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144
MC KENDREE, BISHOP WM.
The Rededication

of

McKENDREE

CHAPEL

in

Cape Girardeau County
Missouri

Sunday, October 15, 1933
THE FIRST METHODIST CHURCH.

"The first Methodist church west of the Mississippi River was organized in about 1806, at Mcken- dree, about three miles from the present town of Jackson, in Cape Girardeau County. . . . Soon afterward a house of worship, Mc- Kendree Chapel, was built out of great hewn poplar logs. . . . "

THE SALVAGING OF OLD MCKENDREE.

From The Cape Girardeau Southeast Missourian.

Occasionally in past years some citizen would contribute a letter to The Cape Girardeau Southeast Missourian urging the salvaging of Old McKendree Chapel and declaring it a sin for Christian people to permit the old house to crumble away. In 1922 John Pets sent a communication to The Missourian warning that unless prompt action were taken, Old McKendree would soon disappear.

Early in September, 1922, an editorial in The Missourian urged the formation of an organization to save the chapel and Judge Frank Kelly then called for a meeting to be held at New McKendree Church, on Sunday, Sept. 13. About 20 people attended and a committee was elected to carry on the work. It was decided to form a McKendree Chapel Memorial Association, with Judge Frank Kelly as president, R. M. McCombs, Jackson, vice-president; Fred Naster, Cape Girardeau, vice-president, and Arthur F. Denseke, Cape Girardeau, secretary-treasurer. The plan was to ask for 100 memberships at $10 each, it having been ascertained that for $1000 the building could be salvaged and perpetuated for at least another 50 years. It was pledged that unless 100 memberships were obtained the work would not proceed, guaranteeing that the building would either be permanently and completely rehabilitated or nothing would be done.

At the end of a year the committee announced that 105 memberships were sold, that the work had been completed, and that every pledge made by the committee had been fulfilled. Then the date for the rededication was set.

First a new foundation was built, the underpinning of the house was made secure, a fireplace and chimney was erected as nearly like the original as possible, a new hand-made cypress slab roof was put on, first-class material from other old buildings was obtained and the missing weatherboarding and interior boarding replaced.

The original chapel was of logs. Later the house was weather-boarded. But the interior has remained practically the same as when erected and today it is as near its original condition as hu-
only possible to make it. Architect A. F. Lindsay, Cape Girardeau, was secured by the committee to direct the work, and too much credit cannot be given him for the excellent service rendered.

Old McKendree Chapel, located in a magnificent grove of two acres, with one of the finest springs in Cape Girardeau County, is now in a condition to last another half century. The house will be kept locked, but will be available at all times for services and visitors can secure a key from members of the committee.

Fastened securely to a wall inside the chapel is a brass plate containing the names of the members of McKendree Chapel Memorial Association, and Judge Kelly has prepared the papers for the incorporation of the association in order to make it perpetual. It is proposed to have an annual meeting at the Chapel each year on the second Sunday of October for a religious service and to perpetuate the active membership. Dues of 50 cents per year will be collected and this money will be used to keep the property in good condition.

Plans for the rededication of the old chapel were made by the committee for Sunday, Oct. 15, 1933. Bishop W. F. McLarry, a native Missourian and one of the great men of Southern Methodism, accepted the invitation to preach the rededication sermon. Dr. F. W. Wahl of St. Louis, former district superintendent of the Methodist
Episcopal Church, and great friend of Old McKendree, was assigned by Bishop Charles L. Mead to represent him, Dean R. S. Douglass, professor of history in the State Teachers College, Cape Girardeau, gave a historical review of early religious efforts in this district.

BEGINNING OF McKENDREE CHAPEL.

By JOHN G. PUTZ, Jackson, Historian for The Cape Girardeau Southeast Missourian.

The exact date on which William Williams came to this county is a matter of conjecture. Some authorities have it that he came here about 1797, while others say that he came down the Ohio River from Cincinnati in 1803, settled at New Madrid and came north to this county after the earthquake. To determine whether or not he obtained a land patent to the place where he died, or whether he purchased a "heardright" from others, would be the work of an abstracter of land titles. His name appears first on the land records of this county as having purchased a "heardright" from Medad Randoi and others, the 100 acres of land being described as being located "on both sides of Randal's Creek," now Williams Creek. When Rev. John Clark and Rev. Jesse Walker came over from Illinois in the interest of the spread of Methodism they found conditions extremely chaotic, and it appears that Methodism was unable to obtain a permanent foothold until the coming of William Williams. Whether or not the two missionaries or Mr. Williams came first is a mooted question; probably they came about the same time, shortly after the beginning of the 19th century.

Word had come to the Protestant settlements in Missouri in 1803 that Spain had ceded this territory to France, and Protestant churches were organized in spite of the fact that the ban placed on this territory by the Spanish governor in 1797 that "no preacher other than Catholic shall introduce himself in this province" was still in force. Lieutenant-Governor Zenon Trudeau of the Upper Louisiana Territory rather favored the immigration of American settlers and was rather liberal in enforcing the restrictions in regard to religious worship in his domain.

Each year from 1806 to 1810 camp meetings were held at Old McKendree. During this period Bishop William McKendree came and, in 1810, the first generally attended camp meeting was held, and from this grew the idea of a chapel and its completion in 1819. The first Methodist Society west of the Mississippi was organized some time between 1806 and 1809, with about 10 charter members, William Williams and his wife being the first to sign the membership roll.

For about 30 years regular services were held at the church, al-
though many of the members had joined the southern branch of Methodism after the division in 1844-45.

Gradually the old chapel was deserted and the road was closed. It was nearly forgotten, when Rev. W. J. Stewart, pastor of New Mc-Kendars Church in Jackson, about 1826, presssed a new interest in it. On Sept. 13, 1865, a warranty deed for a roadway to the two-acre tract was secured from D. A. Smith and wife, and soon a graded road was opened. He further succeeded in getting a joint committee appointed by the two Methodist conferences to see after the property, but the members were so widely scattered that meetings were impossible.

In 1876, through the effort of Rev. F. W. Wahl, then district superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Missouri conference, held at Lecompton, voted to deed one-half interest in McKendree Chapel to the Southern Methodist Conference, so the property is now owned by the two branches of the Methodist church in Missouri.

THE TORCH OF CIVILIZATION IN MISSOURI.
By ALLAN H. HINCHLEY.

Civilization west of the Father of Waters began in what is now Southeast Missouri. The people of three races, the Spanish, French and Americans crossed into a vast wilderness extending from the great river to the Pacific Ocean and later on adventurous spirits carried the torch of civilization toward the setting sun.

In that part of Missouri reaching from St. Charles on the north to the Arkansas line on the south is the land which can aptly be called the cradle of civilization in the western half of our great American empire. And the county of Cape Girardeau is near the center of this historical region.

Briefly, the story of this march of civilization starting in the river district of what is now Southeast Missouri is as follows:

1541 First Christian service held at the Casquin village, near the present site of New Madrid, where De Soto erected the first Christian cross of cypress trees so large that it required a hundred men to lift the timbers, according to the old Spanish chroniclers.

1659 St. Cosme erected the second Christian cross within the borders of Missouri on an island rock near the southern line of Perry County.

1700 Father Montigny, a companion of Father St. Cosme, erected a cross on the bank of the river just south of the present city of Cape Girardeau, calling it Cape La Croix. The little stream flowing through Cape Girardeau still bears that name.
1758 First records of the Catholic church at Ste. Genevieve were begun.

1759 First Protestant sermon west of the river was preached by Rev. Thomas Johnson, who baptized Agnes Ballou in a stream near the present site of Jackson.

1802 First sermon by German Reformed Church minister was preached by Rev. Samuel Weyerberg (later known as Whybark) near the site of present town of Jackson.

1806 First Baptist Church west of river, Bethel Chapel, was organized about 15 miles west of Cape Girardeau, by David Green.

1806 Later in this year a Methodist Camp Ground was established about 5 miles northwest of Cape Girardeau by Rev. John Travis. Later this became McEndree Chapel.

THE CRADLE OF RELIGIOUS WORK.

By DEAN R. S. DOUGLASS,
Professor of History, State Teachers College, Cape Girardeau.

