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Kimberly Downs Initiates IMPAC/MSU To 'Put Christ on the College Campus'

By Myrtle Davidson

LANSING, Mich.—One of the most unusual steps ever taken to "put Christ on the state college campus" is being made now on the Michigan State University campus in Lansing.

It's called IMPAC/Michigan State—initiating the means for penetrating America's campuses—a name which leaders of the group hope will be used by Christian leaders establishing student programs and churches of Christ on other college campuses to mean "improving the methods for penetrating America's campuses."

"An impact for Christ—that's exactly what we want to make," Lee Harrington, one of the three IMPAC leaders said. "We want to share the good news about Christ with these students on the Michigan State University

campus. We want to build a campus.

Build Solidly

"We want to build solid evangelistic student centers and educational programs so that they can be with fellow Christians and continue to learn as souls are being won to Christ, and we want to establish a campus congregation of the church so they will have an accessible place to worship and be directed in further evangelistic efforts on campus."

The IMPAC work is under the rule of the elders of the Kimberly Downs congregation in Lansing. They selected Harrington, Reid Felps, and Bill Bowen to start a student program on the Michigan State campus.

All three of these young men were working with the student center program at the Univer-



Reid Felps

sity of Alabama under the direction of a pioneer of student center and Bible chair work, Kenneth Reed, minister of the University congregation in Tuscaloosa.

Idea New

The IMPAC idea is new—but it is based partially on the teaching concept now found on several campuses and mainly on the evangelistic fervor found in an exodus concept.

"From our experience we have found three main areas to campus work for Christ," Harrington said. "The first area is the local ministry, which includes the oversight of a School of Biblical Studies, the teaching concept; the second is the direction of campus evangelistic efforts, and the third is public



Lee Harrington Jr.

relations, oversight of physical facilities and responsibility for any financial endeavors."

Overlapping

He added that the three overlap extensively, and all are programmed and oriented toward the one ultimate goal of evangelizing the campus of MSU.

"IMPAC means that at least three trained workers, one to be responsible for each of these three areas, will go to a state college campus to establish a student program, to begin personal work, and to establish a congregation of the church with a School of Biblical Studies to provide adequate Christian education on a college level.

"If others could go to aid the work, especially secretaries and



Bill Bowen

students trained in campus evangelism or willing to be trained, the work would be strengthened," Harrington said.

IMPAC Differs

Thus IMPAC differs from the Bible Chair arrangement, where in many cases one worker must try to do all three jobs, and from the Exodus, where 100 or more people move into a community to establish a church.

Harrington said that IMPAC evolved this way:

"I came to the University of Alabama in 1960, and for three years was totally indifferent to the church. Then I began going to the University Christian Student Center (U.C.S.C.), became involved in the Student Center activities, and met Reid Felps, who had come to the U. of A. from Freed-Hardeman College (Henderson, Tenn.).

"Reid was speaking at various congregations of the church in Alabama on week-ends, asking individual Christians to take calendar banks, the only means of financial support for the Student Center program. I asked to go along one week-end, and the first thing I knew, I too was placing the little banks on week-ends."

B.S. and Law School

Harrington received his B.S. degree in commerce and business in 1965, then entered Law School at the U. of A. After one semester, he decided that there were "more important things in life," so he and Felps, who received his B.S. in psychology in 1966, entered summer school at Abilene Christian College to begin work on master's degrees in Bible.

In the fall of 1966, both of the young men were hired to work full-time for the University Church of Christ, Harrington as development director of the student center, and Felps as personal work director for the church.

Both of them taught in the School of Biblical Studies which had just begun, with Bill

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ister at Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, as director.

Back to Abilene

In the summer of 1967, Felps and Harrington returned to Abilene to continue their Bible studies, and Bowen, who held a B.S. degree in history from Jacksonville State and an M.A. degree in New Testament studies from Harding College in Searcy, Ark., continued his work on a second M.A. degree in philosophy at the U. of A.

"One afternoon in the fall after we arrived back at the University, the three of us went across the street to get a Coke," Harrington recalled. "One asked if either of the other two could ever picture our leaving the work at the University church—at that time I never thought I would—but after a pause, one responded with 'yes, if an opportunity to do similar work elsewhere came along.'"

The three then began to work on such a possibility. One of the first steps they took was to contact Mark Hicks, who had been personal work director at 5th and Highland in Abilene but who had left that work to begin a student program at the University of Florida.

Several Places

He suggested several places

at Michigan State University, called Harrington and said that the Kimberly Downs congregation in Lansing was extremely interested in starting campus work and had progressed quite far in their plans.

"Lynn had no idea that we had even been thinking about doing this type work when he suggested that we think about coming up and using our experience to lead this effort," Harrington said.

To Kimberly Downs

Nelson submitted the three names to the elders of the Kimberly Downs congregation, who sent applications and later asked them to come up for interviews.

There are many reasons why Michigan State should be the target of the first IMPAC. It is the largest on-campus university in the world, with some

45,000 students expected in September of this year. It is a greater center of research and learning, and is continually expanding. And, as one dorm counselor told Harrington on a recent visit on campus, the college students need such a program.

Harrington said that the three IMPAC leaders spent many hours trying to decide where to go. Bowen, and his wife Nancy, were unable to go for the first interviews, but went later and were quite impressed with the work and the possibility of establishing a student program on the campus at MSU.