

**“KEEP UP THE AGITATION”<sup>1</sup>:  
CHICAGO CLERGY AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE 1960s**

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Rev. Gerald E. Forshey was a Chicagoan, but not by birth. He was born in Long Beach, California in 1932, the son of a casino pit boss. Influenced by Methodist ministers while attending UCLA, Forshey decided to train for the ministry at the Iliff School of Theology after graduation. He went to Denver as “a blue collar kid with expanding horizons.” He left seminary with “a theology and a sense of mission that would shape his life and work.” He also met and married his wife Florence, who came to study in Denver from her home in Mobile, Alabama.<sup>2</sup>

Chicago became their home in 1958, when Rev. Forshey took an assignment as pastor to an inner-city Methodist parish near Lincoln Park. In ways that Jerry and Florence Forshey could not possibly have foreseen, their lives would be intertwined with those of thousands of other migrants headed to Chicago, most of them African American and coming from the deep south. During the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, a half-million migrants came to Chicago and their arrival affected nearly every aspect of city life.

Like many other migrants, Forshey “was entranced by the big city and all it had to offer.” He came to Chicago on the cusp of an explosive period of growth under Mayor Richard J. Daley—including the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the construction of the expressway systems and new mass transit lines, the development of McCormick Place and the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, as well as the opening of the then largest building in the world—the Sears Tower.

But he was not a starry-eyed idealist; he spent years working in a string of Methodist congregations as the white pastor in racially-mixed or all-black congregations. Forshey lived in neighborhoods going through rapid racial change, and his approach to the ministry was shaped by the experiences of his congregants, both black and white. The black migrants’ very presence forced existing residents and institutions to change—often in wrenching, and soul-searching ways in the face of ingrained patterns of racism. He watched as his African American congregants scrambled to find housing in a city where strict racial segregation was maintained through custom, coercion and

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Jerry Forshey to Ed King, Spring, 1964, in Ed King, “White Church” (2005), typescript in Martin Deppe personal files.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Mahan, Dean of the Iliff School of Theology, remarks on accepting an alumni award from the Iliff School of Theology on behalf of Jerry Forshey, January 25, 2008. As in an email to Jerry Forshey on that same date. Martin Deppe, personal files.

sometimes violence.<sup>3</sup>

Because of his ministerial appointments, Forshey came to devote himself particularly to the cause of civil rights. Not only did he see the problems encountered by his own parishioners, but he also saw connections to the southern civil rights movement. He arrived in Chicago just a few years after the Supreme Court decision desegregating schools (Brown) and the Montgomery Bus Boycott that fostered the rise of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., to national prominence. Forshey helped to organize the Inner City Methodist Ministers Fellowship to provide “mutual support and survival” as well as a platform for action in changing times.

In January, 1963, the National Conference on Religion and Race met in Chicago to mark the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation and called for “leadership of religion in ending racial discrimination in the United States.” Among the speakers was the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who addressed Jewish, Protestant and Catholic representatives and encouraged their ecumenical efforts for civil rights. The meeting spurred activists and “there was a dramatic increase in the public visibility as well as the inner vitality of religious groups committed to racial justice.”<sup>4</sup>

Clergy committed to integration in Chicago were galvanized by words and actions both in Chicago and across the country. After his address to the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference moved from their voter registration program in Albany, Georgia to civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama. King was arrested in Birmingham and wrote an open letter to clergymen on April 16, 1963, known familiarly as the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” Addressed to “my dear fellow clergymen,” King exhorted them to action, arguing, “that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”<sup>5</sup> The exhortations of Martin Luther King, Jr., from the Birmingham jail in April, 1963, for help from his fellow clergymen, black and white, resonated deeply with clergy in Chicago and across the nation.

### **Jackson, 1963**

In Jackson, Mississippi, following the events in Birmingham, Medgar Evers, John Salter and groups of young college students began to challenge

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<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the twentieth century, the black population of Chicago grew from less than 1% of the city’s population (30,000 in 1900) to one third of the city’s 3 million residents in 2000. Many of those who came to Chicago were from Mississippi so many that by 2000 Chicago had more black residents than the entire state of Mississippi.

<sup>4</sup> Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line, The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens, GA: U Georgia P, 1986), 105-106.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986), 92.

the racial segregation of public facilities. Evers, who headed the state chapter of the NAACP, and John Salter, a white sociology professor and NAACP organizer at Tougaloo College, were joined by the recently appointed college chaplain, Methodist Ed King, who came as a “white Christian minister in the black Church.” Ed King, a native of nearby Vicksburg, was especially affected by the “hypocrisy on display in Birmingham’s churches,” something he felt could not be lost “even on white Mississippi Christians.”<sup>6</sup>

John Salter and Ed King decided to challenge segregation in lunch counters, public libraries and waiting rooms. In late spring, 1963, Tougaloo and Jackson State students organized a sit-in at the Woolworth’s store in downtown Jackson. Ed King was among a group of sitting protesters arrested after a mob attacked them “with ketchup, mustard, sugar, pies, and everything on the counter.”<sup>7</sup> Photographs of this attack appeared in newspapers across the country and galvanized the Jackson movement.

Following their release, the activists began organized integrated church visits in Jackson, Mississippi. On Sunday, June 9, Medgar Evers led integrated groups attempting to worship but were turned away from the First Baptist Church as well as Galloway Memorial Methodist Church. When the long-time pastor at Galloway, Dr. W. B. Selah, learned that his ushers had refused entrance to this group, he addressed his congregation on the spot: “I know in conscience that there can be no color bar in a Christian church, so I will ask the bishop for another appointment.” Just a few days later, Evers was shot and killed outside his home in Jackson, Mississippi. More than 100 demonstrators were arrested in protests that followed Evers’ murder.