Religious work in Missouri had its beginning in Southeast Missouri. On the great mound at New Madrid, 60 miles away, Mr. Louis Rouch believed the first Christian service ever held west of the great river was performed by the priests who accompanied De Soto. On that mound they erected the cross and the forest and the wondering savages saw the mystery of the mass. Sixty miles to the north, at Ste. Genevieve, was organized the first Christian organization in all this territory, the parish church of Ste. Genevieve, whose written records go back to 1739. Twenty miles to the south was preached the first non-Catholic sermon and the first baptism was performed when Thomas Johnson of Georgia, a Baptist minister, came here in 1799. Ten miles west of us, at Old Bethel, was organized the first church not a Catholic, when David Green gathered a handful of Baptists together at the home of Thomas Bull in 1806. Eight miles to the north and west is the cradle of Methodism west of the Mississippi, the famous McEndree camp meeting ground, where, late in 1806, or early in 1807, the first congregation of that faith was organized.

At Calhounia, in this district in 1815, was formed the first Presbyterian church in all the west by Salmon Giddings. Samuel Weyerberg, later called Whybark, began the work of the German Reformed Church about 1803, within 20 miles of this place. The oldest church of the Disciples this side of the river is at Libertyville, formed probably in 1824. The great work of the Lutherans in Missouri was begun at Altenburg in 1833.
The Gospel Trails

By

Noreen Dunn

ADULT—MARCH, 1935

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PROMOTION
WOMAN'S SECTION, BOARD OF MISSIONS
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH
706 CHURCH STREET, NASHVILLE, TENN.
THE OLD GOSPEL TRAIL
Story of William McKendree

William McKendree, like so many of the traveling preachers of pioneer days, never married. Surely he would have been a successful husband, just as he was successful in everything he undertook. Ambitious, and alive with energy, he would have been a good provider for a wife and family. Nearly six feet tall, beautifully proportioned, and possessing with his good looks the social graces of his day, he was a man whom many a woman might have found it in her heart to love.

But William McKendree never had time to marry. First came the Revolutionary War. At the age of twenty-one he volunteered with a group of his fellow-Virginians. Soon he became an officer and as such stayed on the battle field until he witnessed the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, though he never boasted of his part in the war and never claimed a pension for his services.

Then, after the Revolution, came John Easter, the man who set in motion a revival which swept the whole of the new nation and brought into the ministry many noble men—both young and old. William McKendree, then thirty years of age, was one of those converted in Easter's revival, and while he was wrestling with a call to preach that same year he was unexpectedly appointed to Mookerberg Circuit, Virginia, an appointment which he agreed to accept on trial, feeling certain that after a year he would prove his inadequacy and unworthiness to preach and be relieved of his responsibilities. Instead, his faith, devotion, and zeal won for him a permanent place in the hearts of the people and in the ministry of his church.

The following quotations are typical of many of the entries in his journal during those early days of his ministry:

"Rose at 3 a.m.; family prayer, a time of sweetness to our souls. Went into the lovely fields when the blushing morn is dispeling gloomy night; breathed the sweet morning air with the love of God in my soul."

Again:

"Early in the morning spent an hour on my knees in fervent prayer, reading God's Word, and praising my adorable Savior. From 10 a.m. to half past one o'clock I spent in a lonely, awful swamp in wrestling, agonizing prayer. But surely God and his holy ones were all around me, heaven burst into my bosom, and glory filled my soul."

On another occasion we find him writing:

"O Lord, let me wrestle and fight and die rather than sink into a formal spirit of religion."

Built on such a foundation as this, it is not strange that through his ministry he was destined to become one of Methodism's greatest men.

The tenth year of William McKendree's ministry (October, 1800) marks the beginning of what may be termed his missionary career. For at that time he crossed the Alleghany Mountains and became presiding elder of a district which embraced the western part of Virginia, all of Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as the settled territory west of the Ohio River including what is now Ohio and an extensive part of the state of Illinois. The Natchez mission was also connected with his charge. He had to travel over fifteen hundred miles.
to encompass his district, all of which, except East Tennessee and Western Virginia was a new, rapidly populating country.

The gospel trail in those days led from one small, isolated neighborhood to another. Poor settlements they were—hard pressed and often miserably lonely, many miles from each other with no roads connecting them, no landmarks save the tops of bushes bent down or half broken—or occasional ax marks on the trees. A true pioneer in spirit, McKendree endeavored, with a handful of preachers in his charge, to keep pace with the advancing population of this western world, and plant the standard of Christ in the most remote of the frontier settlements.

Many hardships were, of course, involved in carrying out such a plan. McKendree and his fellow-laborer were frequently ministers of gospel consolation to the people in their camps and cabins, in the woods and cumberboughs before their fields had been opened sufficiently to raise a comfortable support for their families. In getting to them they slept at night upon their blankets and under the open sky; owls, bears, wolves, and panthers were their serenaders, and sometimes the wild and cruel Indians dogged their steps by day and hovered around their camp fires at night.

From McKendree's journal we catch a glimpse of the indomitable good cheer with which he met such a life. "If we come to a creek or river, we had the privilege of swimming it; and when safely landed on the other bank, it was a consolation to reflect we had left that obstruction behind and that the way to the next lay open and plain before us. If night overtook us before we could reach a house, it was our privilege to gather wood where we could find it, make a fire, eat our morsel, and supplant a throne of grace with as free access as in a palace or a church."

The results of his efforts, speaking numerically only, were astounding. He began his work in the West with eleven traveling preachers and less than two thousand members of the church. At the end of eight years' service, he had 45 traveling ministers and 16,887 church members, and the territory with which he began was divided into five districts instead of one.

With this record he came to the General Conference of 1809, held in Baltimore, Md., and was elected bishop, ordained by Francis Asbury, thus becoming the first American-born bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His territory then extended from Vermont to Louisiana, and from the Atlantic across the Mississippi.

His first tour of the frontier, as a bishop, was exceedingly interesting. People flocked to hear him, expecting to see a pompous person, wrapped in wealth and expensive garments, holding himself aloof from men and austere in his ministrations. Never was a man farther removed from this. His manner, appearance, and message soon corrected these opinions and won for his Master many loyal followers.

Having received only twenty dollars for his first year's work as a presiding elder in the West, and only eighty dollars a year thereafter, he was not a man given to the love of money or things that money buys. Indeed he possessed what amounted almost to a righteous aversion to wealth. On one occasion when a group of city friends presented him with a suit of fine black broadcloth which they considered more suitable for a bishop than the Tennessee jeans he had been wearing, he made the change with great reluctance, saying: "I am afraid of fine things; fine things delude the soul."

It must not be supposed by this that he was slovenly in his habits. For "in his dress and address you perceived in a moment the neatness and simplicity and courteousness of a gentleman who respected both himself and his company too highly to seem careless of his appearance."

The burden of episcopal duties at one time after Asbury's death, fell heavily upon McKendree as the only surviving bishop. Difficulties involving matters of deep concern in regard to church government came to the fore, and while handling these in a keen, judicious manner, his chief concern continued to be for men and women who were not hearing the gospel and for children who were growing up without the advantages of Christian training.

The Indian tribes had been of great concern to him for many years; but it was in the midst of ecclesiastical problems that he devised a plan whereby missionaries might be sent to the Indians and did much personally toward gaining a friendly entrance for his men into the various tribes.

During this time he aroused the interest and loyalty of his preachers, made a plan for general, systematic contributions for the support of missionary enterprises, and was one of the foremost leaders in organizing the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1819.

Matters of organization, however, did not keep him from the field itself. Neither did bodily afflictions. Greatly weakened by repeated exposure, improper food, and endless labor, in 1824 he started his journey from Tennessee to the General Conference in Baltimore in a feeble condition, scarcely able to sit up. Yet, after the conference he made his way to the Wyandotte Indian mission, where he preached to them and visited in their homes. He found that "the tomahawk and scalping knife, the rifle and the bow had been substituted by the ax, the plow, and the hoe."

The Wyandotte mission school was operating a fine farm, keeping itself supplied with corn, wheat, oats, rye, flax, and a profusion of vegetables.

