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"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."

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PRAYER MEETING METHODS

By Rev. H. T. McFadden, Louisburg, N. C.

(Paper read at the Presbyterian Workers' Conference)

The subject of Prayer Meeting Methods which has been assigned to me for this hour is one of the live issues of today, and one that is consuming a great deal of time and energy, both among educators and religious men and women of today.

The question that most concerns us at present is not what to do, but how should it be done? and what are the best methods that can be used to get over to the public what we have for them? Every business enterprise, large or small, has some definite rules by which business is governed. These rules may vary greatly from each other, but, nevertheless, they are methods, and those who are most concerned are putting forth every wit and energy to make their business a success, and to render the best possible service to the public.

The greatest business of the world today is the winning of souls for Christ, and the spreading and advancement of God's kingdom among men. The urgent question that is being asked day after day is, How shall this matter of soul-winning be presented to the people? We turn to a force that can well be called the power house of the universe, the electric force of the age, the consoling power of peace and happiness, the beginning of civilization, the progress of life and prosperity, and the real, spiritual and material growth of our great Christian Church. That force is the prayer meeting.

Is not this an important question? Should not our methods be carefully considered? Our prayer meeting methods are various, just as we have various churches and denominations. Some, no doubt, are effective, and some are not; others are simply a meeting of people singing, praying, and returning to their various homes with little or no accomplishment.

Let me state here that there should always be a definite plan well worked out which one should follow in conducting prayer service. Before we can serve a great meal there is certain preparation that must be made before that meal can be served to any great advantage; to this we all will agree readily. So then we come to a matter of vital importance.

I. Thorough Preparedness. A number of churches and prayer meetings have died because when they would have their meetings they had nothing definite in the way of a plan to offer that would hold the interest for a length of time. In our preparation for our meeting the selection of a leader is of great importance. The pastor or minister of the local church, elder, deacon, trustee, or any other consecrated person may lead the meeting, but this person should by all means be one that is full of the Spirit, one who knows Christ and can lead men to Christ by his or her exemplifying life as well as through preaching.

A prayer meeting should be called to order with the singing of two or more lively hymns. Let them be inspirational, inviting and appealing to all. The offering of a spiritual prayer may be followed by Scripture reading, singing, and a short talk by the leader on some definite theme pertaining to church or community work. Special prayers should be offered for the sick, the unsaved, the indifferent and careless ones of the church and community. A portion of the time should be given over occasionally for discussion on the subject or any other thoughts pertaining to church or community life.

A prayer meeting is more than a meeting together of people, singing, praying and returning to their various homes feeling that they have accomplished the purpose of the meeting. The prayer meeting may be rightly called a place of spiritual culture, instruction, wisdom, happiness, and a profound devotion to the cause of Christ and His work through a full sense of His love for us, and our duty toward Him, with a full and whole-hearted co-operation of physical and spiritual strength in His work.

No prayer meeting will be a success unless the pastor stands as a central figure in the meeting. The whole burden of success and spiritual atmosphere seems to circle around, or rest upon the shoulders of the minister. A definite theme at each meeting is very necessary in order that great spiritual results might be acquired. The singing, Scripture lesson, and prayers should all point toward that one definite purpose at which we are aiming.

The music plays a very large part in the success of any meeting. Lively, familiar and spiritual music that deals directly with the subject that is before us for discussion and prayer. The old custom of singing the entire hymn has somewhat gone out of style in the prayer meeting and tends to deaden the spirit of the meeting. One or two stanzas of a lively hymn are far better from a spiritual view for a meeting than the whole hymn. We should practice the habit of singing songs at times without books and without calling the numbers. This tends to increase spiritual interest in a meeting.

2. Regularity and Punctuality have their places in the prayer meeting. Regularity and punctuality should be stressed greatly for the best spiritual interest of the meeting. We can not keep up the spiritual interest in our meetings when they are irregular and filled with tardiness all through and through. We are not able to focus the entire attention of the audience on the prayer topic when there is interruption at all minutes by the late comers to the meeting. Tardiness leads to the singing of many hymns at times that have just been sung. Some one entering late announces or raises in many cases the very hymn that has just been sung, which brings a chill and a lack of spiritual interest in the meeting.

A prayer meeting should in no wise be allowed to run until the people lose interest in it, but I would not confine you to any specific length to run your prayer meeting. That part should be governed largely by the spiritual interest and responses of the individuals. But let me say this: that a meeting should not be allowed to drag because of long prayers and lengthy periods. From 45 minutes to one hour is indeed an ideal length in which spiritual interest can be retained.

Many churches for a long, long time have carried out the idea, and are now putting the same into operation, that ministers and elders in the Presbyterian church are the only persons to conduct a prayer service. But we have long since learned that variety is the spice of life. That being true, then in order to increase interest and new opportunities for leadership among young and old, a place should be allotted on our prayer meeting programme for the following organizations to conduct our religious services: The Ladies' Missionary Society, Men's Club, Brother-

hood, Westminster Guild, Young People's Christian Endeavor Society, Tuxis Club, Leagues and Forums. The leaders taken from the various organizations should be consecrated persons in the service of Christ and humanity.

