

Africo-American Presbyterian

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii, 32.

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TEN YEARS AT THE BIDDLEVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Review by the Pastor, Rev. L. B. West, D. D.

I came to the Biddleville Presbyterian church ten years ago. I arrived in Charlotte on Friday afternoon, October 13th, 1916, from Denver, Colorado, and preached my first sermon Sunday, October 15. After the morning service the session met and placed my salary at the princely sum of \$175 per year as the best church could do as its part.

For several years the church had been trying to erect a new edifice for the worship of God. And so, in accordance with this, funds were being raised. A rally was planned for my first day at the church. The amount collected was a little over \$600.00. The members were pleased with this effort. This amount was added to a sum that was already in the bank, bringing the total to something like one thousand dollars.

The Biddleville church was no stranger to me. I had attended services here while in school, and had made up my mind that I would never be induced to be its pastor. I was acquainted with several of its members, but many of them were strangers to me. I had come to the church with the understanding that the prospects for building up a better church were very bright. I therefore addressed myself to that task. I found a fatherly set of officers who assured me that they were willing to move forward to greater things. They impressed upon me, however, that the first step in the direction of building up the church was the erection of a new church building. It was not long before the idea of a new church building gripped the entire congregation. The building committee was called into action and new members were added. The style and price of the building came in for a great deal of discussion. At that time it was agreed that a \$3,000 structure would meet the needs of the church and be serviceable to the community. The committee was kept busy inspecting catalogues and plans of churches. It was finally decided to give a local architect the contract for the drawing of the plan. The late L. L. Hunter drew the plans which were altered to give us the edifice which we now have and love so well.

In the midst of our work something happened which shattered our plans for a while. The United States entered the World War. While we were checked somewhat, the fire that was kindled had not gone out. And so at the close of the war the fire that had died down began to burn with intensity toward the erection of a new church. The old frame church had become dilapidated, and some of the members had become ashamed of it. A high wind while services were on would shake the building so until the worshippers became alarmed. The war had sent things sky high, and that made it impossible to construct a \$3,000 structure. In fact it was thought that the same kind of structure would cost twice that amount of money.

A congregational meeting was called for a night in the week. It was poorly attended but it was not poor in spirit. Those present evinced an eagerness that can never be forgotten. It was decided to raise \$1,000 in a rally. This decision was reached after much discussion. One of the members who had much faith and whose heart was aglow with enthusiasm said she believed we could raise that amount and made a motion to that effect which was carried. The roll of the church showed that we had about 80 members. A good many of these were children and several were in the class that is to be found in all

churches, viz., the uncertain quantity class. Clubs were formed and leaders appointed and sent forth in prayer. Those were hours never to be forgotten or thought light of when the leaders assembled with the pastor and laid the matter in earnest prayer before God.

As has been stated, I took charge of the work in October, 1916. In September, 1917, an evangelistic campaign was launched. I ventured to do the preaching alone. The choir was augmented by members from the other choirs in the village. Each night a spirited song service was conducted. As a result of this effort ten persons united with the church. The membership has steadily increased. The roll shows today 145 members.

One hundred and thirty-six members have joined the church during the ten years just closed. While several of the members are still here which I found, the personnel of the congregation has greatly changed. Country churches have been sending to the city churches large numbers of members in recent years. It has been the good fortune of the Biddleville church to receive into its membership some of the finest Presbyterians to be found anywhere from some of these churches.

A good many have come and gone in these years. Some have moved to other places and some have passed into the great beyond to await the summons of the general resurrection. It is interesting to note that death has not invaded our ranks very much in these years. We have only had an average of one or two deaths a year.

To come back to the building of the church, the campaign to raise \$1,000 was successful. The captains reported about \$1,400. I think this church has the record for raising money in the city. It was a Sunday night of great rejoicing after the report was made. The people stood and sang "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Other campaigns were launched until the church was completed at a cost of \$12,000.