Extracts from a letter received by Bishop McKendree from the Wyandotte tribe, after his visit to them, indicated the depth of their gratitude and love for him. Beginning their letter with the simple word, "Father," they related to him many intimate incidents—both good and bad—in connection with their tribe.

"One of our chiefs, Wapole, that did not belong to us," they wrote, "has joined, and this day was received into full connection and appointed one of the leaders. We hope he will prove faithful and make us a strong stake."

"The school is still prospering, and our children are like the buds of the trees in the spring. . . . We still pray that you continue your care for us and our children: and through you we return our thanks to all our friends that have contributed to help forward this great work among our nation. We hope they will not get tired, but as they have helped us to wake out of our deep sleep and on to our feet, they will still help until we can walk and gather food for ourselves."

This letter was dictated by Between-the-Logs and Menonee to an interpreter, and signed with the cross mark of these two, and six other Indian men.

Always keenly sensitive to the needs of Negroes in the United States, Bishop McKendree, from his early ministry, served them unreservedly everywhere he went. This interest for many years reached out to include native Africans, and he became a real propagandist for foreign missions, particularly anxious to begin work in Liberia. Happily he lived to see his dream for
Africa come true when in the year 1832 Melville B. Cox set sail for Africa—the first missionary sent from the Methodist Episcopal Church to a foreign land.

In this same year Bishop McKendree attended General Conference, which met in Philadelphia. For twelve years he had been nominally superannuated, having been requested to do only such service as his health and convenience might justify. But during that time, although afflicted with rheumatism, hernia, vertigo, and asthma, he continued to make his rounds annually, usually on horseback.

An incident recorded in Tennessee, in the year 1827, pictures vividly the patience with which he bore his suffering. Because of his condition a doctor was called, and upon examining his venerable patient became alarmed, saying: “Bishop, how can you bear such pain so quietly?”

The old gentleman looked up and, smiling into the eyes of the inquirer, said: “Doctor, does your philosophy explain how a Christian can be perfectly happy while his body is in agony? Must there not be a soul in him?”

The doctor, a skeptical man, for a moment was silent, and then he answered: “Bishop, it must be so.”

It is no wonder that as he reached Philadelphia in his seventy-fifth year he knew he would never attend another General Conference. The knowledge that he had at last come to the end of his active ministry bore heavily upon his heart. Indeed, his strength was so spent that he gave a brief message to the conference and then departed. Leaning on his staff, his eyes filled with tears, his voice trembling with emotion, he said: “Let all things be done without strife or vainglorious and try to keep the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace. My brethren and children, love one another.” Then lifting his hand, he gave the apostolic benediction. The whole assembly rose and stood until he disappeared.

Too feeble to sit up, a bed was fixed for him in a carriage, and he crossed the Alleghenies toward the West for the last time. Three years later, after forty-eight years of Christian service, he preached his last sermon in the new building of McKendree Church, in Nashville, Tenn., the church named in his honor. Shortly after, he died in the home of his devoted brother and sister and was buried beside his father in Sumner County, Tenn.

When word was spread that a biography of this noble man was to be written, many interesting incidents of his life became known for the first time. Two such incidents are cited here for the purpose of showing the broad expanses of this man’s heart. The first became known through a letter written by “An Old Lady,” as she signed herself, in memory of the days Bishop McKendree spent in her childhood home. She said:

“Henderson. In childhood. He liked to have his hair combed, and I would stand perhaps an hour at a time, on my little chair, combing his beautiful black hair, which curled naturally, and twining it about my thin finger. . . . He would almost fall asleep while I amused myself behind him. When I came to arrange it in front he would take me on his knee. And when I was done, a very sweet kiss would be my reward and many thanks, also. I would then take my little chair and sit close by him and count the buttons at his knees. There were five at each knee; and he wore buckles on his shoes, too. I shall never forget his appearance, for in my opinion he was perfectly beautiful. He had a happy, holy look. . . . I knew Bishop Asbury, Bishop

Whatcoat, Dr. Coke; but never loved any as well as I did Bishop McKendree.”

The last incident concerned Old Gray, the faithful horse who was almost as well known by thousands as was his owner. The Bishop’s last will and testament made known the fact that he had bequeathed to Old Gray “enough money to pay for a good stable, a nice blue-grass pasture for life, and an honorable burial.”

Thus did this great old missionary whose love embraced all living creatures pay tribute to the faithful companion who had helped him blaze the gospel trail among the frontier settlements of our spreading land.
THE NEW GOSPEL TRAIL

Changed Aspects of Home Missions

William McKendree in his forty-eighth year of Christian ministry represents the heart of the home mission task of his day. It requires no imagination to see that the home field today differs in many essentials from that field a century, or even a generation, ago. Some of the change that has taken place is stated in broad outline as follows:

"If the story of National Missions in the nineteenth century were to be condensed into a single word, that word would be expansion. Seen in retrospect, every other feature of the development of National Missions before 1900 seems dwarfed in comparison with the sheer immensity of the task which the rapid development of the country unfolded before the Church. All of the diversification of service and of the experimentation in method, all of the beginnings, divisions, and combinations in organization seem incidental to the main fact that within the space of three generations the Church had to expand a feeble and localized enterprise, to span a Continent.

"It follows therefore that through most of the century the familiar form of description of the Field of National Missions was in terms of geographical expansion and population growth. Here were sections which when first opened to settlement doubled and trebled their population within a decade. A canal or a railroad or even a cross-country trail newly constructed became a living stream scattering infant communities along its path. An allotment of land for homesteading or the discovery of gold was a magnet for tens of thousands. Those were the familiar stories of the nineteenth century. To be sure, the Church on its way across the Continent had its attention turned toward many opportunities for service other than the planting of churches in new communities. The missionary purpose was broad enough to embrace the special needs of Indians, Negroes, Mexicans, Mormons, and other handicapped peoples. In the aggregate the service rendered to such populations is impressive and it would not be fair to speak of it as incidental to the main purpose of the Church. From the beginning such service was implicit in the whole missionary program, but it was nevertheless, in general, subordinated to the central task of extending the church into new territory and of equipping and maintaining it in the territories where it had already been established.

"This much of history is reviewed to point the moral of the change that has taken place. The field of National Missions is no longer describable in such terms nor has it been for a quarter of a century. Broadly speaking, three factors combined to alter the aspect of the situation. The first of these was the practical completion of the process of opening new territory to settlement within which it was deemed necessary promptly to establish many new churches. There are, of course, new communities born every year, and there are frequent instances of sections characterized by rapid and often unexpected population growth. Homesteading is not yet at its end and industrial development is, in many sections at least, still in its infancy. But in broad outline it is possible to set some reasonable bounds to probable expansion and the church establishment is on the whole fairly adequate to care for any probable growth.

"The second important factor was the tremendous industrial development
upon which the country entered in the period following the Civil War and which in the succeeding decades has completely revolutionized our life. This industrial development has involved many changes of fundamental importance to National Missions. One of these has been the growth of great cities to the dominating position which they now occupy. Another has been the tremendous inflow of immigration from eastern and southern Europe. Still another has been the depressing effect of industrial expansion upon the agricultural population. The extent of this industrial development has been so prodigious as to be difficult of comprehension by those who have not seen it.

The third factor has been the rise in American life of the consciousness of racial or class differences. The terms most commonly used in recent years in the description of the task of National Missions have been the terms of contrasting population groups. The most striking advances made in mission work since 1860 have concerned the adaptation of its service program to meet the needs of special populations or areas due to different racial, economic, or social backgrounds.

BARRIERS TO BE REMOVED

Undoubtedly the home mission task today is different in many respects from that of yesterday. The old gospel trail had barriers to be overcome—physical barriers which called for strong bodies, strong wills, and relentless spirits fixed with unconquerable ideals.