On the evening of June 18, 1963, before Evers’s funeral, Ed King and John Salter were both seriously injured in a mysterious car accident on their way to Tougaloo College, just north of the city. Questions remain about the way their car was struck, which put both Salter and King out of commission for much of the summer. Partially recovered, Ed King was joined by his wife Jeanette and three students for the drive to Washington, DC, for the March on Washington. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed the difficulties that King and others in Mississippi were facing: “It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end, but a beginning.”<sup>8</sup>

Ed King heeded this call from Martin Luther King. When he returned to Jackson, he revived attempts to desegregate downtown churches. His strategy of focusing on segregated mainline Protestant churches was intentional, as “challenging the churches’ “whites only” policies presented an opportunity to expose the controlling influence of the white social structures

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer; Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997), 126.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dial Press, 1968), 238-239 and Marsh, 131.

<sup>8</sup> Moody, 274-275; King, “I Have a Dream,” in King, *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986), 103.

especially within their private and protected religious domains. Medgar’s assassination, so soon after the first attempt at making a bi-racial church visit, confirmed the significance of the strategy.” In September, 1963, Ed King recruited students at Tougaloo, as he had in the spring, to resume the church visits.<sup>9</sup>

On World Wide Communion Sunday, October 6, 1963, interracial teams sought to enter several all-white downtown churches including St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church, Fondren Presbyterian Church, First Christian Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Capitol Street Methodist Church and Galloway Methodist Church. They were turned away from all but the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup>

Three Tougaloo students, two young black women and one white woman, tried to enter the Capitol Street Methodist Church. An usher stopped them at the door and police arrested them as soon as they arrived. One of the women later explained her actions in relation to the murder of Medgar Evers whom she said “died fighting for the rights of his people and that she was willing to do the same.” The three women were sentenced the following day to a year in jail and fined \$1000 each. However, they were freed on appeal bonds within 24 hours, and returned to the Capitol Street Methodist Church the following Sunday but were not arrested that day.<sup>11</sup>

### Chicago, 1963

Back in Chicago in the late spring and summer of 1963, Methodists were also wrestling with segregation, both within their denomination and in the region. They were moved by events in Alabama and Mississippi. The members of the Methodist Church’s Rock River Annual Conference (including white congregations in Chicago) unanimously adopted a resolution “expressing its admiration, trust and spiritual unity with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his nonviolent campaign for racial integration.” The resolution noted, “The firing line of Christianity today is the area of integration and civil rights.”<sup>12</sup>

Helping to keep attention focused on the issue of integration, members of the new Interracial Council of Methodists, both lay and clergy, held an interracial prayer vigil throughout the three-day meeting. The interracial “kneel-inners” were not stopped at the doors of the church as were their counterparts in Birmingham and Jackson. Instead, they prayed at the cancel rail of the First Methodist Church of Oak Park while the annual convention was taking place. They were joined by Inner City Fellowship pastors and spouses (including Reverends Elmer Dickson and Martin Deppe and

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<sup>9</sup> Robert J. Harmon and Richard Tholin, “Producing the Storyline,” Forshey Files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

<sup>10</sup> “Negroes Arrested At a White Church,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1963.

<sup>11</sup> “Coeds Arrested at Miss. Church Released on \$1,000 Appeals Bond,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 10, 1963. See also Nicholas von Hoffman, “Church Integration Effort in Mississippi: Pro and Con,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sunday, October 27, 1963.

<sup>12</sup> “Dr. King Praised by Methodists,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 19, 1963.

their wives Jean and Peg). They called for an end to segregation in the Rock River Conference.<sup>13</sup>

Members of the Inner City Fellowship also continued to support actions against the segregation in Chicago public schools through the summer and into the early fall. On Tuesday, October 22, 1963, thousands of African American students boycotted schools in an attempt to pressure the School Superintendent Benjamin Willis into making needed improvements. The CCCO and its affiliated community groups organized “Freedom Schools” across the city to serve as alternatives to regular classrooms. Methodist clergy, including John Porter and Leon Sutch, were among those who provided space for these alternative schools.<sup>14</sup>

It was against the backdrop of these issues in Chicago, as well as the national debate about civil rights legislation, that on October 8, 1963, the *Chicago Daily News* ran a headline story written by Nicholas Von Hoffman about the arrest of three Tougaloo College students outside the Capitol Street Methodist Church in Jackson, Mississippi the previous Sunday. The Chicago paper took a particular interest because two of the students arrested came from Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

Rev. Forshey later remembered that he got a phone call at work late that afternoon, “I heard the voice of God saying, ‘Well, what are you going to do about it?’ It sounded just like my wife, Florence. ‘Do about what?’ I inquired. ‘What’s on the front page of the *Daily News*,’ she said.”<sup>16</sup>

Both Forsheys were moved to action. Florence wrote an impassioned letter to the Jackson church where the arrests had taken place: “As a Methodist, and one who was brought up in a church in Mobile, Alabama, I find it even more difficult to understand how you can defy the *Methodist Discipline*, par. 2026 which states that “to discriminate against a person solely upon the basis of his race is both unfair and unchristian.” Florence Forshey encouraged the Jackson minister to “open your doors to everyone” and noted, “If this letter seems condemnatory it is because we stand mutually under the judgment of God, because what happens in Mississippi affects all of us both North and South.”<sup>17</sup>

Jerry Forshey was also moved to act. He and fellow Methodists of the Interracial Council of Greater Chicago called on The Methodist Church “to censure a Mississippi church which barred two Chicago coeds—one white,

<sup>13</sup> Dolores McCahill, “Interracial Prayer Vigil Conducted at Methodist Meeting,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 20, 1963.