3. Socially speaking our prayer meetings have become static, and in many cases can be truthfully called "frigidaires" because of neglect of friendship and hospitality manifested to strangers in our local churches. We have become just a bit too cold. Just try a warm handshake of welcome to strangers, visitors and church members, and make them welcome to the prayer meeting and see if our attendance does not increase. I observed while a student in school in one of our progressive churches this method: a handshake with the person standing next to you at the close of the service, beginning with the minister in the pulpit and passing down to the pews.

Dr. Benjamin F. Glasco, pastor of the Bidwell Street church, of Pittsburgh, Pa., uses this method as a social help, which, he states, is greatly revolutionizing his own mid-week service, and to the church at large we highly recommend this service.

1. Devotionals led by various groups of the church, beginning with elders, and including every organization of the church. This links all individuals with the spirit of the meeting. Forty minutes is devoted to this period. At the close the choir takes its place and renders gospel music for service.

2. Pastor preaching a strong evangelistic sermon. This sermon should not be longer than 20 minutes.

3. Invitation extended to all unsaved and unchurched members, the meeting closing at 9 P. M., followed with a social hour, coffee and doughnuts, cakes or sandwiches served free to all who have attended the service. As each person enters the church a ticket is given him or her for a social hour. This method, if put into action in our local churches, will, no doubt, prove a great power in building spirituality.

4. We now present the compulsory method. In military terms it is called the conscription plan. This plan may not receive the endorsement of the majority of Christian thinkers as a real effective one. But in military success it has proven a great asset to America and other nations in warfare. The victory that came to the U. S. A. during the recent World War was due largely to the conscription method, and if it has proven a success in killing men, then we do not hesitate to say that it will do equally as well, if not better, in winning souls for Christ.

May I recite to you a concrete case where this has proven a great help? On my own field I had this experience with two ladies, one young and the other old, and by chance, mother and daughter. Both were somewhat bashful and backward in their expressions before the public. They could not pray aloud in public, but I made it a practice of calling upon them from time to time with a very poor response at the beginning, but finally they continued to grow and grow until they have become real spiritual powers in the prayer meeting, spiritual prayers and inspirational talkers. But if they were left alone, no doubt, they would have become perfect drones. In our recent Week of Prayer this statement was made by the young lady: "I am growing spiritually strong, and had it not been for Rev. McFadden calling on me to offer prayer at various times, I would have remained a weakling, a coward in the service of the Master."

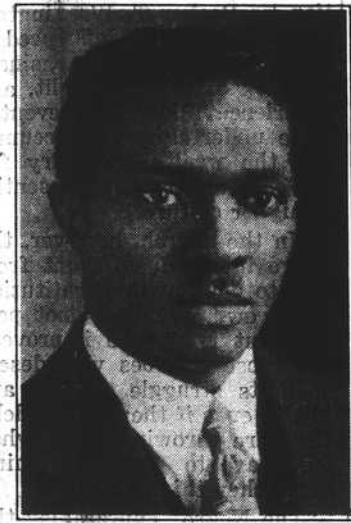
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OUR PRESBYTERIAN WORK, SOME OF THE PROBLEMS AND HOW TO MEET THEM

By Rev. D. Talmage Murray, B. D., Harbison College, Irmo, S. C.

I should say in the outset this article is not written to commence a newspaper controversy; there will be no come-back on my part. "What I have written, I have written." I hope I will not be classified as a radical as to my views on these issues, because there is nothing more important in my life's work than the operation of the great Church of which I form a part. The crowning goal in every man's life should be his church where he can serve in such a way as to "Crown Him Lord of all."

At present there is much discussion going on among



REV. D. TALMAGE MURRAY

some of our church leaders relative to our work. Newspaper articles are continuously coming from the press with great criticisms as to our present condition. We do not hesitate to admit that some are justifiable and should cause us to take on new courage, yet in view of all that might be said concerning our work, the fact still remains that we belong to a great forward-going Church, one which we love and cherish, because it was through her influence that we have been brought thus far into the light of civilization where we can discern God's plans and purposes as He reveals them to the sons of men.

As we look back over a period of more than sixty odd years when our forefathers were freed from slavery, leaving them without homes, lands, ignorant, and last, but not least, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, they stood with outstretched hands crying for help and their pitiful cry was heard and answered by our consecrated Northern white missionaries who came down in this Southland and worked among Negroes, first establishing preaching stations and finally organized schools and planted the seed of Presbyterianism in the hearts of many. As the results of their labors we have a great harvest of Presbyterians in the South, many well organized churches, finely established schools turning out year after year young men and women who are serving the church in a most Christ-like way. This early work was done at a great sacrifice. "They climbed the steep ascent of heaven through peril, toil and pain," and if this work is to be preserved our prayer must be, "O God to us may grace be given to follow in their train."