Today the physical barriers have been removed. The day of expansion is over. The geographical bounds of our home mission task are fixed, and our country is covered with a maze of mudless roads, and rivers are arched by bridges which defy the greatest floods. Churches dot the hillsides, and there is hardly a community or family anywhere which could not find some Sunday service to attend, or secure the help of a minister if they were in need. The immensity of the achievement of the early pioneer missionary preachers who blazed the old gospel trail can hardly be conceived by men and women accustomed to the comforts of our scientific age. Yet their task was enviable in many ways. Their barriers were tangible, concrete, definite. A trackless forest, a bridgeless river, hungry wild animals, hostile Indians—what are they compared to the barriers of race prejudice, industrial and economic selfishness and greed, political debauchery, sex discrimination, intangible barriers which hide themselves in the hearts of men and women and make difficult the spreading of the Kingdom of God?

Such barriers as these cannot be marked by geographical boundary lines. They cut across every area of our land and creep into the church itself, so that a white face and respectable clothes are necessary requirements for the person who would kneel at the altar to partake of elements administered by men only, in memory of the Savior of all mankind who knew no difference between white and black, between rich and poor, between man and woman.

These barriers which keep men from finding the fulness of Christian fellowship in our land are barriers which must be removed if we are to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK

Perhaps the task of home missions would be easier if we could have pictured to us in vivid terms the inconsistency between our progressions and our practices. We live in a so-called Christian land, and yet, a yearly trail of barbaric mobs snuff out the lives of Negro men without giving them even the merest semblance of a trial, whereas the story of the white man’s conduct goes unnoticed, except for the faces of little children who give mute evidence to his violation of Negro womanhood.

Nor can home missions overlook the fact that there are men and women of high influence in a Christian nation who invent excuses, coin pious phrases, appeal to the most sacred things in life in order to defeat an amendment which has for its purpose the protection and welfare of the children of our land. In his book, Christianity, the Way, Joseph B. Matthews says:

“If Jesus were here today he would feel an unpleasant, scratchy sensation in some of our softest wearing apparel. Some of our sweetest foods that come to use from the soil of little children would be bitter to him. The warmth of our homes, made comfortable by the heat from coal that has been sorted by tender bleeding hands, would kindle such a blaze in his soul that you would hear him say: ‘It were better for an industry that a millstone were hanged about its neck, and that it were drowned in the depth of the sea, than that it should offend one of these little ones.’”

We should by no means minimize the task which is commonly considered the duty of home missions—that is, that of filling the gap for humanity wherever society has failed to provide the means for man’s physical, mental, or spiritual well-being. Our home mission institutions—settlement houses, clinics, schools, churches—are for the purpose of filling such gaps and supplying such needs. We have buildings, equipment, trained missionaries dedicated to this part of the task. But the task of home missions today digs deeper than that. While giving relief, it seeks to remedy the cause, to get at the root of the great inconsistencies in our life which give birth to such crying needs. The task of healing ourselves is a painful, disconcerting one. Perhaps no more difficult task was ever before laid at the Christian’s door.

THE CHRISTIAN’S RESPONSIBILITY

Missionaries and ministers alone cannot remove the barriers which stand in the way of true Christian fellowship in our land. They cannot cope with the difficult task which the present-day conditions set for the church without the help of Christian men and women in every walk of life.

In spite of our templed hills, the fact remains that about one-half of the men and women of the United States do not identify themselves with the church. Thousands of boys and girls are growing up without Christian training, and this in view of the fact that ninety-seven per cent of the men in Sing Sing today never had a chance as children to be members of any clubs or juvenile societies where boys learn how to spend their leisure time in wholesome recreation.

There are unachieved boys and girls in every community who should be brought into the Sunday school. There are men and women whose needs plead eloquently for a place in the Christian fellowship of the church. There are rural communities without Sunday schools and missionary societies—communities within reach of church members who could minister to their needs. It behooves every Christian to become a missionary in a very real sense today. If he is to obey the injunction of the Master, he must reach out into the community in which he lives and find a place of service for himself.
But this is the simplest part of the task, because it is the one nearest at hand. The earnest Christian can no more stop with his community than McKendree could stop at the foot of the Alleghanies when he was commissioned to serve the western conference beyond. Jesus himself left no area of life untouched, and he commanded us to go into all the world.

We may not be able literally to obey his injunction by becoming traveling missionaries. But each of us, whether we ever get farther than twenty miles from home, may become world citizens. We can give our first loyalty to God and to humanity, and identify ourselves with the ideals for which Jesus stood, ruthlessly testing our own lives and the life of our church and of our nation by his true standards, shorn of their ecclesiastical trappings.

This is the new gospel trail—a trail which cuts across personal prejudices, selfishness, and conceits, and breaks down barriers which shut men and women out of Christian fellowship. Jesus says, "Come, follow me." If we obey, it may mean social ostracism, false accusations, criticism, imprisonment, or exposure of ourselves to bodily danger. It will mean standing for the hard right, not spasmodically as we feel inspired to do so, but every day with dogged perseverance, against the easy wrong. Are we willing to try this trail? If so, we must pray for ability to see our own weakness, strength to bear suffering, courage to face dangers. The rugged faith of our pioneer fathers must descend upon us, and the spirit of Christ himself consume our very hearts.
MCKENDREE, WILLIAM, 1757-1835-1835.

b. King William County, Virginia, July 6. His father, John McK, was a native-born planter. William was an adjutant in the Revolution and was present at Yorktown. He would not apply for a pension. His family belonged to the old Colonial Church of Virginia. He was converted powerfully in his thirtieth year, 1787, under John Easter, who asked him to travel his circuit with him. Influenced by his father to accept a call to ministry, he was received on trial in 1796, Virginia Conference. Pastor, Presiding Elder. He preached at his first General Conference, 1806, so powerfully that Asbury said, "That sermon will make McKendree bishop." It did. He was the first native American elected a Methodist bishop. He introduced regular order into the General Conference. He labored with tremendous energy, suffering accidents and infirmities but continuing to travel and preach. He died at the home of his brother, Mr. James McKendree, in Sumner County, Tennessee, March 5, and was buried near the old family home. Later his body was moved to Vanderbilt campus, Nashville.

From Leete. Methodist Bishops
The
Gospel Trails

By
Noreen Dunn

ADULT—MARCH, 1935

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PROMOTION
WOMAN'S SECTION, BOARD OF MISSIONS
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH
706 CHURCH STREET, NASHVILLE, TENN.
SUGGESTIONS TO THE LEADER

A good story-teller should be asked to prepare for telling the story of McKendree, bringing out very clearly the problems of his day, his courage and endurance, and his heroic spirit. Our only aim in placing these stories of our early pioneers in our programs is that we may catch their spirit in meeting our problems as they present themselves today.

The second topic, "The New Gospel Trail," may be presented by one speaker, or it may form a discussion in which a few persons may prepare and present, or the whole group may be included. We give below suggestions for discussion:

1. Discuss the task of McKendree and other pioneer missionaries as they followed the westward trail.
2. Discuss differences in the task of the early pioneers and those we meet today.
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4. Discuss the responsibility of every Christian in following "The New Gospel Trail."
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THE OLD GOSPEL TRAIL

Story of William McKendree

William McKendree, like so many of the traveling preachers of pioneer days, never married. Surely he would have been a successful husband, just as he was successful in everything he undertook. Ambitious, and alive with energy, he would have been a good provider for a wife and family. Nearly six feet tall, beautifully proportioned, and possessing with his good looks the social graces of his day, he was a man whom many a woman might have found it in her heart to love.

But William McKendree never had time to marry. First came the Revolutionary War. At the age of twenty-one he volunteered with a group of his fellow-Virginians. Soon he became an officer and as such stayed on the battle field until he witnessed the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, though he never boasted of his part in the war and never claimed a pension for his services.

Then, after the Revolution, came John Easter, the man who set in motion a revival which swept the whole of the new nation and brought into the ministry many noble men—both young and old. William McKendree, then thirty years of age, was one of those converted in Easter's revival, and while he was wrestling with a call to preach that same year he was unexpectedly appointed to Mecklenberg Circuit, Virginia, an appointment which he agreed to accept on trial, feeling certain that after a year he would have proved his inadequacy and unworthiness to preach and be relieved of his responsibilities. Instead, his faith, devotion, and zeal won for him a permanent place in the hearts of the people and in the ministry of his church.