<sup>14</sup> “250,000 Boycott Schools,” and “Pupils Play and Sing at Freedom Schools,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 22, 1963.

<sup>15</sup> “A Symbol Transformed,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 2008. See also “Coeds Arrested at Miss. Church, Released on \$1,000 Appeal Bonds,” *Daily Defender*, October 10, 1963.

<sup>16</sup> Reverend Jerry Forshey, August 24, 2004, untitled typescript, in possession of Martin Deppe.

<sup>17</sup> This story was a headline story in the *Chicago Daily News* in October 8, 1963. Florence Forshey letter to the Rev. Mr. Seth Granberry, Minister at Capital Street Church, Jackson, Mississippi, October 9, 1963, after the arrest of two college girls at his church on World Wide Communion Sunday.

the other Negro—from attending worship services together” to members of the Methodist Council of Bishops. On October 14, 1963, Bishop Charles W. Brashares of the Chicago Area of The Methodist Church, issued a press release decrying the arrest of the three female students on the steps of the Capitol Street Methodist Church in Jackson, Mississippi. Brashares described the arrests as a “tragedy which belittles American democracy and Christian witness around the world,” as well as an “embarrassment to our churches in Chicago”<sup>18</sup>

Another member of the Interracial Council of Methodists, Rev. Stanley J. Hallett, called his Boston seminary colleague, Ed King, and asked what could be done. Hallett was the executive director of the department of church planning of the Chicago Church Federation. Ed King told Hallett that clergy were needed to join the visitation teams as an act of solidarity and so that black students would not be alone in the jails.

After alerting other members of the Interracial Council of Methodists of this request, Hallett went down to Jackson the next weekend. He volunteered to return to the Capitol Street Church with the three Tougaloo students, Julie Zaugg, Ida Hannah, and Betty Poole, who had been arrested on October 6, 1963. On Sunday, October 13, Hallett and the students tried again to worship at the Capitol Street Methodist Church because “It’s important that the same three people go back to show that it is not a prank, that we are sincere in our efforts.” They were turned away again, but not arrested.<sup>19</sup>

After the church visit, Hallett asked what more the ministers in Chicago could do “and King and the students said that we should come and accompany them to the churches the following Sunday.” They understood that “the presence of a Methodist minister seemed to inhibit police action and insured an outside eye-witness to any threats of violence.”<sup>20</sup> Upon Hallett’s return, the Interracial Council committed to sending ministers to Jackson, beginning with teams going almost weekly, to stand witness alongside Tougaloo students in their church visits.<sup>21</sup>

Rev. Forshey was among the Chicago contingent who volunteered to make the trip to Jackson the next weekend over Sunday, October 20. The group also included Rev. Donald E. Walden, Chicago Lawn Methodist Church; Rev. Elmer A. Dickson, pastor of Hope Methodist Church, Westchester; Rev. Joseph A. Buckles, pastor of Hyde Park Methodist Church; and Rev. James M. Reed, pastor of Holy Covenant Church. Traveling in the cars with them was their lawyer, Leland Rayson, president of the Methodist Foundation (Ministry) board at the University of Chicago. William Kun-

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<sup>18</sup> “Censure of Church Asked,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 10, 1963. See also October 14, 1963, press release from Wendell Kellogg, director of Midwest Public Relations, Chicago Area Methodist Church, Deppe Files.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, “Four Pastors Arrested in Dixie,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 21, 1963.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Tholin, “Why We Were There,” *The Telescope-Messenger*, December 21, 1963.

<sup>21</sup> Gerald Forshey, “The Racial Purification of the Church, The Cross (KKK Crucifixion), Forshey files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

stler, nationally prominent civil rights attorney, was already on the scene. As well, reporter Nicholas von Hoffman was sent to cover the visits by the *Chicago Daily News*. They joined Chicagoans and Tougaloo students Julie Zaugg and Betty Poole.<sup>22</sup>

### Chicago Ministers in Jackson

After arriving in Jackson, the group met with Rev. Seth Granberry, pastor of the Capitol Street Methodist Church as well as other Methodist leaders. Granberry, described as “the kind of warm-mannered man who will invite you to stay and share a church supper,” had deep roots in Mississippi. He told *Chicago Daily News* reporter, Nicholas von Hoffman, that his family had “lost” 100 slaves as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation, reminding von Hoffman that this “was equal to half a million dollars in farm equipment today.” Granberry “begged them not to let this happen at the doors of my church . . . I am powerless to do anything.”<sup>23</sup> Granberry and others “said that it was official policy of the church to have segregated worship services, and that even if we were bishops accompanying colored people, we would be denied access.”<sup>24</sup>

Many white Methodists in Mississippi were dismayed with the arrival of the Chicago delegation. Rev. Dr. J. W. Leggett, the District Superintendent, met with this first group of Chicagoans to head to Jackson. Leggett admitted that he had worshiped in an integrated church and that it “did not hurt me” but he felt integration “would destroy the church over which I preside” because “the great majority of Mississippi Methodists sincerely do not believe in integration.” Taking the opposing view was Rev. Ed King, who felt that the Methodist Church in Mississippi was already near destruction: “we are suffering from a soul sickness that is destroying us,” he said. Leggett’s response to Ed King was to describe him as an “irresponsible . . . unfrocked minister.” Those around the Tougaloo chaplain feared for his life for taking these stands.<sup>25</sup>