As we think of the wonderful achievements of our Church and its present day leaders we thank God that the work of our Board has not been in vain in training Christian leadership. Our ministers are leading spirits in the communities in which they live; they are highly respected by both white and colored and in most cases they

head up the educational program in the community. Their wise counsel and influence have helped to solve many racial problems; I refer to such educators as Drs. H. L. McCrorey, John A. Savage, John G. Porter, G. C. Shaw, A. B. McCoy, B. R. Smith, J. W. Holley, G. W. Long, I. P. Pogue, M. J. Jackson, C. W. Francis, W. J. Nelson, Elder J. D. Martin and a number of others who are serving the Church in a most remarkable way.

In view of this it is thought by some that the minister should give full time to preaching the gospel. Preaching is only teaching, and he can instruct in a more definite way in the classroom and at the same time provide for himself sufficient funds upon which to live. None of our churches South are able to pay a minister a living salary. If we depended on our churches for a living in this age of depression I declare unto you some of us would break the speed limit to the poor house. Those who are disposed to think that we should give full time to church work and not do anything else should try that to sit in a fine office and it in the South. It is an easy say what should be done, and how to do it, but when it comes to the actual doing, it is another question. Any man can sit on the bench and criticize the boy playing the game, but get in the game and see how you would play.

As to our schools, the secret of their success lies in the fact that our Board has seen fit to retain ministers at the head in order to preserve that Christian influence for which they were established. Many young men and women have received their inspiration by coming in personal contact with ministers and thereby causing them to dedicate their lives to Christian service. As long as this record is kept up we have a great outlook as a denomination.

Church Membership

This is also another situation facing some of our church leaders. They are asking why we do not grow as other denominations. They look at our records each year and find a continuous falling off. I think if they only knew the facts in the case they would not be so alarmed as to our failure to grow, but pity the way in which some of our records are kept. Those of us who attended the Workers' Conference a few weeks ago and heard Dr. S. D. Thom's report were given some light on the subject. Sufficient time was not given for all to answer. Briefly, we hope to point out some of the problems.

Drs. H. L. McCrorey and G. C. Shaw pointed out one thing that should be noted: that as ministers we fail to follow up members leaving our churches and going elsewhere. We know the rule relative to this. We do not discharge our duty along this line. As they leave our church we should give them a letter to the Presbyterian churches in the cities to which they are going. They may not want it. Now is the time for the minister to do some ecclesiastical teaching.

Second: Many of our records are poorly kept. A candidate or candidates come before the session seeking membership. After the examination they are received into the church. The clerk will take their names on a piece of paper, saying, "I will copy their names in the church roll when I get home. In many cases their names never get on

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KNOXVILLE LETTER

The Status of Religious Education in the Sunday Church School in Fifteen Negro Churches in the City of Knoxville, Tenn.

This is a title of a thesis by Mr. Ralph Stewart Elder, of the Department of Religious Education in Knoxville College. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Northwestern University for the degree of Master of Arts. It is a brilliant analysis of the situation that exists in the major churches of the city of Knoxville by a young man with a keen, analytical mind, and a spiritual and social passion. The treatise is noted for its catholicity of spirit and transparent fairness. It does not attempt to pick flaws or to show up the efforts of the Negro at religious instruction in an unfriendly light. It is a sincere effort on the part of the author to make a study of the situation in regards to the religious activities of the colored group in and around Knoxville to the end that he might be better prepared to equip young men and young women to meet the religious needs of their communities, and to pave the way for a closer co-operation of the Department of Religious Education of the college with the churches of the community. He presents the facts as he saw them. They speak for themselves.

His study embraces only fifteen of the thirty-two churches in the city. These fifteen are the larger and more influential ones. They constitute a cross section of the program of religious instruction carried on by the group. Five of the churches belong to the A. M. E. Zion group, one to the A. M. E., one to the M. E., two to the Presbyterian, U. S. A., one to the United Presbyterian, three to the Baptist, one to the Christian Disciples, and one to the Church of God in America.

In the schools surveyed there were 139 regular teachers, 48 substitutes, 106 general officers, 19 departmental officers, and 2,177 pupils, making a total of 2,489. Of this number only 315 were adults. Only two schools report a cradle roll.

The preparation received by the teachers is as follows:

Elementary training, 27; high school, 34; partial or complete college work, 82; training classes, 47; partial or complete course in School of Methods, 8.

The survey reveals that the hourly cost for the secular education of each pupil enrolled in the city educational system is nearly five times as much as is spent for his religious instruction. It also appears that little or no effort is made by the schools to help the pupils to carry over the religious knowledge acquired into daily conduct. That nearly one half of the Negro population between the ages of 6 and 21 are not identified with any church school. That the churches are not living up to their opportunities to reach the youth of the community. The International Standard points out that:

"The church in co-operation with other educational institutions has responsibility for the complete Christian education of its entire constituency and all others in the parish not now connected with any church school."

According to this study only a few churches take an interest in the church vacation Bible school; that only one is equipped to carry on departmental work.

From this analysis the ministers of Knoxville can clearly see the task in front of them, both to a larger religious service to a greater proportion of

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