The following quotations are typical of many of the entries in his journal during those early days of his ministry:

"Rose at 3 A.M.; family prayer, a time of sweetness to our souls. Went into the lovely fields when the blushing morn is dispersing gloomy night; breathed the sweet morning air with the love of God in my soul."

Again:

"Early in the morning spent an hour on my knees in fervent prayer, reading God's Word, and praising my adorable Savior. From 10 A.M. to half past one o'clock I spent in a lonely, awful swamp in wrestling, agonizing prayer. But surely God and his holy ones were all around me, heaven burst into my bosom, and glory filled my soul."

On another occasion we find him writing:

"O Lord, let me wrestle and fight and die rather than sink into a formal spirit of religion."

Built on such a foundation as this, it is not strange that through his ministry he was destined to become one of Methodism's greatest men.

The tenth year of William McKendree's ministry (October, 1800) marks the beginning of what may be termed his missionary career. For at that time he crossed the Alleghany Mountains and became presiding elder of a district which embraced the western part of Virginia, all of Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as the settled territory west of the Ohio River including what is now Ohio and an extensive part of the state of Illinois. The Natchez mission was also connected with his charge. He had to travel over fifteen hundred miles
to encompass his district, all of which, except East Tennessee and Western Virginia was a new, thinly populated country.

The gospel trail in those days led from one small, isolated neighborhood to another. Poor settlements they were—hard pressed and often miserably lowly, many miles from each other with no roads connecting them, no landmarks save the tops of bushes bent down or half broken—or occasional ax marks on the trees. A true pioneer in spirit, McKendree endeavored, with a handful of preachers in his charge, to keep pace with the advancing population of this western world, and plant the standard of Christ in the most remote of the frontier settlements.

Many hardships were, of course, involved in carrying out such a plan. McKendree and his fellow-laborer were frequently ministers of gospel consolation to the people in their camps and cabins, in the woods and cedars, before their fields had been opened sufficiently to raise a comfortable support for their families. In getting to them they slept at night upon their blankets and under the open sky; owls, bears, wolves, and panthers were their screeders, and sometimes the wild and cruel Indians dogged their steps by day and hovered around their camp fires at night.

From McKendree's journal we catch a glimpse of the indomitable good cheer with which he met such a life: "If we came to a creak or river, we had the privilege of swimming it; and when safely landed on the other bank, it was a consolation to reflect we had left that obstruction behind and that the way to the next lay open and plain before us. If night overtook us before we could reach a house, it was our privilege to gather wood where we could find it, make a fire, eat our morsel, and suplicate a throne of grace with as free access as in a palace or a church."

The results of his efforts, speaking numerically only, were astounding. He began his work in the West with eleven traveling preachers and less than two thousand members of the church. At the end of eight years' service, he had 45 traveling ministers and 16,887 church members, and the territory with which he began was divided into five districts instead of one.

With this record he came to the General Conference of 1828, held in Baltimore, Md., and was elected bishop, ordained by Francis Asbury, thus becoming the first American-born bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His territory then extended from Vermont to Louisiana, and from the Atlantic across the Mississippi.

His first tour of the frontier, as a bishop, was exceedingly interesting. People flocked to hear him, expecting to see a pompous person, wrapped in wealth and expensive garments, holding himself aloof from men and utterly authoritative in his ministry. Never was a man farther removed from this! His manner, appearance, and message soon corrected these opinions and won for him many loyal followers.

Having received only twenty dollars for his first year's work as a presiding elder in the West, and only eighty dollars a year thereafter, he was not a man given to the love of money or things that money buys. Indeed he possessed what amounted almost to a righteous aversion to wealth. On one occasion when a group of city friends presented him with a suit of fine black broadcloth which they considered more suitable for a bishop than the Tennessee jeans he had been wearing, he made the change with great reluctance, saying: "I am afraid of fine things; fine things delude the soul."

It must not be supposed by this that he was slovenly in his habits. For "in his dress and address you perceived in a moment the neatness and simplicity and courteousness of a gentleman who respected both himself and his company too highly to seem careless of his appearance."

The burden of episcopal duties at one time after Asbury's death, fell heavily upon McKendree as the only surviving bishop. Difficulties involving matters of deep concern in regard to church government came to the fore, and while handling these in a keen, judicious manner, his chief concern continued to be for men and women who were not hearing the gospel and for children who were growing up without the advantages of Christian training.

The Indian tribes had been of great concern to him for many years; but it was in the midst of ecclesiastical problems that he devised a plan whereby missionaries might be sent to the Indians and did much personally toward gaining a friendly entrance for his men into the various tribes.

During this time he aroused the interest and loyalty of his preachers, made a plan for general, systematic contributions for the support of missionary enterprise, and was one of the foremost leaders in organizing the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1810.

Matters of organization, however, did not keep him from the field itself. Neither did bodily afflictions. Greatly weakened by repeated exposure, improper food, and endless labor, in 1824 he started his journey from Tennessee to the General Conference in Baltimore in a feeble condition, scarcely able to sit up. Yet, after the conference he made his way to the Wyandotte Indian mission, where he preached to them and visited in their homes. He found that "the tomahawk and scalping knife, the rifle and the bow had been substituted by the ax, the plow, and the hoe."

The mission school was operating a fine farm, keeping itself supplied with corn, wheat, oats, rye, flax, and a profusion of vegetables.

Extracts from a letter received by Bishop McKendree from the Wyandotte tribe, after his visit to them, indicated the depth of their gratitude and love for him. Beginning their letter with the simple word, "Father," they related to him many intimate incidents—both good and bad—in connection with their tribe.

"One of our chiefs, Wapole, that did not belong to us," they wrote, "has joined, and this day was received into full connection and appointed one of the elders. We hope he will prove faithful and make us a strong stake.

"The school is still prospering, and our children are like the buds of the trees in the spring . . . . We still pray that you continue your care for us and our children; and through you we return our thanks to all our friends that have contributed to help forward this great work among our nation. We hope they will not get tired, but as they have helped us to wake out of our deep sleep and on to our feet, they will still help until we can walk and gather food for ourselves."

This letter was dictated by Between-the-Logs and Menencue to an interpreter, and signed with the cross mark of these two, and six other Indian men.

Always keenly sensitive to the needs of Negroes in the United States, Bishop McKendree, from his early ministry, served them unreservedly everywhere he went. This interest for many years reached out to include native Africans, and he became a real propagandist for foreign missions, particularly anxious to begin work in Liberia. Happily he lived to see his dream for
Africa came true when in the year 1832 Melville B. Cox set sail for Africa—the first missionary sent from the Methodist Episcopal Church to a foreign land.

In this same year Bishop McKendree attended General Conference, which met in Philadelphia. For twelve years he had been nominally superannuated, having been requested to do only such service as his health and convenience might justify. But during that time, although afflicted with rheumatism, hernia, vertigo, and asthma, he continued to make his rounds annually, usually on horseback.

An incident recorded in Tennessee, in the year 1827, pictures vividly the patience with which he bore his suffering. Because of his condition a doctor was called, and upon examining his venerable patient became alarmed, saying: "Bishop, how can you bear such pain so quietly?"

The old gentleman looked up and, smiling into the eyes of the inquirer, said: "Doctor, does your philosophy explain how a Christian can be perfectly happy while his body is in agony? Must there not be a soul in him?"

The doctor, a skeptical man, for a moment was silent, and then he answered: "Bishop, it must be so."

It is no wonder that as he reached Philadelphia in his seventy-fifth year he knew he would never attend another General Conference. The knowledge that he had at last come to the end of his active ministry bore heavily upon his heart. Indeed, his strength was so spent that he gave a brief message to the conference and then departed. Leaning on his staff, his eyes filled with tears, his voice trembling with emotion, he said: "Let all things be done without strife or vainglory, and try to keep the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace. My brethren and children, love one another." Then lifting his hand, he gave the apostolic benediction. The whole assembly rose and stood until he disappeared.

Too feeble to sit up, a bed was fixed for him in a carriage, and he crossed the Alleghenies toward the West for the last time. Three years later, after forty-eight years of Christian service, he preached his last sermon in the new building of McKendree Church, in Nashville, Tenn., the church named in his honor. Shortly after, he died in the home of his devoted brother and sister and was buried beside his father in Sumner County, Tenn.