Reverend Leggett felt that the Chicago ministers were simply “agitators from outside the state.” One of the Chicago ministers arrested, Elmer Dickson, remembered that Leggett “begged them [the Chicago church visitors] to go home.” He felt that they “came to Mississippi to go to jail, and they would have been disappointed if they didn’t land there. I felt in my heart it

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<sup>22</sup> Gerald Forshey, “The Racial Purification of the Church, The Cross,” (KKK Crucifixion), Forshey files, Chicago Methodist Temple. Nicholas von Hoffman covered the church visits for the *Chicago Daily News*, and then continued to cover events in Mississippi in 1964 during the Freedom Summer. Von Hoffman’s reporting was collected into *Mississippi Notebook* (New York: D. White, 1964).

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, “Church Integration Effort in Mississippi: Pro and Con,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sunday, October 27, 1963.

<sup>24</sup> Gerald Forshey, “The Racial Purification of the Church, The Cross,” (KKK Crucifixion), Forshey files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, “Church Integration Effort in Mississippi: Pro and Con,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sunday, October 27, 1963.

was a publicity stunt.”<sup>26</sup>

After meeting with Granberry and Leggett, the Chicago ministers returned to the Tougaloo campus where they received instructions from Ed King and the students. They were divided into three groups: one would be sent to Galloway Methodist Church, another to St. Luke Methodist Church and a third back to Capitol Street Methodist Church. Joan Trumpauer, a veteran of these actions in Jackson, gave the ministers a workshop in non-violence. She talked to the group

like an Army—no Marine—sgt. She is really something. She showed us what to do, the positions, how to protect yourself, the practical reasons for non-violence . . . then for ½ hour we practiced getting knocked down, hit, how to be pushed around, etc. Anyway, it was a long night.<sup>27</sup>

On Sunday morning, October 20, 1963, four people made their way to Galloway Methodist Church: John Garner, a white physics professor at Tougaloo and a member of the Galloway congregation (whose family was from the Chicago North Shore); Joyce Ladner, an African American Tougaloo student who had been expelled from Jackson State College for demonstrating against segregation; and two Methodists ministers from Chicago, Elmer Dickson and Joe Buckles.<sup>28</sup>

They arrived at the Galloway Methodist Church in time for the early morning service. The church was the largest Methodist church in Jackson, and stood on the block between the State Capitol and the Governor’s Mansion. When the group of four attempted to worship, they were arrested “after being told they were not welcome to enter together.”<sup>29</sup> As one of the Chicago ministers explained “Although the arrests were courteous, the fact remains that at Galloway Church a police officer entered a church to arrest persons who were seeking peacefully to attend the services at a House of God. Even more ironical is the fact that John Garner was arrested on a charge of trespassing in the church of which he is a member!”<sup>30</sup>

Don Walden and Jerry Forshey arrived at the Galloway Methodist Church just ten or fifteen minutes after the arrests there. They walked around the

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<sup>26</sup> Quotation from Elmer Dickson, May 29, 2011, Sunday School, Galloway Methodist Church, Jackson, Mississippi, author’s notes. Leggett quotes from Nicholas von Hoffman, “Church Integration Effort in Mississippi: Pro and Con,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sunday, October 27, 1963.

<sup>27</sup> Another Tougaloo group, without Chicago ministers, would go to the Trinity Lutheran Church. Jerry Forshey to Florence Forshey, excerpt from a memorial to Jerry Forshey on his May 17, 2008, death, “Jerry Forshey: A Jailbird for Jesus and Justice,” Forshey files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

<sup>28</sup> On Joyce and Dorie Ladner, see Thomas Armstrong, *Autobiography of a Freedom Rider: My Life as a Foot Soldier for Civil Rights* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2011), 89. Joyce Ladner went on to receive a Ph.D. in history and become the president of Howard University. On Garner, see “Church Posts Bail for One in Mississippi,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1963.

<sup>29</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, “Four Pastors Arrested in Dixie,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 21, 1963.

<sup>30</sup> Rev. Don Walden, typed manuscript of events, October 20-25, 1963, Martin Deppe, personal files.

area in advance of their assigned meeting time of 10:30 at Capitol Street Methodist Church, just a few blocks from Galloway, and “were given several long stares.” They waited outside the Capitol Street Church until Julie Zaugg, Ida Hannah, and Betty Poole arrived in a car.