As I remember, work began on the new church in October, 1919. Many difficulties had to be overcome. The minister and his building committee had to keep in touch with each other. More than once the minister, in cases of emergency, had to walk around and notify the members of the committee to meet that night or the next night. The church was recommended to the Board of Church Erection for aid. It was found that no aid was forthcoming until the church had paid off an old standing debt due to the Board. The committee promptly paid the Board. The church was not built by contract. The committee had on it men experienced in business, and so it was decided that the committee would accept bids for the brick work, etc. We ordered our brick through a local company and agreed to have a brick-layer to lay the brick at so much per thousand.

At one point in the erection of the building when things looked rather gloomy the members assembled themselves and after clear cut discussions in which faith was the dominant rule, fervent prayer was offered and different groups made themselves responsible for the needs, which were supplied. One of the significant happenings of the building period was the fact that several women were added to the building committee. These women added much enthusiasm. The names of the committee, as well as I remember, with the women, follow:

Mr. Geo. W. Phifer, chairman, Mr. W. H. Stinson, Treasurer,

Dr. C. H. Shute, Secretary, Dr. H. L. McCrorey, Dr. G. E. Davis, Mr. T. C. C. Foster, Mr. T. E. Bradshaw, Mr. W. R. Young, Mr. DeWitt Hairston, Mr. Henry Etheridge, Mrs. J. B. Stinson, Mrs. J. M. Pride, Miss Dollie Young, Mrs. H. L. McCrorey, Mrs. Auce Jewell, Mrs. Lizzie Feimster, Mrs. Annie Shute.

The fourth Sunday in June, 1922, was a grand and glorious day in the history of Biddleville Presbyterian church. On that day the saints gathered in the old church and marched over to the present church, singing, "We are marching to Zion." The church was formally dedicated. Dr. C. H. Shute preached the sermon. Drs. A. F. Graham and H. L. McCrorey assisted in the service. Each of these ministers had at some time rendered service to the church. The church is free of debt with the exception of the money borrowed from the Board of Church Erection. This amount is to be paid in annual installments of \$200 over a period of ten years.

The Biddleville church is not large, but its members have shown a splendid spirit of loyalty. The minister has been encouraged more than once by the thoughtfulness manifested to him while he was single and since he has been married. Gifts have come to him from the church, and also from individuals. The minister cannot relate all the acts of love. But here is a typical incident. One night after a prayer meeting the minister was presented with a small package. On going home he opened it and there nicely wrapped in a small envelope was a \$2½ gold coin. He was so taken back that he thought it was given for the church benevolence. He, therefore, enquired only to be told that it was for personal use. Again and again money has been given from a dime to \$5.00 with the understanding that it was for personal use. Individual members have given from a fountain pen to a suit of clothes.

The matter of salary reads like a romance. I began work at \$175 per year. Each year the church has made an increase until this year it is \$900 and the end is not yet, for the officers have set their goal.

When I came here the church was raising \$10 a year as its benevolence quota, and since that time it has raised ten times that amount for one year.

On coming here I organized the Ministers' Aid Society. That Society has kept intact all these years and has done much valuable work in the church. Its last act was the installation of the present beautiful pulpit suite which adorns the rostrum. This society has shown kindness to the pastor.

The Missionary Society on more than one occasion has gladdened the heart of the minister by deeds of love for the church and for the minister. The beautiful carpet on the rostrum and the nicely appointed pastor's study are their latest acts of love.

The Sunday school has also played an important part in the work of these ten years. It is from there that the church has been recruited. The most precious moments in the life of the minister have come from the observance of Decision Day when an invitation was given to the young ones to give their lives to Christ.

Much encouragement has come from members who have been free to praise me when my pulpit efforts have helped them, and honest enough not to say anything when I have failed. And God knows I have at times failed. I believe I have been the object of prayer on the part of many members, but how heartening it has been to meet on Wednesday nights and hear the faithful

praying for their shepherd. Our prayer meetings have never been large, but whatever the size Bro. Geo. W. Phifer can be counted on to be one among the number. Many a night he and I have met and talked over the condition of the church and then poured out our hearts to God in prayer and expressed our faith for better days.

Ten years have gone and we are looking back with thanks for what God has wrought. But what about the future? The fact of this community has been completely changed. New people! New homes! New surroundings! New opportunities! These challenge us. What shall our answer be?