When word was spread that a biography of this noble man was to be written, many interesting incidents of his life became known for the first time. Two such incidents are cited here for the purpose of showing the breadth of his heart. The first became known through a letter written by "An Old Lady," as she signed herself, in memory of the days Bishop McKendree spent in her childhood home. She said:

"He was remarkably fond of children. He liked to have his hair combed, and I would stand perhaps an hour at a time, on my little chair, combing his beautiful black hair, which curled naturally, and twining it about my tiny finger. . . . He would almost fall asleep while I amused myself behind him. When I came to arrange it in front he would take me on his knee. And when I was done, a very sweet kiss would be my reward and many thanks, also. I would then take my little chair and sit close by him and count the buttons at his knees. There were five at each knee; and he wore buckles on his shoes, too. I shall never forget his appearance, for in my opinion he was perfectly beautiful. He had a happy, holy look. . . . I knew Bishop Asbury, Bishop

Whatcoat, Dr. Coke; but never loved any as well as I did Bishop McKendree."

The last incident concerned Old Gray, the faithful horse who was almost as well known by thousands as was his owner. The Bishop's last will and testament made known the fact that he had bequeathed to Old Gray "enough money to pay for a good stable, a nice blue-grass pasture for life, and an honorable burial."

Thus did this great old missionary whose love embraced all living creatures pay tribute to the faithful companion who had helped him blaze the gospel trail among the frontier settlements of our spreading land.
THE NEW GOSPEL TRAIL

Changed Aspects of Home Missions

William McKendree in his forty-eighth year of Christian ministry represents the heart of the home mission task of his day. It requires no imagination to see that the home field today differs in many essentials from that field a century, or even a generation, ago. Some of the change that has taken place is stated in broad outline as follows:

"If the story of National Missions in the nineteenth century were to be condensed into a single word, that word would be expansion. Seen in retrospect, every other feature of the development of National Missions before 1900 seems dwarfed in comparison with the sheer immensity of the task which the rapid development of the country unfolded before the Church. All of the diversification of service and of the experimentation in method, all of the beginnings, divisions, and combinations in organization seem incidental to the main fact that within the space of three generations the Church had to expand a feeble and localized enterprise, to span a Continent.

"It follows therefore that through most of the century the familiar form of description of the Field of National Missions was in terms of geographical expansion and population growth. Here were sections which when first opened to settlement doubled and trebled their population within a decade. A canal or a railroad or even a cross-country trail newly constructed became a living stream scattering infant communities along its path. An allotment of land for homesteading or the discovery of gold was a magnet for tens of thousands. These were the familiar stories of the nineteenth century. To be sure, the Church on its way across the Continent had its attention turned toward many opportunities for service other than the planting of churches in new communities. The missionary purpose was broad enough to embrace the special needs of Indians, Negroes, Mexicans, Mormons, and other handicapped peoples. In the aggregate the service rendered to such populations is impressive and it would not be fair to speak of it as incidental to the main purpose of the Church.

From the beginning such service was implicit in the whole missionary program, but it was nevertheless, in general, subordinated to the central task of extending the church into new territory and of equipping and maintaining it in the territories where it had already been established.

"This much of history is reviewed to point the moral of the change that has taken place. The field of National Missions is no longer describable in such terms nor has it been for a quarter of a century. Broadly speaking, three factors combined to alter the aspect of the situation. The first of these was the practical completion of the process of opening new territory to settlement within which it was deemed necessary promptly to establish many new churches. There are, of course, new communities born every year, and there are frequent instances of sections characterized by rapid and often unexpected population growth. Homesteading is not yet at its end and industrial development is, in many sections at least, still in its infancy. But in broad outline it is possible to set some reasonable bounds to probable expansion and the church establishment is on the whole fairly adequate to care for any probable growth.

"The second important factor was the tremendous industrial development
upon which the country entered in the period following the Civil War and which in the succeeding decades has completely revolutionized our life. This industrial development has involved many changes of fundamental importance to National Missions. One of these has been the growth of great cities to the dominating position which they now occupy. Another has been the tremendous inflow of immigration from eastern and southern Europe. Still another has been the depressing effect of industrial expansion upon the agricultural population. The extent of this industrial development has been so prodigious as to be difficult of comprehension.

"The third factor has been the rise in American life of the consciousness of racial or class differences. The terms most commonly used in recent years in the description of the task of National Missions have been the terms of contrasting population groups. The most striking advances made in mission work since 1800 have concerned the adaptation of its service program to meet the needs of special populations or areas due to different racial, economic, or social backgrounds." *

**BARRIERS TO BE REMOVED**

Undoubtedly the home mission task today is different in many respects from that of yesterday. The old gospel trail had barriers to overcome—physical barriers which called for strong bodies, strong wills, and relentless spirits fired with unconquerable ideals.

Today the physical barriers have been removed. The day of expansion is over. The geographical bounds of our home mission task are fixed, and our country is covered with a maze of mudless roads, and rivers are bridged which defy the greatest floods. Churches dot the hillsides, and there is hardly a community or family anywhere which could not find some Sunday service to attend, or secure the help of a minister if they were in need. The immensity of the achievement of the early pioneer missionary preachers who blazed the old gospel trail can hardly be conceived by men and women accustomed to the comforts of our scientific age. Yet their task was enviable in many ways. Their barriers were tangible, concrete, definite. A trackless forest, a bridgeless river, hungry wild animals, hostile Indians—what are they compared to the barriers of race prejudice, industrial and economic selfishness and greed, political demagoguery, sex discrimination, intangible barriers which hide themselves in the hearts of men and women and make difficult the spreading of the Kingdom of God?

Such barriers as these cannot be marked by geographical boundary lines. They cut across every area of our land and creep into the church itself, so that a white face and respectable clothes are necessary requirements for the person who would kneel at the altar to partake of elements administered by men only, in memory of the Savior of all mankind who knew no difference between white and black, between rich and poor, between man and woman.

These barriers which keep men from the fulness of Christian fellowship in our land are barriers which must be removed if we are to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

**THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK**

Perhaps the task of home missions would be easier if we could have pictured to us in vivid terms the inconsistency between our progressions and our practices. We live in a so-called Christian land, and yet, a yearly trail of barbaric mobs snuff out the lives of Negro men without giving them even the merest semblance of a trial; whereas the story of the white man's conduct goes unnoticed, except for the faces of little children who give mute evidence to his violation of Negro womanhood.

Nor can home missions overlook the fact that there are men and women of high influence in a Christian nation who invent excuses, coin pious phrases, appeal to the most sacred things in life in order to defeat an amendment which has for its purpose the protection and welfare of the children of our land. In his book, Christianity, the Way, Joseph B. Matthews says:

"If Jesus were here today he would feel an unpleasant, scrupulous sensation in some of our finest wearing apparel. Some of our sweetest foods that come to use from the toil of little children would be bitter to him. The warmth of our homes, made comfortable by the heat from coal that has been sorted by tender bleeding hands, would kindle such a blaze in his soul that you would hear him say: 'It were better for an industry that a millstone were hung about its neck, and that it were drowned in the depth of the sea, than that it should offend one of these little ones.'"

We should by no means minimize the task which is commonly considered the duty of home missions—that is, that of filling the gap for humanity wherever society has failed to provide the means for man's physical, mental, or spiritual well-being. Our home mission institutions—settlement houses, clinics, schools, churches—are for the purpose of filling such gaps and supplying such needs. We have buildings, equipment, trained missionaries dedicated to this part of the task. But the task of home missions today is deeper than that. While giving relief, it seeks to remedy the cause, to get at the root of the great inconsistencies in our life which give birth to such crying needs. The task of healing ourselves is a painful, disconcerting one. Perhaps no more difficult task was ever before laid at the Christian's door.

**THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY**

Missionaries and ministers alone cannot remove the barriers which stand in the way of true Christian fellowship in our land. They cannot cope with the difficult task which the present-day conditions set for the church without the help of Christian men and women in every walk of life.

In spite of our templed hills, the fact remains that about one-half of the men and women of the United States do not identify themselves with the church. Thousands of boys and girls are growing up without Christian training, and this in view of the fact that ninety-seven per cent of the men in Sing Sing today never had a chance as children to be members of any clubs or juvenile societies where boys learn how to spend their leisure time in wholesome recreation.

