

Remarks of B.J. Stiles

September 16, 2015

Boston University School of Theology

Introduction from Dr. Dana Robert

First and foremost, I want to express the gratitude which I and many others have for the visionary commitment which Dean Moore, Dr. Robert, and dozens of your colleagues have made to create and support the *motive* project.

You have done far more than simply preserve a unique artifact.

You have honored and revived the conviction that students matter.

You have restored, and now make readily available the pages and mission of *motive* magazine.

In doing so, you have also reconnected a wide and diverse community of *motive* readers, authors and artists.

You honor a living fragment of the magazine's staff, contributors, and ardent admirers. You bring us together to remember, to refresh (and perhaps restore), and to celebrate.

On behalf of me and a multitude of my colleagues, we thank you.

### **Who Brought Us Here?**

One of your students.

In 2006, a doctoral student, Ada Focer, took Dana's course, "Women and Mission." On the required reading list was a paperback book, *Journeys That Opened Up the World*, stories by and about "women, student Christian movements, and social justice, 1955-1975."

Being a serious student and experienced journalist, Ada was eager to undertake her journey.

Ada is not your "typical" graduate student.

An early-middle aged mother and well-honed former business reporter, Ada was entering the new and exciting world of academia.

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“I went to the library, and checked out several musty, bound volumes..IT WAS LIKE FALLING DOWN A RABBIT HOLE.”

One of her papers for that course was about *motive*. She couldn't find any scholarly work, other than Frank Dent's dissertation, to help her probe the history and outreach of the magazine.

So, she set about to find people with living testimonies.

In *Journeys*, Ada found women who vividly recalled their encounters with the ideas, authors, artists, and church leaders captured in *motive*.

With a small travel grant, Ada in her aged VW bug, set across country to interview some of the men and women who were among the dozens of foot-soldiers and warriors in social justice movements.

In Claremont, she met Ruth Harris, a retired Board of Missions executive, who believed that a book like *Journeys* could not only capture first-hand stories of some remarkable women, but could also serve as a launching pad for further research.

“When I appeared on Ruth's doorstep, I believe she saw me as the first evidence that her faith and determination were well-placed.”

“All of us involved in the *motive* digitization project have the same faith that if we make *motive* available, the scholarly research and public recognition will follow.”

What a privilege and honor to be here today for this announcement and celebration.

Although the magazine was an icon, *motive* was a trouble-maker. From origin 'til termination. Frank's dissertation recounts and documents the periodic assaults and attacks that threatened to compromise or kill the magazine.

From the outset in 1941, it was fortuitous that the magazine was conceived and embedded in the heart of the Methodist Church's support for campus ministry. *motive* was never a creature of the church's publishing house, or subjected to being a vehicle for some graded curriculum.

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Although our administrative bosses were often chastised for allowing church money to be spent on such an obstreperous publication, nevertheless *motive* was part of a team of creative risk-takers.

More than once I sat in the chair of the accused. And more than once, some Bishop would come to my defense and say that his son or daughter thought that *motive* was the only thing the church did that was worthwhile.

In my eight years as editor I was often "counseled" and urged to take a more "reasonable" approach. There were moments of collegial applause, and shared hugs for an occasional honor or special achievement. But I was seldom alone. My staff and editorial board formed the primary team that produced the magazine. And one of the stalwart team members was Tom Driver, from whom you heard earlier this afternoon about the impact and challenges of *motive*. And Frank Dent's tribute underscored how challenging it was to research and capture the history and complexity of the magazine.

There were many talents and skills that shaped *motive*. One of our celebrated former readers is Hillary Clinton.

She and Chelsea spoke last Sunday in Washington, DC at the bicentennial celebration at Foundry UMC. She cited Romans 12 in making the point that we each have varying talents, yet together we bring those talents into creating a formidable force.

I believe she captures what has made *motive* so imposing.

The digitized archives contain every issue of the magazine, except on: May 1969. That was my final issue. In it, I wished to complete my tenure with some perspective on the status of the church, society, and academia through articles about pivotal events in the university Christian movement, campus activism, and other magazines and editors who were trouble-makers

That issue was pulled from the press by the publisher, and never printed. Nevertheless, I believe that act underscores our belief that the "truth will set us free." And sometimes we don't wish to hear or read the truth

belief that the “truth will set us free.” And sometimes we don’t wish to hear or read the truth.

Some advised that I should expose this act of censorship and go out with a final and personal blast at ecclesiastical repression. I lacked the energy and resources to stage a last stand.

Many times in the ensuing years I was asked when I left the church. My answer has always been: “I didn’t. The church left me.”

Today, Boston University School of Theology has helped amend that situation, and in doing so, you bring healing and reconciliation.

I’m inviting Dean Moore, Dr. Robert, and Ada Focer to join me here for a presentation.

(After they arrived at the podium, I presented them with a red binder.)

In this binder are the page proofs of the May 1969 issue of *motive*, my final issue. In giving this to you to digitize and make available, I have now fulfilled my tenure as editor of *motive* Magazine.