The five stood on the bottom steps of the church (to test “trespassing on church property”). They were greeted by the head usher and approximately 15 other men, still about fifteen minutes before the church service was to begin. Forshey told the ushers: “We are Methodist ministers—we have come to worship with you and have brought our friends here with us.” The head usher pointed to the three whites in the group and said they were welcome to worship. He pulled a slip of paper from his pocket and read “Our Board of Stewards instructs us that Negroes are not welcome here and are not permitted to enter.” At that point, the head usher handed the slip of paper to one of the police officers standing on the sidewalk. Forshey asked the officers, “Please stay out of this. Let us Methodists solve our problems.” Without answering, the officer placed the group under arrest and loaded them into two waiting police cars that took them to the Jackson police station. Walden remembered, “The entire confrontation and arrest did not last more than two or three minutes.”<sup>31</sup>

Response to the arrest came quickly. The Chicago Methodist Bishop, Charles Brashares, declared that, while he “had confidence in the men there” he was dismayed that the Chicago ministers had moved beyond observation to arrest. Dr. J. W. Leggett criticized the actions of the church visitors, as well as the “Northern press” for their handling of segregation. He opined, “We’ll solve our situation and we’ll solve it before they do in Chicago and without outside agitators.” The Rev. Jim Reed, one of the Chicago ministers who had come to Jackson but was not arrested, countered that the arrests were “a very grave offense to the doctrine and discipline of the Methodist Church.” However, he did not lay the blame at the feet of the Mississippi Methodist Church, instead suggesting “The whole Methodist Church has to stand under the judgment of this act.”<sup>32</sup>

All of those arrested were charged with disturbing public worship and trespassing, the very same charges that Julie Zaugg, Ida Hannah and Betty Poole had been arrested on two weeks before. Bonds were posted at \$10,000. Unable to meet these bonds, they were sent to the Jackson jail.

Once at the jail, the men and women were separated. Two of the young women, Ida Hannah and Joyce Ladner, suffered from illnesses. Jerry Forshey wrote his wife Florence from jail “There are five of us in our cell—Joe Buckles, Don Walden, Elmer Dickson and a professor from Tougaloo, John

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<sup>31</sup> Rev. Don Walden, typed manuscript of events, October 20-25, 1963, Martin Deppe personal files; Nicholas von Hoffman, “Four Pastors Arrested in Dixie,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 21, 1963. The Forshey quote came from Hoffman, but Walden’s was slightly different, “Why don’t you outsiders keep out of this and let us Methodists solve our own problems?”

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, “Four Pastors Arrested in Dixie,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 21, 1963. Quote from Brashares in “Seven Chicagoans arrested at Dixie Church,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 1963.

Garner. It is an indescribably strange experience to be turned away from a church. And jail is no great experience, I am afraid. Even with all the courtesies and protection we were getting, jail is still jail.”<sup>33</sup> The ministers were in cells where previous prisoners had scrawled their names and messages on the low ceiling, “Recent names from the demonstrations of the 1963 summer, before the death of Medgar Evers. Earlier battles and names of soldiers—students, other ministers on the 1961 Freedom Rides. Sometimes a name was familiar to one of the Chicago men.”<sup>34</sup> Ed King was allowed to visit the prisoners in the jail and celebrated communion with the incarcerated church visitors, using a hard prison roll as the bread and a battered tin cup for the chalice. King remembered “We felt, our little band of prisoners, like the only ones in an immense cathedral, strengthened for the streets outside.”<sup>35</sup>

Back in Chicago, supporters quickly worked to raise the \$17,000 in bail needed to get the church visitors released from the Jackson city jail. Bail for John Garner, the physics instructor at Tougaloo who was arrested while trying to enter his home congregation Galloway Church, was raised by his parents’ congregation, the Wilmette Congregational Church. The Hyde Park Methodist Church, supported their arrested pastor, Joseph A. Buckles, with \$1000 in pledges.<sup>36</sup> Rev. Martin Deppe, the treasurer of the Methodist Ministers Inner City Fellowship (that had only \$50 in its bank account) put out a call for help. Deppe recalled, “In 4 days’ time, half asleep in an old stuffed chair, set up at the front door of our west side parsonage [Mandell Methodist Church, 5000 W. Congress Parkway], I received from Methodists all over the Chicago area \$17,000 in cash and checks.” Lee Rayson, the attorney who had accompanied the ministers to Jackson flew back to Chicago to get this cash. Deppe “strapped \$17,000 to his arms and legs and he was off to O’Hare for a return flight to Jackson, to arrange the release of the group.” On Friday, October 25, 1963, the group was released from jail on bond.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, in Jackson, their attorney, William Kunstler, had successfully petitioned that the case be transferred to federal jurisdiction under a federal civil rights statute despite the fact that the group had been arrested for trespass and disturbing public worship under local law. Kunstler hoped that this strategy could be employed across the south in similar cases.<sup>38</sup>

Even before they were out of jail, two Methodist ministers, along with two Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) ministers, left Chicago to participate in church visits in Jackson the very next Sunday. Several EUB members had just begun to participate in the Interracial Council of Methodists as

<sup>33</sup> Jerry Forshey to Florence Forshey, excerpt from a memorial to Jerry Forshey on his May 17, 2008 death, “Jerry Forshey: A Jailbird for Jesus and Justice,” Forshey files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

<sup>34</sup> Ed King as in Marsh, 137

<sup>35</sup> “Church Civil Rights Leader Recall Early Struggles,” *Reporter of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist*, October 24, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> “Church Posts Bail for One in Mississippi,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1963.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Deppe, “KKK Crucifixion,” remarks when cross presented to the Chicago Methodist Temple, October 5, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> “Pastors, 2 Co-eds Get Bail in Dixie,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 27, 1963.

the two denominations were in union conversations. Rev. Sheldon Trapp and Professor Richard Tholin drove 400 miles on Friday, October 15, and stayed overnight just before heading into Mississippi. Tholin was a newly hired faculty at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in suburban Naperville, but he had the support of the seminary president. Trapp was the son-in-law of the presiding bishop of the Illinois EUB Conference Harold Heininger. Tholin and Trapp arrived in Jackson in time to meet with Tougaloo student organizers on Saturday afternoon. Both understood that they had come to Jackson “to do what students wanted us to do.” The meeting included “a lot of singing . . . and sharing concerns, someone would preach a little, then strategy and signing on.” That week, the students wanted to make the church visits, but they didn’t want to be arrested. Their strategy was to arrive at Capitol and Galloway 20 minutes before the service, wait to be stopped, argue a bit, and then the students would leave. The visiting ministers would stay as witnesses until people had left the services.<sup>39</sup>