There are unreached boys and girls in every community who should be brought into the Sunday school. There are men and women whose needs plead eloquently for a place in the Christian fellowship of the church. There are rural communities without Sunday schools and missionary societies—communities within reach of church members who could minister to their needs. It behooves every Christian to become a missionary in a very real sense today. If he is to obey the injunction of the Master, he must reach out into the community in which he lives and find a place of service for himself.

* Fifth Annual Report. Presbyterian Board of National Missions, pp. 16, 16.
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His first tour of the frontier, as a bishop, was exceedingly interesting. People flocked to hear him, expecting to see a pompous person, wrapped in wealth and expensive garments, holding himself aloof from men and authoritatively in his ministry. Never was a man farther removed from this! His manner, appearance, and message soon corrected these opinions and won for him many loyal followers.

Having received only twenty dollars for his first year's work as a presiding elder in the West, and only eighty dollars a year thereafter, he was not a man given to the love of money or things that money buys. Indeed he possessed what amounted almost to a righteous aversion to wealth. On one occasion when a group of city friends presented him with a suit of fine black broadcloth which they considered more suitable for a bishop than the Tennessee jeans he had been wearing, he made the change with great reluctance, saying: "I am afraid of fine things; fine things delude the soul."

It must not be supposed by this that he was slovenly in his habits. For "in his dress and address you perceived in a moment the neatness and simplicity and courtesy of a gentleman who respected both himself and his company too highly to seem careless of his appearance."

The burden of episcopal duties at one time after Ashbury's death, fell heavily upon McKendree as the only surviving bishop. Difficulties involving matters of deep concern in regard to church government came to the fore, and while handling these in a keen, judicious manner, his chief concern continued to be for men and women who were not hearing the gospel and for children who were growing up without the advantages of Christian training.

The Indian tribes had been of great concern to him for many years; but it was in the midst of ecclesiastical problems that he devised a plan whereby missionaries might be sent to the Indians and did much personally toward gaining a friendly entrance for his men into the various tribes.

During this time he aroused the interest and loyalty of his preachers, made a plan for general, systematic contributions for the support of missionary enterprises, and was one of the foremost leaders in organizing the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1819.

Matters of organization, however, did not keep him from the field itself. Neither did bodily afflictions. Greatly weakened by repeated exposure, improper food, and endless labor, in 1824 he started his journey from Tennessee to the General Conference in Baltimore in a feeble condition, scarcely able to sit up. Yet, after the conference he made his way to the Wyandotte Indian mission, where he preached to them and visited in their homes. He found that "the tomahawk and scalping knife, the rifle and the bow had been substituted by the ax, the plow, and the hoe."

The mission school was operating a fine farm, keeping itself supplied with corn, wheat, oats, rye, flax, and a profusion of vegetables.

Extracts from a letter received by Bishop McKendree from the Wyandotte tribe, after his visit to them, indicated the depth of their gratitude and love for him. Beginning their letter with the simple word, "Father," they related to him many intimate incidents—both good and bad—in connection with their tribe.

"One of our chiefs, Warpole, that did not belong to us," they wrote, "has joined, and this day was received into full connection and appointed one of the leaders. We hope he will prove faithful and make us a strong stake.

"The school is still prospering, and our children are like the buds of the trees in the spring. . . . We still pray that you continue your care for us and our children; and through you we return our thanks to all our friends that have contributed to help forward this great work among our nation. We hope they will not get tired, but as they have helped us to wake out of our deep sleep and on to our feet, they will still help until we can walk and gather food for ourselves."

This letter was dictated by Between-the-Lags and Menonuce to an interpreter, and signed with the cross mark of these two, and six other Indian men.

Always keenly sensitive to the needs of Negroes in the United States, Bishop McKendree, from his early ministry, served them unreservedly everywhere he went. This interest for many years reached out to include native Africans, and he became a real propagandist for foreign missions, particularly anxious to begin work in Liberia. Happily he lived to see his dream for
Africa come true when in the year 1822 McVille B. Cox set sail for Africa—the first missionary sent from the Methodist Episcopal Church to a foreign land.

In this same year Bishop McKendree attended General Conference, which met in Philadelphia. For twelve years he had been nominally superannuated, having been requested to do only such service as his health and convenience might justify. But during that time, although afflicted with rheumatism, hernia, vertigo, and asthma, he continued to make his rounds annually, usually on horseback.

An incident recorded in Tennessee, in the year 1827, pictures vividly the patience with which he bore his suffering. Because of his condition a doctor was called, and upon examining his venerable patient became alarmed, saying: “Bishop, how can you bear such pain so quietly?”

The old gentleman looked up and, smirking into the eyes of the inquirer, said: “Doctor, does your philosophy explain how a Christian can be perfectly happy while his body is in agony? Must there not be a soul in him?”

The doctor, a skeptical man, for a moment was silent, and then he answered: “Bishop, it must be so.”

It is no wonder that as he reached Philadelphia in his seventy-fifth year he knew he would never attend another General Conference. The knowledge that he had at last come to the end of his active ministry bore heavily upon his heart. Indeed, his strength was so spent that he gave a brief message to the conference and then departed. Leaning on his staff, his eyes filled with tears, his voice trembling with emotion, he said: “Let all things be done without strife or vainglory, and try to keep the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace. My brethren and children, love one another.” Then lifting his hand, he gave the apostolic benediction. The whole assembly rose and stood until he disappeared.

Too feeble to sit up, a bed was fixed for him in a carriage, and he crossed the Alleghanies toward the West for the last time. Three years later, after forty-eight years of Christian service, he preached his last sermon in the new building of McKendree Church, in Nashville, Tenn., the church named in his honor. Shortly after, he died in the home of his devoted brother and sister and was buried beside his father in Sumner County, Tenn.

When word was spread that a biography of this noble man was to be written, many interesting incidents of his life became known for the first time. Two such incidents are cited here for the purpose of showing the broad expanse of this man’s heart. The first became known through a letter written by “An Old Lady,” as she signed herself, in memory of the days Bishop McKendree spent in her childhood home. She said:

“He was remarkably fond of children. He liked to have his hair combed, and I would stand perhaps an hour at a time, on my little chair, combing his beautiful black hair, which curled naturally, and twining it about my tiny finger . . . . He would almost fall asleep while I amused myself behind him. When I came to arrange it in front he would take me on his knee. And when I was done, a very sweet kiss would be my reward and many thanks, also. I would then take my little chair and sit close by him and count the buttons at his knees. There were five at each knee; and he wore buckles on his shoes, too. I shall never forget his appearance, for in my opinion he was perfectly beautiful. He had a happy, holy look. . . . I knew Bishop Asbury, Bishop

Whatcoat, Dr. Coke; but never loved any as well as I did Bishop McKendree.”

The last incident concerned Old Gray, the faithful horse who was almost as well known by thousands as was his owner. The Bishop’s last will and testament made known the fact that he had bequeathed to Old Gray “enough money to pay for a good stable, a nice blue-grass pasture for life, and an honorable burial.”

Thus did this great old missionary whose love embraced all living creatures pay tribute to the faithful companion who had helped him blaze the gospel trail among the frontier settlements of our spreading land.
THE NEW GOSPEL TRAIL
Changed Aspects of Home Missions

William McKendree in his forty-eighth year of Christian ministry represents the heart of the home mission task of his day. It requires no imagination to see that the home field today differs in many essentials from that field a century, or even a generation, ago. Some of the change that has taken place is stated in broad outline as follows:

"If the story of National Missions in the nineteenth century were to be condensed into a single word, that word would be expansion. Seen in retrospect, every other feature of the development of National Missions before 1900 seems dwarfed in comparison with the sheer immensity of the task which the rapid development of the country unfolded before the Church. All of the diversification of service and of the experimentation in method, all of the beginnings, divisions, and combinations in organization seem incidental to the main fact that within the space of three generations the Church had to expand a feeble and localized enterprise, to span a Continent.