God has wonderfully blessed us. We are not blessed with numbers, but we are blessed with other blessings. What a noble heritage you have. You have an aggregation of talent that any church ought to be proud to have. You can take your stand by the side of any congregation in education and intelligence. You are not a rich people, neither are you poverty stricken. God has caused you to move in pleasant places. He has led you into pastures green and beside still waters. Great possibilities and potentialities are wrapped up in the Biddleville congregation. God will require more at your hands than He will from those of less favored congregations. I call upon you to consecrate yourselves for the task which awaits you. Remember this is the Lord's work. It calls for the best you have to offer. May the Biddleville church not suffer, may it not take a backward step, may it not want for people to worship God at its services, may it not lack the evangelistic spirit, may it not lack for financial support, may it not lack love, may it not lack prayer nor any of the Christian graces because of the disloyalty of its members. May the Lord be kind to you and may you be true to Him. Let this be your slogan: A Greater, Better, Bigger Biddleville.

COLORED WOMEN ADVANCE UNDER BALLOT.

Washington, October 30.—With more than four million colored women and girls, ten years of age and over, gainfully employed in the diversified occupations of American production some significant facts are apparent in the shift of employment among this wing of our working group during the past twelve years. Due to the tremendously active abandonment of farm employment, largely in the South, for the industrial pursuits of urban centers in the North, agricultural workers (including forestry and animal husbandry employees) among our female group, declined from approximately 52.2 per cent to 39.0 per cent. This decrease was greater than the decline among the male group in the agricultural occupations, which fell from 58 per cent to 48.2 per cent.

In the manufacturing and mechanical industries, which are very sparsely located in the Southern States, our female group increased from 8.4 per cent to 6.7 per cent; in the transportation occupations their increase was from one-tenth of one per cent to two-tenths of one per cent; in the trade pursuits, they rose from three-tenths of one per cent; in the public service they gained their first significant inclusion of one-tenth of one per cent from their previous mark of 1.0 per cent; in domestic and public service they increased very appreciably; and in clerical occupations they made the approximate twelve-year gain of three-tenths of one per cent.

All employment has its compensation of wages, recreation, and civic and political opportunity, all of which are as good or as poor as conditions of labor and the dominating influ-

ences of actual employment permit them to be. Consequently, the national enfranchisement of women, which was accomplished by the Republican party, and under which colored women, outside of the solid South, have been given the unrestricted use of the ballot, whereby they may influence the conditions of employment surrounding them, as well as the opportunity to take part in the moulding of the government of which they are subjects, is of far greater importance to them than it is to any group of a lesser producing potentiality. When there is added to this truth the fact that under the protective tariff American industry will thrive, thus holding off competing imports from foreign countries and providing ample employment at a fair wage, for our own workers, the power of the ballot in the hands of an intelligent working and voting group is almost doubled. It is not strange that a young colored woman, who is gainfully employed in the Middle West, characteristically stated; with much emphasis: "Sure! I vote at every election, and right now I'm working to aid in the defeat of a Democratic Congressional candidate, who has said that Negro labor is worthless. He doesn't know what our women are doing in our country; but he'll find out when the election is over."

DR. CARTER WOODSON'S NEW BOOK.

Washington, October 30.—Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Harvard scholar and the race's most eminent historian and social research expert, has announced the publication of his latest book, "The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters During the Crisis, 1800-1860." This copious collection of letters written by Negroes through over half a century of slavery makes an interesting contribution to the record of the sociologic and psychologic features of that period. More than two hundred individuals are represented, several of them by more than one letter.

Dr. Woodson has classified them in four groups: namely, letters written to the American Colonization Society, which organized and administered the movement to send free Negroes to Liberia, there to form a self-governing colony; those to anti-slavery workers and agencies; a large number chiefly personal and private; a small group dealing with miscellaneous matters. In addition, the editor quotes in his introduction letters from several Negroes of some achievement, who were well known prior to the period which limits the selections in the body of the volume. Among the Negroes whose letters are quoted with reference to the colonization scheme is John B. Russworm, who was the first black man to receive a college degree in the United States. He was graduated from Bowdoin College and some time later in the early eighteen-thirties, joined the colony in Liberia, where he played an important part.