Sunday morning, October 27, 1963, Professor Tholin, Rev. David Twigg, and two Tougaloo students went to Galloway, where they stood witness, but were not arrested. At Capitol Street, Rev. Trapp and Rev. Preston Cole, chaplain of the Methodist Foundation at the University of Chicago, were both arrested (but no students were arrested at either church as per their strategy). Trapp and Cole gained their release from jail on \$500 bonds on Wednesday and returned to Chicago. Back in Chicago, Professor Tholin wrote “this issue has made us aware of the sin of disunity and racial injustice in our own (EUB) church and of the way we have run away from it in the cities and suburbs of the north. We have also been aware of some of the elements in the structure of The Methodist Church which make it hard for that church to deal with this issue.”<sup>40</sup>

His words echoed those of ministers back in Chicago that same Sunday evening at a meeting sponsored by the Interracial Council of Methodists to raise funds for the bail needed to gain the release of Rev. Trapp and Rev. Cole. All four of the Chicago area ministers arrested the previous Sunday in Jackson were present at the fundraiser. They argued that progress was being made “despite the united opposition of the Methodist clergy of Jackson.” Donald Walden noted, “I cannot say that we were successful in communicating our concern about the oneness of the church to Jackson pastors. To our brother Methodist pastors we were northern meddlers, more of those people deterring the alleged progress which the church had been making until all the recent outside agitation began.” At the same meeting, Rev. Daniel Overmyer, an EUB minister, warned that the racial strife in the Methodist Church could “delay or even imperil . . . the basis of union” between the EUBs and

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Tholin, personal interview with author, March 23, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Tholin, “Why We Were There,” *The Telescope-Messenger*, December 21, 1963.

the Methodists scheduled for 1968.<sup>41</sup>

Despite these concerns, in the weeks that followed, while ministers from Chicago continued to make the trip, they were joined by ministers and laymen from Detroit, Cleveland and New York. Deppe, continuing to fund raise for legal fees, noted 10 arrests on Sunday November 17, 1963, “in the struggle of the Church to be the Church.”<sup>42</sup> Even through the dark days following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the church visits continued. As well, Methodist pastors from several cities traveled to Detroit to demand a stronger statement on the open church at the fall meeting of their Council of Bishops.

In January, 1964, Deppe, who had been fundraising for the effort in Chicago, took a turn driving to Jackson, Mississippi. He was accompanied by Roland (Rollie) Kidder, an EUB seminary student at Naperville, and Thomas Armstrong, an African American student from Tougaloo (who would later move to Chicago and then to Naperville). After attending the early morning Tougaloo College Chapel service on January 19, 1964, the three went to the Capital Street Methodist Church before the 11 a.m. service. Deppe asked the head usher to let the group worship but they were turned away. Instead, the group went to a black Methodist Church, where they “were warmly greeted and asked to sit up front in the choir and participate in the service.”<sup>43</sup>

At the afternoon service at the Wesley Methodist Church, Tougaloo student Ida Hannah and Chaplain Ed King joined the Chicago ministers in seeking entrance. A police siren roared as the group sought to enter the building for a special service marking the church’s tenth anniversary with the local bishop in attendance. However, the ushers hurried “to keep them in the [police] car—they obviously wanted no arrests with their own bishop inside the church.” Finally, the same group as had gone to Wesley were rebuffed when trying to attend the evening service at Galloway.

As Deppe later noted, “Because there was no bail money available we were advised to avoid arrest, which we managed to do, with some relief! To be jailed in Jackson at that time was exceedingly dangerous, especially for African Americans.”<sup>44</sup> Thomas Armstrong, the young black student who had accompanied Deppe that January Sunday morning to the Capitol Street Church, noted that at the end of that day

our group as well as other groups met at Tougaloo College to assess our activities

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<sup>41</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, “Methodist-EUB Merger Plan Imperiled by Racial Strife,” *Chicago Daily News*, October 28, 1963, and “Four Pastors Tell of Dixie Jailing,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 28, 1963.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Deppe letter to “Friends of Freedom,” November 22, 1963, Martin Deppe, personal files.

<sup>43</sup> Martin Deppe, “Mississippi Journal: A Report of a Church Visitation to Jackson, Mississippi, January 18-20, 1964” and Martin Deppe, “KKK Crucifixion,” remarks when cross presented to the Chicago Methodist Temple, October 5, 2009, Martin Deppe, personal files.

<sup>44</sup> Martin Deppe, “Mississippi Journal: A Report of a Church Visitation to Jackson, Mississippi, January 18-20, 1964,” and Martin Deppe, “KKK Crucifixion,” remarks when cross presented to the Chicago Methodist Temple, October 5, 2009, Martin Deppe, personal files.

of the day. These meetings, as well as others that followed, gave all of us the opportunity to give testimony to our true feelings, to search within ourselves for some aspect of racial healing. Also, when bail money was forthcoming, we could put more emphasis on this type of protest.