"It follows therefore that through most of the century the familiar form of description of the Field of National Missions was in terms of geographical expansion and population growth. Here were sections which when first opened to settlement doubled and trebled their population within a decade. A canal or a railroad or even a cross-country trail newly constructed became a living stream scattering infant communities along its path. An allotment of land for homesteading or the discovery of gold was a magnet for tens of thousands. Those were the familiar stories of the nineteenth century. To be sure, the Church on its way across the Continent had its attention turned toward many opportunities for service other than the planting of churches in new communities. The missionary purpose was broad enough to embrace the special needs of Indians, Negroes, Mexicans, Mormons, and other handicapped peoples. In the aggregate the service rendered to such populations is impressive and it would not be fair to speak of it as incidental to the main purpose of the Church. From the beginning such service was implicit in the whole missionary program, but it was nevertheless, in general, subordinated to the central task of extending the church into new territory and of equipping and maintaining it in the territories where it had already been established.

"This much of history is reviewed to point the moral of the change that has taken place. The field of National Missions is no longer describable in such terms nor has it been for a quarter of a century. Broadly speaking, three factors combined to alter the aspect of the situation. The first of these was the practical completion of the process of opening new territory to settlement within which it was deemed necessary promptly to establish many new churches. There are, of course, new communities born every year, and there are frequent instances of sections characterized by rapid and often unexpected population growth. Homesteading is not yet at its end and industrial development is, in many sections at least, still in its infancy. But in broad outline it is possible to set some reasonable bounds to probable expansion and the church establishment is on the whole fairly adequate to care for any probable growth.

"The second important factor was the tremendous industrial development
upon which the country entered in the period following the Civil War and
which in the succeeding decades has completely revolutionized our life. This
industrial development has involved many changes of fundamental importance
to National Missions. One of these has been the growth of great cities to the
dominating position which they now occupy. Another has been the tremendous
inflow of immigration from eastern and southern Europe. Still another has
been the depressing effect of industrial expansion upon the agricultural popu-
lation. The extent of this industrial development has been so prodigious as to
be difficult of comprehension.

"The third factor has been the rise in American life of the consciousness
of racial or class differences. The terms most commonly used in recent years
in the description of the task of National Missions have been the terms of
contrasting population groups. The most striking advances made in mission
work since 1860 have concerned the adaptation of its service program to meet
the needs of special populations or areas due to different racial, economic, or
social backgrounds."**

** BARRIERS TO BE REMOVED

Undoubtedly the home mission task today is different in many respects
from that of yesterday. The old gospel trail had barriers to be overcome—
physical barriers which called for strong bodies, strong wills, and relentless
spirits fired with unconquerable ideals.

Today the physical barriers have been removed. The day of expansion
is over. The geographical bounds of our home mission task are fixed, and our
country is covered with a maze of mudless roads, and rivers are arched by
bridges which defy the greatest floods. Churches dot the hilltops, and there
is hardly a community or family anywhere which could not find some Sunday
service to attend, or secure the help of a minister if they were in need. The
immensity of the achievement of the early pioneer missionary preachers who
blazed the old gospel trail can hardly be conceived by men and women accustom-
ted to the comforts of our scientific age. Yet their task was enviable in
many ways. Their barriers were tangible, concrete, definite. A trackless
forest, a bridgeless river, hungry wild animals, hostile Indians—what are they
compared to the barriers of race prejudice, industrial and economic selfishness
and greed, political debauchery, sex discrimination, intangible barriers which
hide themselves in the hearts of men and women and make difficult the spreading
of the Kingdom of God?

Such barriers as these cannot be marked by geographical boundary lines.
They cut across every area of our land and creep into the church itself, so
that a white face and respectable clothes are necessary requirements for the
person who would kneel at the altar to partake of elements administered by
men only, in memory of the Savior of all mankind who knew no difference
between white and black, between rich and poor, between man and woman.

These barriers which keep men from finding the fullness of Christian
fellowship in our land are barriers which must be removed if we are to be
doers of the word and not hearers only.

** THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK

Perhaps the task of home missions would be easier if we could have pic-
tured to us in vivid terms the inconsistency between our progressions and our
practices. We live in a so-called Christian land, and yet, a yearly trail of
barbaric mobs snuff out the lives of Negro men without giving them even the
merest semblance of a trial; whereas the story of the white man's conduct goes
unnoticed, except for the facts of little children who give mute evidence to
his violation of Negro womanhood.

Nor can home missions overlook the fact that there are men and women
of high influence in a Christian nation who invent excuses, coin pleas phrases,
appeal to the most sacred things in life in order to defeat an amendment which
has for its purpose the protection and welfare of the children of our land.
In his book, Christianity, the Way, Joseph B. Matthews says:

"If Jesus were here today he would feel an unpleasant, scratchy sensation
in some of our softest wearing apparel. Some of our sweetest foods that come
to use from the soil of little children would be bitter to him. The warmth of
our homes, made comfortable by the heat from coal that has been sorted by
tender bleeding hands, would kindle such a blaze in his soul that you would
hear him say: It were better for an industry that a mill-stone were hunged
about its neck, and that it were drowned in the depth of the sea, than that
it should offend one of these little ones."

We should by no means minimize the task which is commonly considered
the duty of home missions—that is, that of filling the gap for humanity where-
ever society has failed to provide the means for man's physical, mental, or
spiritual well-being. Our home mission institutions—settlement houses, clinics,
schools, churches—are for the purpose of filling such gaps and supplying such
needs. We have buildings, equipment, trained missionaries dedicated to this
part of the task. But the task of home missions today digs deeper than that.
While giving relief, it seeks to remedy the cause, to get at the root of the
great inconsistencies in our life which give birth to such crying needs. The
task of healing ourselves is a painful, disconcerting one. Perhaps no more
difficult task was ever before laid at the Christian's door.

** THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

Missionaries and ministers alone cannot remove the barriers which stand
in the way of true Christian fellowship in our land. They cannot cope with
the difficult task which the present-day conditions set for the church without
the help of Christian men and women in every walk of life.

In spite of our templed hills, the fact remains that about one-half of the
men and women of the United States do not identify themselves with the
church. Thousands of boys and girls are growing up without Christian train-
ing, and this in view of the fact that ninety-seven per cent of the men in
Sing Sing today never had a chance as children to be members of any clubs
or juvenile societies where boys learn how to spend their leisure time in
wholesome recreation.

There are unreachéd boys and girls in every community who should be
brought into the Sunday school. There are men and women whose needs plead elo-
squently for a place in the Christian fellowship of the church. There are
rural communities without Sunday schools and missionary societies—communi-
ties within reach of church members who could minister to their needs. It
behooves every Christian to become a missionary in a very real sense today.
If he is to obey the injunction of the Master, he must reach out into the com-
unity in which he lives and find a place of service for himself.

** Fifth Annual Report, Presbyterian Board of National Missions, pp. 16, 16.
But this is the simplest part of the task, because it is the one nearest at hand. The earnest Christian can no more stop with his community than McKendree could stop at the foot of the Alleghenies when he was commissioned to serve the western conference beyond. Jesus himself left no area of life untouched, and he commanded us to go into all the world.

We may not be able literally to obey his injunction by becoming traveling missionaries. But each of us, whether we ever get farther than twenty miles from home, may become world citizens. We can give our first loyalty to God and to humanity, and identify ourselves with the ideals for which Jesus stood, ruthlessly testing our own lives and the life of our church and of our nation by his true standards, shorn of their ecclesiastical trappings.

This is the new gospel trail—a trail which cuts across personal prejudices, selfishness, and conceits, and breaks down barriers which shut men and women out of Christian fellowship. Jesus says, “Come, follow me.” If we obey, it may mean social ostracism, false accusations, criticism, imprisonment, or exposure of ourselves to bodily danger. It will mean standing for the hard right, not spasmodically as we feel inspired to do so, but every day with dogged perseverance, against the easy wrong. Are we willing to try this trail? If so, we must pray for ability to see our own weakness, strength to bear suffering, courage to face dangers. The rugged faith of our pioneer fathers must descend upon us, and the spirit of Christ himself consume our very hearts.
Photographs from this file have not been included but are available upon request. For more information please contact research@gcah.org