COLORED WOMEN TO STUDY INDUSTRY.

New York, October 30.—With the increasing trend of female employment in this city, Columbia University has announced for the coming academic year, a new extension course on the subject of women in industry.

A number of leading industrial experts of the race, it is said, are planning to take the course, in view of the gradual increase of colored female workers in New York and vicinity.

Recently a Manhattan laundry gave employment to a number of colored girls, a bookkeeper and a solicitor; and otherwise colored women are slowly but surely advancing in industry throughout the State.

THE AFRO-AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL

By Rev. T. J. B. Harris, D. D., Executive Secretary.

The Thirty-Second Annual meeting of the Afro-American Presbyterian Council was held in the St. John Presbyterian church, Detroit, Mich., Rev. Milton Thompson, pastor, October 14-17 inclusive. Thirty-two ministers and delegates were present. The organization of Council was effected on Thursday, 14th, at 3:30 P. M.: Rev. McClain C. Spann, of West Chester, Pa., was chosen as President; Elder J. W. Nichols, of Grace church, Baltimore, Md., Vice-President; Mrs. F. E. Jerome, Jersey City, Temporary Clerk; Rev. John T. Colbert, D. D., Grace church, Baltimore, Md., Statistician; Rev. Wm. Lloyd Imes, St. James church, New York City, and Rev. A. E. Bennett, Witherspoon Street church, Princeton, N. J., members of the Executive Committee.

A very harmonious Council was the verdict of all who attended the sessions. The reports of the chairmen of the various committees were interesting and inspiring. The addresses were effective and pointed. The sermons were forceful and convincing and helpful to both Council and church. The opening sermon was preached by the Rev. Wm. R. Rutledge, retiring President, Wilmington, Delaware. The reports, on Stewardship by Rev. A. E. Bennett, Princeton, N. J.; Evangelism, by Rev. B. F. Glasco, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Church Extension, by Rev. S. W. Brister, Atlantic City, N. J.; Statistics, by Rev. J. T. Colbert, D. D., Baltimore, Md.; Men's Work, by Rev. Wm. Lloyd Imes, A. M., N. Y.; Geo. L. Winstead, M. D., Pittsburgh, Pa.; Elder W. C. Hundley, N. Y. City, and the Missionary Work of the Council, Rev. John W. Lee, D. D., Phila., Pa., showed a wide grasp of the subjects in hand and an intense study of the fields and their needs. The faithfulness of some of the members of the committees was shown in that they could not be present but sent their reports to be read. Rev. James G. Carline, of Troy, N. Y., Mrs. Mary O. Griggs, Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Elder J. Gordon Baugh, Jr., Germantown, Pa., all sent their reports to be read. The Department of Women's Work was directed by Mrs. Geo. W. Evans, Philadelphia, Pa., and Mrs. Florence E. Jerome of Jersey City. Mrs. Fannie P. Sanders, of St. James church, New York City, and Mrs. Josephine Norcum, Executive Secretary Y. W. C. A., Detroit, Michigan, were special speakers.

Visitors at the Council included Mr. Paul Dennis, Chairman of the Constitutional League; Ossian H. Sweet, M. D., around whom the fires of race hatred have been flaming recently; Rev. Dr. Miller, Camp Nelson, Ky.; Rev. E. A. Wilbur Johnson, Rev. C. H. Hill of Detroit, John C. Dancy, Jr., of the Urban League; E. A. Carter, M. D., Aaron Toodle, Ph. G.; Rev. Lewis N. Brooks, D. D., Moderator of the Presbytery of Detroit, Rev. Ralph Crissman, D. D., Moderator of the Synod of Michigan.

The congenial hospitality of the good people of St. John church, will remain a pleasant memory for the members of the Council through many years. The closing sermons of the Council were preached by Rev. M. C. Spann, West Chester, Pa., and the Rev. A. E. Bennett, Princeton, N. J. The session was concluded by the administering of the Lord's Supper.

Council adjourned to meet at Grace Presbyterian church, Baltimore, Md., the second Thursday in October, 1927.