Rev. Martin Deppe returned to Chicago and continued his fundraising efforts. On Easter Sunday, in March, 1964, visiting ministers, black and white attempted to enter Capitol Street Methodist Church while Bishops Charles Golden (Central Jurisdiction) and James Mathews (Northeast Jurisdiction) attempted to enter Galloway Memorial Methodist Church for worship. All but the two bishops were arrested in this last episode of the church visits. Those who had participated in the church visits during late 1963 and early 1964 were ready to move in new directions, building from their experiences in Jackson.<sup>45</sup>

### 1964: Bringing Jackson Home

Support of the interracial church visits in Jackson strengthened the resolve of the Methodist pastors and laity back in Chicago to fight segregation within their denomination. Chicago clergy Jerry Forshey, Jim Reed, and Charles Peterson provided visionary leadership in the creation of the national group, Methodists for Church Renewal (MCR). MCR called for the elimination of segregation within The Methodist Church, and set the stage for a spirited debate at the 1964 Methodist General Conference. Those who had traveled to Jackson understood that segregation was not restricted to Mississippi or Alabama. What happened in Jackson dramatized “the segregated nature of the church and its false unity.” Their experiences “focused and symbolized so many things: sins of omission and commission, of individuals and congregations, North and South; problems of church and state, Christ and culture, and of Methodist structure, policy and polity.”<sup>46</sup>

In Chicago, the Inner City Methodist Ministers Fellowship became the Methodist Ministers for Church Renewal and continued to work with the lay-led Interracial Council of Methodists. With their support, Rev. Jerry Forshey continued to work with Rev. Ed King and others in Jackson. He saw “the glimmerings of a nationwide movement across all the geographical Jurisdictions to eliminate the segregation of the Central Jurisdiction.”<sup>47</sup> Forshey let those in Jackson know that he was “terribly indebted to all of you, and gigantically proud to know you.” He closed a letter to his Jackson friends in the spring of 1964, “Keep up the agitation . . . The whole situation looks as hopeless now as it did then, but you don’t give up . . . and all I can do is say ‘thank you.’”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Armstrong, *Autobiography of a Freedom Rider, My Life as a Foot Soldier for Civil Rights* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2011), 168.

<sup>46</sup> John F. Baggett and Philip M. Dripps, “Christian Unity, the Methodist Church and Jackson,” *Behold*, December, 1963.

<sup>47</sup> Gerald Forshey, “The Racial Purification of the Church, The Cross” (KKK Crucifixion), Forshey files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

<sup>48</sup> As in Ed King, “White Church” (2005), typescript in Martin Deppe personal files.

## Pittsburgh, 1964

Rev. Forshey saw an opportunity to press the case for Methodist desegregation at the church’s quadrennial conference to be held in Pittsburgh during the first week of May, 1964. He was both visionary and organizer of the “Pilgrimage to Pittsburgh” witness. Relying on contacts he made during the Jackson interracial church visits, Forshey organized busloads of students from the cities like Jackson and Birmingham to come to Pittsburgh.

Among those who came were students from Tougaloo College, accompanied by Rev. Ed King, including Austin Moore of Chicago who was then serving as the president of the Tougaloo student body. Rev. King, Moore, and the other students also brought along a charred cross that been burned on the front lawn of King’s home on the campus of Tougaloo College. While the cross burning was intended “to intimidate Rev. Ed King who was the chaplain at the historical African American college, it didn’t work. Instead of throwing it away, King immediately used the charred cross in demonstrations against segregation.” He and his students brought it with them to Pittsburgh.<sup>49</sup>

Contingents from Chicago and Jackson joined more than 1,000 protesters, mostly students, who came by the busload to the 1964 General Conference in Pittsburgh. Austin Moore carried the charred cross from the Tougaloo campus, as protestors kneeled-in and sang in front of the arena where the General Conference was being held. Some held signs reading, “Break the Racial Barricade,” “When Will We Practice What We Preach,” and “In Christ There Is No East Or West.” While the protestors called for the immediate desegregation of The Methodist Church, inside Pittsburgh’s then new Civic Arena, the 900 assembled members agreed that the projected new church, uniting Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren, expected to be consummated in 1968, would eliminate the racial Central Jurisdiction, effectively integrating the new denomination within four years. Still, the story (including a photograph of Austin Moore carrying the charred cross) made the front page of the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*.<sup>50</sup>

As the delegates began to board buses homeward, Jerry Forshey returned to the office from which he had directed the protest “to start cleaning up things to return home.” He found the charred cross from Jackson that had been carried in the demonstrations leaning up against a desk with a note “For Jerry F.” The Jackson contingent had left the cross for Forshey to honor “his inspired leadership of the Pilgrimage to Pittsburgh.” The charred cross made its way to Chicago, a symbol of the connections between Forshey and his colleagues with the Jackson movement.<sup>51</sup>

One of the Jackson protestors wrote to Rev. Forshey about what the trip

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<sup>49</sup> Martin Deppe, “KKK Crucifixion,” remarks when cross presented to the Chicago Methodist Temple, October 5, 2009, Martin Deppe, personal files.

