” for some of our church members, but they decided to support the YMTY. James Graby, a pre-theological student at Lebanon Valley College and a member of my Fontana congregation, became one of the “Y.E.S.” men, as the leaders were called. Our “Jalopy Raid” round-up was much enjoyed by the youth, and it got a fair amount of notice in the Lebanon Daily News.

I had met Ralph Holdeman while a student at Bonebrake (now UTS) Seminary, but this was my first opportunity to work with him. What a guy! What an imaginative powerhouse! Carl Rife, a missioner and then a high school senior in York, Pennsylvania, stayed with us and preached in our Rocherty Church on Sunday morning. We’ve been friends across the years.

Our YMTY was long remembered and talked about in politically and religiously conservative Lebanon County. The residents of Lebanon did not care whether snakes had necktie problems. They DID know that life has many problems and challenges, and Ralph Holdeman and his “rowdy” evangelists with their crazy songs were seen as helping to handle and to make sense of life. I think they also gained a new vision and courage to venture in reaching out to others for Christ. And that is what it was all about!
Johnstown Area Youth Missions To Youth

Preparing for a Jalopy Raid

Closing Youth Rally

Photo Johnstown Tribune-Democrat
Schedule of Youth Missions to Youth
Summer 1956

Greater Harrisburg, Penn.       June 12-18
Allentown-Bethlehem, Penn.      June 19-24
Williamsport, Penn.             June 20-26
Lancaster County, Penn.         June 25-July 1
Kansas City-St. Joseph, Kansas   June 25-July 1
Phillipsburg, Penn.             June 29-July 5
Wichita, Kansas                 July 2-8

General Youth Fellowship Convention
Lake Koronis, Minnesota         July 11-15
Muncie, Indiana Area            July 20-26
Viola, Wisconsin                July 20-26
Sterling, Colorado              July 20-26
Des Moines, Iowa                July 31-August 6
Decatur, Illinois Area          July 31-August 6
Robinson, Illinois Area         July 31-August 6
Greater Indianapolis, Indiana   August 9-15
Greater Denver                  August 9-15
Detroit                        August 9-15
Greater Johnstown, Penn.        August 17-23
Findlay, Ohio                   August 17-23
Callaway Area, Nebraska         August 17-23

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Photo from John Schildt
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:
Grass Roots Voices

Over 100 interviews have been completed for the “Grass Roots Voices” project, but we need to complete interviews in Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Kansas, and Western Pennsylvania next. We need both regional and conference facilitators for this project. Many of you, our readers, qualify for these roles. Members of the Oral History Task Force will provide the necessary training materials.

If you are interested, please contact:

Ms. Lorraine E. Pierce
832 Knoll Road
East Lansing, MI 48823
(517) 351-1248
howardp907@aol.com

This is a significant project in recalling life in the EUB Church. Join us in completing it.

United Theological Seminary
Center for the
Evangelical United Brethren Heritage
1810 Harvard Boulevard
Dayton, OH 45406-4599