<sup>50</sup> George Dugan, “Kneel-In Scores Methodist Stand,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1964.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Deppe remarks at Rev. Jerry Forshey funeral, Chicago Methodist Temple, May 23, 2008.

to Pittsburgh had meant to her. She noted “the demonstration was the most beautiful I have ever seen—and that includes the March on Washington. It was a very moving experience too, for it in a sense embodied the travail and faith of the Movement.” Still, while “Pittsburgh was a great experience for all of us from Mississippi, the rally and demonstration were long and hard, and in many ways depressing.” Despite being discouraged, though, she felt that perhaps “the Church is coming into its own on this matter of Christianity.”<sup>52</sup>

Rev. Forshey expressed his thanks to the Tougaloo movement in a letter a few weeks later. He lamented, “the Rally is over and Methodism is not much different than when we went to church in Jackson some months ago. But it is different. We now have channels for raising bail money, we now have in the law of the church open doors, and there are a series of other lesser but significant changes.” Forshey found the demonstration “a deeply moving experience . . . Somehow the ‘one new humanity in Christ’ which I had come to Jackson to find was consummated momentarily for me in Pittsburgh, and I felt at least at that moment that I truly belonged to the ‘family of God.’” For Forshey, the charred cross “was the gift of the Christ of shame, broken, and deserted and abandoned by his people and celebrated by those who also have participated in this brokenness . . . and there is no real way to express my thanks in words, or even indeed in actions.”<sup>53</sup>

### Witness to Civil Rights

Over the next weeks, months, and years many of those involved in these actions found themselves struggling to make sense of the events which affected them, as well as a slowly changing world. For the student protesters from Jackson, they were quickly drawn into the Freedom Summer of 1964, when thousands of volunteers came to Mississippi to register voters and provide educational opportunities for residents. For Rev. Ed King, the church visitation campaign of the previous year had shown that “the White Church, members and leaders, had been thoroughly discredited in our eyes, and more importantly, to outside church groups.”<sup>54</sup> For King, this “failure of the white church to open its doors and preach racial justice, signaled the need for broader, more aggressive civil rights activism.” He became involved in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and was drawn increasingly away from denominational issues and more towards voter registration and political empowerment.<sup>55</sup>

The disappearance of activists Michael Schwerner, Andy Goodman and James Chaney on June 21, 1964, and the discovery of their bodies on August 4, 1964, marked a turning point for activists in Mississippi like Rev. Ed

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<sup>52</sup> Letter of Joan Trumpauer to Jerry Forshey, May 29, 1964, as in Ed King, “White Church” (2005), typescript in Martin Deppe personal files.

<sup>53</sup> As in Ed King, “White Church” (2005), typescript in Martin Deppe personal files.

<sup>54</sup> As in Ed King, “White Church” (2005), typescript in Martin Deppe personal files.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer*, 6-7

King. Speaking at Chaney’s memorial service, King noted that the symbol of white Mississippi had become a burning cross. But he asked his audience to consider: “[Our] cross is not a burned cross, it is the one cross of Calvary that is stained with the blood of Jesus, God’s son . . . [T]his is the cross that we follow—the cross that means victory in this life; the cross that means we can forgive, that God will help us to love.”<sup>56</sup>

When Jerry Forshey and his colleagues returned to Chicago from Pittsburgh in the spring of 1964, they began working on integration of the Rock River Annual Conference. With a push from the Interracial Council and the Methodist Ministers for Church Renewal the June session of the Rock River Annual Conference voted to absorb the 14 Lexington Conference churches in its geographical area. Lexington voted likewise, confirming the historic decision ending Methodism’s segregated structure in northern Illinois. The Methodist activists “focused on empowerment of blacks in church structure,” most particularly the appointment of black clergy to congregations and other appointments. The clergy in the Evangelical United Brethren Church Renewal (EUBCR) also pressed for the voluntary elimination of all racial structures in the conferences without waiting for the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church as the United Methodist Church in 1968.<sup>57</sup>

Rev. Jerry Forshey displayed the cross in his living room. He enlisted the help of an artist friend, John Kearney to “create a sculpted crucifix by using the charred cross.”<sup>58</sup> Forshey never saw the cross as his alone. He shared it with the many activists who came to his home:

Ed King sat in my house and stared at it. Bill Kunstler, our lawyer in Mississippi, stood in front of it and read some things he had written. Jesse Jackson sat in front of it to eat ribs and talk about how to get black subcontracting for electrical work in the Sears Tower. Martin Deppe drove it to Chicago for me. Jim Reed and Chuck Peterson in our frequent contacts as part of Methodists for Church Renewal would tell people about it. Five of us who were serving black churches in the late sixties would gather in my front room where it watched over us while we discussed our ministries.<sup>59</sup>

Florence Forshey, who shared that living room, saw the cross “as a reminder of the people who put their lives on the line to bring justice into the church and the world. It’s also a reminder that there is still much work to be done.”<sup>60</sup>

Just before Rev. Forshey died in May, 2008, he and Florence made plans to give the cross to the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple, “a truly representative place for all kinds and conditions of men and

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<sup>56</sup> Rev. Ed King in Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer*, 145.

<sup>57</sup> Reverend Robert J. Harman and Professor Richard Tholin, “Producing the Storyline,” Forshey Files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Deppe, “KKK Crucifixion,” remarks when cross presented to the Chicago Methodist Temple, October 5, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Gerald Forshey, “The Racial Purification of the Church, The Cross (KKK Crucifixion) Forshey files, Chicago Methodist Temple.

<sup>60</sup> Florence Forshey quote in Mary Houlihan, “Church Welcomes Special Cross,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 6, 2008.

women.” The KKK Crucifixion stands today in the chapel at the Chicago Temple, reminding its members and visitors from around the world that the church visitations now almost 50 years ago at the Galloway and Capitol Street Methodist Churches in Jackson, Mississippi, were deeply entwined with a group of pastors and their congregations in Chicago, Illinois.